

# Brief Introduction to Requirements for Organic Crop Production

According to European Regulation (EC) 834/2007 equivalent to Third Countries\*, the US National Organic Program (NOP), and JAS

## 1. What organic agriculture is:

- ❖ Avoids synthetic pesticides, easily soluble mineral fertilizers and genetically modified organisms (GMO)
- ❖ Protects the environment and promotes biodiversity
- ❖ Produces healthy food
- ❖ Recycles nutrients
- ❖ Uses locally adapted methods.

## 2. Soil fertility and plant nutrition:

- ✓ **Soil fertility** has to be conserved or improved
- ✓ **Hydroponic** cultivation is not allowed
- ✓ Soil **erosion** must be avoided
- ✓ For annual crops, a wide crop **rotation** must be used, including **legumes** to assure biological nitrogen fixation
- ✓ For perennial crops, wherever possible, legumes should be planted as cover crops
- ✓ **Organic manuring** should be used to maintain soil fertility:

Type of manure	EU Regulation and JAS	NOP
From organic husbandry	Yes	Fresh manure only up to 3 / 4 months before harvest, after this only composted manure may be used
From conventional husbandry (factory farming excluded)	Yes	
From factory farming	No	

- ✓ Nitrogen **fertilizers** and superphosphate are not allowed
- ✓ **Rock phosphate, potassium sulphate**, other fertilizers from mined origin and single **trace element** fertilizers can be used in case of proven deficiency
- ✓ Organic and inorganic fertilisation must **not exceed** crop **requirements**
- ✓ Lime (CaCO<sub>3</sub>) can and should be applied, when necessary.

## 3. Crop protection:

- ✓ Synthetic herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides are not allowed
- ✓ Pests and plant diseases must be **prevented**, using adapted species and **resistant varieties**, adequate crop **rotations**, and by promoting **natural enemies**
- ✓ After having taken these measures, only those **natural or mineral substances** may be used, which are listed in Annex II to Reg. (EC) 889/08, Annex 2 to JAS Notification 1605, respectively the NOP National List.
- ✓ NOP restricts not only the active substance, but also the **inert ingredients** of allowed pesticides
- ✓ **Weeds** must be controlled by mechanical or thermal means, adequate soil tillage and crop rotation. NOP allows botanical herbicides, provided they comply with the National List.

## 4. Approval of farm inputs by certifiers

Farm inputs, such as fertilizers and crop protection products, need not be "certified" for being used on organic farms. Here is an overview:

	Must each input be explicitly approved by the certifier before using it?	Must inputs be "certified" through a document issued to the manufacturer?	Can "input confirmations" issued by other certifiers be recognised by CERES?
Reg. (EC) 834/2007	No – asking for approval is desirable, but not compulsory	No	Only if the confirmation clearly refers to Annex I or II of Reg. (EC) 889/2008, not to an "equivalent standard" <sup>1)</sup>
NOP	Yes	No	Only if the other certifier is accredited by NOP <sup>1)</sup>
JAS	No	No	Only if the other certifier is accredited for JAS <sup>1)</sup>

1) In any case, CERES reserves the right not to recognise such confirmations if they are not plausible or trustworthy

## 5. Seeds, seedlings and vegetative planting material:

	EU Regulation	NOP	JAS
Origin of <b>seeds and vegetative planting material</b>	Must be organic		
Use of conventional <b>seeds or planting material</b>	Farmer must prove non-availability of organic seeds or planting material		
In addition:	Farmer must apply for a derogation before sowing, otherwise the crop must be considered conventional (this applies also for potatoes, but not for other vegetative planting material)	No such additional procedure	
Seeds with chemical dressing	Not allowed. Use will be considered as application of chemicals. Land has to undergo new conversion (see below).	Allowed if untreated seeds / organic seedlings are not available	
Seedlings for annual crops (e.g. vegetables)	Must be organic. Otherwise the crop will be considered conventional.		

## 6. Conversion period:

A conventional farm must undergo a **conversion** period before products can be sold as organic. During the conversion time, all rules of organic production must be kept, according to:

	EU Regulation and JAS	NOP
<b>Annual crops:</b>	<b>24 months</b> until planting	<b>36 months</b> until harvest
<b>Perennial crops:</b>	<b>36 months</b> until harvest	<b>36 months</b> until harvest
<b>Beginning of conversion period:</b>	Date of contract with the certifier, or date of first inspection	Last use of prohibited substances
<b>External control during conversion:</b>	Required	Not required, farmer keeps records
<b>Exceptions:</b>	In case of sufficient proof for non use of prohibited substances during the previous years, conversion period may be reduced <sup>2)</sup>	
<b>Sale of products during conversion:</b>	From second year of conversion on, products can be labelled as "in conversion to organic farming" <sup>3)</sup>	Must be sold as conventional.

2) Please refer to CERES Policy 4.1.2. 3) Products from third countries cannot be imported into the EU with an "in conversion" claim.

## 7. Cross contamination:

- ✓ NOP and JAS explicitly require **buffer** zones between organic and conventional fields
- ✓ Reg. (EC) 889/08 requires operators to take "precautionary measures ...in order to reduce the risk of contamination", which includes the need of separating organic from conventional fields, whenever there is a risk of pesticide drift.

## 8. Biodiversity:

- ✓ Organic standards require soil fertility conservation and promotion of natural enemies (see above). Reg. (EC) 834/07 defines biodiversity as a key element of organic farming. CERES believes that these conditions can't be met on huge monocrop fields. Large fields must be subdivided by **hedgerows**.

## 9. Records:

- ✓ Before the first inspection takes place, the farm must present an **organic management plan** to the certifier; this plan must be updated annually
- ✓ A **farm diary** must be kept, recording the main activities on each plot
- ✓ Invoices for **purchase** of fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, etc., must be filed
- ✓ **Harvested quantities** must be recorded for each crop
- ✓ The farm needs at least a simple system of **bookkeeping** for sales of organic products

- ✓ In addition, **JAS** requires "**grading**" records: before selling products with the JAS logo, the producer has to double-check and record fulfilment of JAS standards.

## 10. Knowledge:

- ✓ The farmer must have a **copy** of the respective **standards** and must study them
- ✓ The farmer needs an adequate level of **knowledge** on organic farming rules and technologies.

\* **Note:** Inside the EU, the Regulation must be applied in a “compliant” way. Products from third countries outside the European Union are considered "equivalent". Please refer to the CERES homepage for our Policy 4.1.1, which, combined with the former Regulations (CE) 834/07 and (CE) 889/08 and our other policies, make up the "CERES equivalent standard".



*Please be aware that this is only a selection of essential requirements of the organic standards, meant as an introduction. The operator, of course, must learn about and meet all requirements of the respective standard.*