

## Brief Information on Input Conformity Confirmations for Organic Farming

### 1. Introduction

Input confirmations according to different international organic standards are not an organic "certification" in the strict sense, because neither Regulation (EC) 834/2007, nor NOP, nor JAS consider farm inputs among the scope of certifiable products. Such confirmations are based on a private programme by CERES. They make life easier for:

- ✓ Farmers, because they can easily find out if an input is allowed or not
- ✓ Input manufacturers, because they need to disclose confidential information only to one certifier
- ✓ Other certifiers, because they need not investigate compliance for inputs that have already been approved by a reliable certifier.

CERES' input confirmation programme is not covered by our accreditation. This does not mean we take it less serious than our accredited certification programmes.

### 2. Types of inputs and companies

We can issue conformity confirmations for all kinds of inputs used in organic farming, except for seeds, which are certifiable products under Reg. (EC) 834/07 and NOP. Most confirmations are requested for fertilisers, soil amendments, and crop protection products.

Conformity confirmations can be issued to manufacturers and distributors. In case of distributors, manufacturers (suppliers) either must be inspected by CERES, or the distributor must produce conformity confirmations from reliable certifiers for each supplier.

### 3. Policy

In addition to compliance of the input as such with organic standards, CERES requires manufacturers to comply with the following minimum conditions:

Condition	Example of non-compliance
Production must not contribute to pollution of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unprotected compost windrows subject to nutrient leaching and pollution of groundwater</li> <li>• Phosphate mines contributing to large scale pollution of the area with dust and heavy metals</li> </ul>
Extraction or production must not contribute to destruction of valuable ecosystems	Large scale peat mining
Workers must be protected from health risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workers exposed to dust from stonemeal</li> <li>• Workers handling aggressive fungi (e.g. <i>Beauveria</i>) without protection</li> </ul>
Conventional farms supplying livestock manure must comply with animal welfare standards per <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-welfare">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-welfare</a> , as a minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laying hens kept in cages</li> <li>• Tethered cows</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>

### 4. Procedure

Client	CERES
a. Application	First superficial verification of ability to comply
b.	If yes: Offer
c. Sign contract	Sign contract
d. 50% Prepayment	
e. Completes Management Plan, provides detailed recipes and flow charts for each input	Detailed verification of recipes and other documentation; feedback to client.

Client	CERES
f. If applicable, certain procedures, recipes, ingredients may have to be modified at this point.	
g.	Onsite inspection and sampling
h.	Inspection report; sample sent to laboratory
i. Payment final invoice	Issues final invoice, including travel and laboratory expenses
j.	Review of inspection report and laboratory test results
k.	If applicable: informs client about non-conformities that need to be corrected
l. Submits evidence of corrective actions	Closes non-conformities
m.	Issues conformity confirmation
n.	Conformity confirmation is published on the CERES website

- ✓ Normally, in the first year we conduct an onsite inspection and take samples for testing.
- ✓ The conformity confirmation must be renewed every year. Depending on size, complexity and risk level, we either repeat inspection and sampling every year, or in the second year we only test samples, in the third year only onsite inspection, etc.

## 5. Compliant vs. Equivalent

The EU Regulation on organic farming (EC) 834/2007 is meant for EU member countries only. In third countries (non-member countries), only "equivalent rules" can be applied. CERES has established relatively few differences in its equivalent standard for third countries (see Policy 4.1.1 on our website). On our input confirmations, when it comes to the EU Regulation, we also make a distinction between "compliant" and "equivalent". Only inputs listed in one of the Annexes to the Regulation can be considered "compliant". Some others, that comply "only" with the CERES equivalent standard, can be considered "equivalent". "Equivalent" inputs may not be used in EU member countries – unless they are explicitly approved by the competent authorities in the respective country. Example: Annex II to Reg. (EC) 889/2008 lists only pyrethrum, neem and quassia as plant extracts allowed for crop production, while the CERES equivalent standard allows also other plant extract, provided they are harmless for human health and the environment.

## 6. Quality Management and Recordkeeping

The producer of organic farming inputs must establish a quality management system to ensure ongoing compliance of the products. Staff must be adequately trained to ensure implementation of the rules and procedures. Detailed records must be kept to ensure traceability of all ingredients and additives, for each batch that has been produced and sold. The producer must establish procedures for immediate stop-sale and recall of batches that do not comply.

## 7. Labeling and Publicity

- ✓ For companies that produce or sell both organic and conventional inputs, any publicity and information material must make very clear, which inputs are approved and which are not
- ✓ Any restrictions for use of an input, that are mentioned on the CERES confirmation, must be clearly stated on labels and technical datasheet, in an easily visible and understandable way
- ✓ Any reference to approval by CERES must be removed from labels, publicity, and technical datasheet, once the confirmation expires, or is withdrawn by CERES because of noncompliance with the standards or with the contract.