

## COIs for Imports of Organic Products into the EU (+ EEA, CH and NI)

### Abbreviations

AWB	<b>A</b> ir <b>W</b> aybill	Official air transport document
B/L	<b>B</b> ill of <b>L</b> ading	Official maritime transport document
CMR	<b>C</b> onvention Relative au Contrat de Transport International de <b>M</b> ar-chandises par <b>R</b> oute	Official road transport document
COI	<b>C</b> ertificate of <b>I</b> nspection	Previously called "TC = Transaction Certificate"
ETD	<b>E</b> stimated <b>T</b> ime of <b>D</b> eparture	
TRACES	<b>T</b> rade <b>C</b> ontrol and <b>E</b> xpert <b>S</b> ystem	Official traceability system for organic imports into the EU

## 1. Introduction

The European Union (as well as the whole European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland (CH) and Northern Ireland (NI)) requires **Certificates of Inspection (COI, also called transaction certificates)** for each import of organic products from third countries. In 2016, Regulation (EC) 1235/2008 was amended with the purpose of improving the traceability of organic products, reducing potential fraud, and obtaining information about imported quantities of organic products. Since October 2017 all COIs for organic imports into the EU (as well as the whole EEA, CH and NI) must be issued via the online platform TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System implemented and managed by the EU).

In 2020 the EU Commission has approved the **electronic signatures** for the certifiers. **Since 15 July 2020, EU-COIs are no longer issued on paper by CERES but electronically in form of a digitally signed PDF original.** These are called "e-COI". **The digital signature (e-seal) fully replaces the manual signature and stamp.** Waiting times and extra costs related to sending hard copy COIs are thus obsolete, the e-COI is immediately available on TRACES for all authorities and operators involved in the import.

The only **exception** to this rule are EU-COIs for imports from equivalent third countries under Annex III (e.g. Chile). For these, the electronic signature has not been approved yet. COIs are still printed out on paper and signed and stamped manually.

## 2. Timeline for Issuing the COI

With an update to Regulation (EC) 1235/2008 from January 2020, the Commission decided that **EU-COIs must be issued before the organic product leaves the country of export.** This means:

- a. The exporter must **apply for the GB-COI as early as possible with enough time for us to check the documents and rule out any doubts before the shipment.** Please take into account our usual processing times for COI-applications and, in case an application cannot be submitted with sufficient time in advance, also consider using the EXPRESS service option that we offer for national sales and international vessel shipments (NOT applicable for international air- and land freight; generates additional costs, see our price list). For international vessel shipments the application should be sent at least 10-14 days prior to the shipment. International air- and land freight should be submitted at least 2-5 working days before the shipment and need to be marked as Flight/AWB or Truck/CMR in the subject line of the email so that they can be handled with priority.

- b. Exporters must be aware that **EU authorities may reject organic imports if the COI is issued after the consignment has left the country**. CERES cannot assume any responsibility for any potential consequences.

- c. In case the official waybill (B/L, CMR or AWB) and commercial invoice are issued only after the vessel has departed, **we also accept draft versions of the waybill (or booking confirmations) and proforma invoices for COI issuance**.

If the draft B/L (or CMR or AWB) is not available at this time we will prepare the COI without this document. The COI will then, of course, not include any shipment details (boxes 14,15 and 17 for container number, seal number and means of transport will remain empty). Once the original B/L (or CMR or AWB) is available, please send it immediately and we will update the e-COI on TRACES with the relevant shipment details.

(Boxes 14 - 17 as well as the net weight and packages in box 13 of the e-COI can be modified in TRACES after the COI has been issued and before it has been endorsed by the EU competent authority; the digitally signed PDF of the COI will remain unchanged because it is the original and originals cannot be modified).

**The information shall be included in TRACES within a maximum of 10 days (from the date of the signature in box 18) and in any case before endorsement of the COI by the relevant Member State's competent authorities**. This deadline has been given by the EU Commission; it is not a CERES deadline.

- d. Please make sure to **include the correct ETD as well as the transport mode (BL / AWB / CMR) in the subject line** of your email when sending in the application.

The **subject line of the COI application** should contain the following information: **COI to EU\_ BL / CMR / AWB** (the applicable one only) **Exporter x Importer, ETD: DD-MM**.

In case you would like to order EXPRESS service (only for maritime transport, generates additional costs, please see our price list) please also include EXPRESS in the subject line.

- e. We request the exporter to send us the **final version of the B/L and the commercial invoice as soon as these documents are available**. CERES will not be responsible for any delays in entering the missing data, such as Container or B/L information in case of not receiving these documents in time (information can only be completed in TRACES prior to customs clearing). This needs to be an automatic process. We will check this monthly and send reminders. **If we do not receive the relevant documents after sending our reminder, we may stop issuing new COIs**.

In case of **changes between proforma/draft and original version of invoice or B/L (or CMR or AWB) we have to be informed in your email** in order to make the modifications in TRACES in time.

- f. **Importer or First Consignee may upload the final transport document** (B/L, AWB, CMR) **in TRACES if requested** (not mandatory from EU Commission side). This does **not replace the email** including this document **to CERES**.

In case you want CERES to upload this document in TRACES, we will need a declaration (on letterhead, signed and stamped) from the exporter that CERES was given permission to upload this document in TRACES and also the instruction to do so when sending in the document. This is because of confidentiality reasons.

g. This procedure **only applies to imports from third countries into the EU** (as well as the whole European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland (CH) and Northern Ireland(NI)). All other COIs / TCs will be handled as before.

h. **Please kindly support us by including the following information in the subject line of all COI application emails:**

- **Destination / country of import** (EU (+ EEA / CH / NI) or GB or other countries)
- **Transport mode** (Vessel/BL, Airfreight/AWB, Land freight/truck / CMR)
- For vessel transport only: **Service option** (EXPRESS or STANDARD)
- **Exporter** company name
- **Importer** company name
- For shipments to EU, EEA, Northern Ireland or GB: **ETD** (estimated time of departure = date when the shipment is planned to leave the country of export)
- For shipments to other countries: ETA (estimated time of arrival = date when the shipment is planned to reach the point of destination)



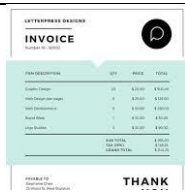
Example: COI to EU\_BL EXPRESS\_Exporter x Importer\_ETD 03.10.

### 3. Which Control Body (CB) issues the COI?

Per Art. 13(3) of Regulation (EC) 1235/2008, the **COI shall be issued "by the (...) control body of the operator carrying out the last operation for the purposes of preparation"**.

Examples:

	Producer	Last Processor	Exporter	COI by
a.	Banana farmer  Certified by CERES	The bananas are packed on the farm  Certified by CERES	The exporter does not process, repack or re-label the product  Certified by CB X	CERES
b.	Vineyard  Certified by CERES	Winery  Certified by CB X	The winery exports the wine itself 	CB X
c.	Rice farmer group	Rice mill	Exporter buys and sells, but does not get in touch with the rice	CB Y

	Producer	Last Processor	Exporter	COI by
	 Certified by CB X	 Certified by CB Y	 Certified by CERES	

#### 4. Who can use TRACES

Access to TRACES is granted to:

- Issuing Body (**Control Body** responsible for the third country exporter)
- Commission and Member State's Competent Authority
- Importers
- First consignees
- Responsible Control Bodies in Member States
- Last processors

#### 5. How it works

1 <sup>st</sup> Step	Importer <b>or</b> control body of the last preparer creates the COI on TRACES.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Step	<b>Control body</b> responsible for the operator who carries out the last preparation activity (in this case CERES) <b>issues</b> the e-COI; the e-COI is available in real time for the respective customs authority.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Step	<b>Customs</b> confirms through (electronic) signature and stamp
4 <sup>th</sup> Step	<b>First consignee (electronically) signs</b> the declaration on acceptance of goods as organic
5 <sup>th</sup> Step	During the annual inspection, Box 20 of the e-COI is <b>endorsed</b> by the control body (or competent authority) in the member state.

CERTIFICATE OF INSPECTION FOR IMPORT OF PRODUCTS FROM ORGANIC PRODUCTION INTO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

1. Issuing control body or authority (name, address and code) CERES GmbH Vorderhaslach 1 D-91230 Happurg Germany		2. Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007: -Article 33(2) <input type="checkbox"/> or - Article 33(3) x	
3. Serial number of the certificate of inspection		4. Exporter (name and address)	
5. Producer or processor of the product (name and address)		6. Control body or control authority (name, address and code) CERES GmbH Vorderhaslach 1 D-91230 Happurg, Germany XX-BIO-140	
7. Country of origin		8. Country of export	
9. Country of clearance / Point of entry		10. Country of destination	
11. Importer (name, address and EORI number)		12. First consignee in the Union (name and address)	
13. Description of products			
CN code number	Trade name Net weight	Number of packages	Lot
14. Container number	15. Seal number	16. Total gross weight	
17. Means of transport before point of entry into the Union Mode  Identification  International transport document			
18. Declaration of control authority or control body issuing the certificate referred to in box 1 This is to certify that this certificate has been issued on the basis of the checks required under Article 13(4) of Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 and that the products designated above have been obtained in accordance with rules of production and inspection of the organic production method which are considered equivalent in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 834/2007. Date: Name and signature of authorised person    Stamp of issuing authority or body			

<p>19. Customs warehousing <input type="checkbox"/> <span style="float: right;">Inward processing <input type="checkbox"/></span>                  Name and address of operator:                   Control body or control authority (name, address and code):                   Customs Declaration Reference Number for customs warehousing or inward processing:</p>
<p>20. Verification of the consignment and endorsement by the relevant Member State's competent authority.                  Authority and Member State:                     Date:                   Name and signature of authorised person    Stamp</p>
<p>21. Declaration of the first consignee.                  This is to certify that the reception of the products has been carried out in accordance with Article 34 of Regulation (EC) No 889/2008.                  Name of the company:                      Date:                   Name and signature of the authorised person</p>