

## Brief Introduction to Requirements for Organic Imports

according to the European Regulation (EC) 834/07

### Import of organic food:

- ❖ Must assure traceability and transparency
- ❖ Requires a good documentation system

### 1. Who needs to be certified as organic importer:

<b>Customs</b> agents who do not become owners of the product	No
<b>Brokers</b> or importers who buy and sell the product, without repacking or relabelling it (possibly without being in contact with the product)	Yes
<b>Handlers</b> who repack or label the product	Yes

### 2. The regulatory situation in the EU:

When we speak about "import", we always refer to import from third countries (non members of the EU). Trade between member countries is free and not considered "import". **Regulation (EC) 1235/2008** establishes the rules for organic imports. Imported products are always considered "equivalent", not "compliant". There are **two options** to establish equivalency:

Option:	Equivalent country	Equivalent certification body
Meaning:	The third country has been approved by the European Commission, after verifying it has a system that can be considered "equivalent" to the EU, in what refers to the standard and the control system	The private certifier has been approved by the EC for offering its services in third countries – independently from a government system that may exist in the respective country or not.
Where to find:	Regulation (EE) 1235/2008, Annex III	Regulation (EC) 1235/2008, Annex IV
Examples:	Argentina, Australia, Canada, etc.	CERES is approved for approx. 70 third countries
Codes:	CERES in Chile (third country) has the code CL-BIO-005	CERES in the other countries has the code XY-BIO-140

### 3. Steps to the import of organic products to the EU from countries outside the EU:

- a. First, you must be **certified** as an **organic importer** and registered as such by your national authorities; please contact an authorised certifier in your country.
- b. Second, you must make sure that your **supplier** holds a **valid certificate** for organic products equivalent to Reg. (EC) 834/07 – meaning that the certifier who issues the document, be listed either in Annex III or in Annex IV of Regulation (EC) 1235/2008 for the respective country. Additionally, you must be sure that the certifier is approved for the respective category (A: unprocessed crops, B: unprocessed products of animal origin; C: aquaculture; D: processed food; E: feed; F: seeds and propagation material).
- c. For each shipment, the certifier of the operator who carries out the last preparation operation must issue a **certificate of inspection (COI)** (sometimes called TC or transaction certificate); this COI must be issued by the control body that is responsible for the last preparation step in the third country. The respective commercial documents must be submitted (invoice, transport documents, etc.), but also documents showing the organic origin of the respective lot.
- d. The COI is issued through an online system called **"TRACES"**. For further details, refer to Brief Info 3.2.8.1. A product imported without an original COI stamped by customs is considered conventional!

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- e. The importer has the obligation to **verify that the information in the different documents and the labels coincide and is correct**. Among others, he must verify that products, invoices, and transport documents carry the **correct code** of the certifier of the last entity that has handled the product. In the case of CERES, the code is XY-BIO-140 in the countries for which CERES is approved (XY to be replaced by the official code of the country of export, for example, PY for Paraguay, or DO for the Dominican Republic)
- f. The importer also has the obligation to **analyse the possible risks** that the product might not comply with the standard, and take the respective measures - for example, analysis of pesticide residues, or visits to producers and exporters in the country of origin.
- g. Once inside the EU, the organic product can be marketed freely.

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