



Smallholder Group Certification

Training Curriculum for Producer Organizations



International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

compiled by
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Acknowledgements

IFOAM commissioned a group of experts under the coordination of IMO to revise the IFOAM producer manual and develop a training manual for producer groups in setting up and harmonizing internal control systems. The new guidance manual and this training curriculum are based on the results of the three IFOAM smallholder harmonization workshops (organized by AgroEco) as well as acknowledged basic documents in smallholder group certification, such as the Naturland/IMO Smallholder Manual (2001).

This manual was written by Florentine Lechleitner (IMO) and Chris May (Bioglobal). The training curriculum was tested in pilot trainings in Vietnam, India and Peru.

IFOAM would also like to thank the large number of people who participated in the harmonization process regarding smallholder group certification, especially the smallholder organizations that participated in the pilot trainings. You all have helped to make this process a very credible one. Thanks.

How to use this training manual

This training curriculum is a structured analogue to the [IFOAM Training Manual for Organic Agriculture in the Tropics](#). Trainers are referred to this manual for further information how to organize effective trainings.

The ICS training curriculum consists of two parts:

- 1) [Slides](#) for each chapter of the IFOAM ICS Training Manual.
- 2) [Training Manual](#):
 - The left side contains information that the trainer could present with the slides.
 - The right side of each page shows the corresponding slides plus discussions/working group exercises for illustration and better understanding of the content.

The complete manual and slides are divided into 14 separate WORD/ POWERPOINT files (teaching units). In each WORD file, you can open the corresponding and complete POWERPOINT file by double-clicking the first slide on the right side.

The summary of how an ICS should be set up and additional sample documents for work group sessions can be found in the IFOAM ICS Guidance Manual for Producer Organizations and its annex. The chapters of this Guidance Manual correspond to the chapters in the Training Manual.

The complete training curriculum can be done in approx. 3-4 days, depending on how many exercises and discussions are included and the level of experience of the participants. Approximate times needed for presentation and the exercises are indicated in the table of contents.

The time needed for different chapters also depends on the participants. For new organizations that are receiving guidance to set up their own ICS, it may be appropriate to allow sufficient time to design their own documents, etc. Thus, the whole training may take longer or may be split in two parts with some time to develop a sample internal ICS manual to be discussed and finalized during the second training session.

For organizations that already have an ICS in place are using this training to update their knowledge of ICS and are fine-tuning their system with the harmonized IFOAM approach, more emphasis should be laid on risk identification at all levels and more time can be spent on optimizing existing systems. In this case, 3 days might be sufficient.

Wherever possible, trainers are advised to collect local examples of ICS documents for illustration and a basis for discussion.

Chapter <i>(Number of chapter corresponds to producer guidance manual)</i>	Page	No. slides approx. time
How to use the training manual		
0. INTRODUCTION TO SMALLHOLDER CERTIFICATION Why is certification needed? What is an ICS? What does an ICS comprise? Conditions for smallholder group certification Some terms for this Training Curriculum The ICS Manual (<i>chapter 1 of ICS Guidance Manual</i>)	1	9 slides approx. 0.75 h
1. DISTRIBUTION AND UPDATE MANAGEMENT ICS MANUAL <i>This part presented together with chapter 0</i> <i>See also producer guidance manual</i>		
2. PROJECT ORGANIZATION Initiative for organization of smallholder projects Options for project set-up <i>Optional:</i> Advantages/disadvantages of different models <i>Optional:</i> How to start an organic project Overview of farms, buying, & processing Organization of the ICS (project coordination)	6	11 slides approx.: 1.5-2 h
3. RISK MANAGEMENT Example: Potential risks and what can be done Risk assessment Continuous risk management	13	5 slides approx.: 1.5 h
4. INTERNAL ORGANIC STANDARD Important organic standards Why is an internal organic standard needed? The internal organic standard Basic requirements for organic production How is an internal standard developed? Background consideration: What is included in organic standards?	17	9 slides approx. 1.5-2 h

Chapter <i>(Number of chapter corresponds to producer guidance manual)</i>	Page	No. slides approx. time
5. FARM CONTROL AND APPROVAL PROCEDURES		
5.1 Registration of New Farmers Registration procedures Commitment declaration (contract) Farm entrance form/ Basic farm data Maps	26	6 slides approx. 1 h
5.2 Internal Inspections Frequency and planning of internal inspections How to organize inspections What is inspected? Documentation and reporting process Summarizing the results for the farmer Inspection techniques Critical control points	32	13 slides approx. 2 – 2.5 h & ½ day field inspection
5.3 Yield Estimates Yield estimates How can accurate yield estimates be achieved? Sources of information and cross-checking Challenges in obtaining accurate estimates	43	5 slides approx.: 0.5 h
5.4 & 5.5 Internal Approval and Sanctions The internal audit cycle Who approves? Approval procedures A problem is found – what should be done? Sanction procedures Non-compliances and their sanction	48	8 slides approx.: 1.5-2.5 h
5.6 ICS Documentation Farmer's documents Management of the documentation Farmers lists and approved farmers list List of sanctioned farmers	55	7 slides approx.: 1– 3 h

Chapter <i>(Number of chapter corresponds to producer guidance manual)</i>	Page	No. slides approx. time
6. ICS PERSONNEL	61	15 slides approx. 1.5-2 h
6.1 ICS Staff and Organizational Chart		
6.2 The ICS Coordinator		
6.3 Internal Inspector Introduction Qualification requirements What an internal inspector needs to know		
6.4 Approval Personnel		
6.5 Field Officers/Field Advisors and other positions Other positions in the ICS		
6.6 Conflicts of Interest Conflicts of interest consultancy vs. internal inspection		
6.7 Buying Personnel Staff documentation <i>(this chapter is covered under 8.5 in the producer guidance manual)</i>	74	6 slides approx. 0.5-1 h
7. Training Why is training so important? Training of ICS staff Farmers training – Building awareness Additional tips: How to do good farmers trainings		
8. BUYING, HANDLING, PROCESSING & EXPORT <i>(proposed to present chapter 8 before chapter 6&7)</i>	79	21 slides approx. 3-4 h
8.1 Selling & Buying Procedures Selling and buying systems Buying procedures and buying documentation Buying staff and potential problems in the buying process How to avoid mistakes during buying		
8.2 Product Flow Control (Handling) & Storage Overview of organic product flow systems		

Chapter <i>(Number of chapter corresponds to producer guidance manual)</i>	Page	No. slides approx. time
Handling of organic products at all stages Preparing product flow documents Storage of organic products		
8.3 Organic Processing and Export What is considered processing? Important aspects organic processing How can separation be guaranteed?		
8.4 Organic Exports		
9. External inspection Steps towards certification The external inspection Certification & communication with certifier	96	4 slides approx. 0.5-0.75 h
TOTAL		Approx. 20 h = 3.5 days plus 0.5 day field visit

0. Introduction to Smallholder Certification

The organic market is regulated by various organic standards and regulations; i.e., in most countries worldwide all production steps of a product that will be marketed as “organic” need to fulfill certain defined criteria for organic production. Compliance with these rules must be inspected and certified by an organic certification body.

Why is certification needed?

It is all about building trust. Certification has greatly helped to develop both consumers’ trust in organics and the organic market itself.

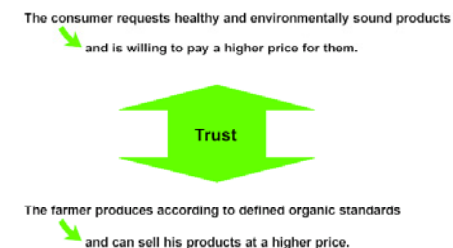
On the other hand, a majority of agriculture practitioners worldwide are smallholders and often are located in remote areas with long travel times from one place to another. Furthermore, the overall revenue from their agricultural production is usually far too small to cover the costs of a farm inspection by an external inspection body for each farmer.

For these reasons, for 15 years—long before government regulations—smallholders in Developing Countries in cooperation with certification bodies have been developing systems to assure compliance to organic standards for producers as a group. Different forms of quality assurance systems of smallholder groups have developed over time with respect to the nature and size of the operation, ranging from tens to thousands of individual producers.

Smallholder group certification implies that there is:

- A central body responsible for ensuring the group’s compliance to applicable standards. This can be a self-organized cooperative/farmers association or simply a buyer or processor who contracts farmers (“contract production”).
- One single certification for all individual production as well as processing and handling activities registered within the group. Individual operators within the group may not use the certification independently.
- There is an ICS in place (further explanation of what this means will follow).

Why is organic certification needed?



Source: IFOAM Organic Agriculture in the Tropics



Training Manual on Setting Up and Harmonising Internal Control Systems

Principles of Smallholder Group Certification

- A central body ensures the compliance of all smallholder farmers with organic standards
- Group has a formal Internal Control System (ICS)
- One certification for the group (not for single farmers)



Training Manual on Setting Up and Harmonising Internal Control Systems

What is an ICS?

The requirements regarding smallholder group certification and the Internal Control System have varied considerably over the past years. Therefore IFOAM started a harmonization process 3 years ago with several harmonization workshops and also initiated the revision of the IFOAM ICS Manual for Smallholder Groups and the elaboration of this training manual.

All explanations regarding ICS in this manual reflect the present consensus on this subject; however, certain details may still be considered differently by various certifiers or authorities.

IFOAM definition of an ICS (see slide)

This formal role of the ICS as an official “control body” implies that certain basic formalities for organic inspection need to be fulfilled, as organic standards describe not only how organic production needs to be done, but also how it can be controlled. These “inspection requirements” include a lot of issues, like documentation, inspection procedures etc., that ICS operators often overlook when they wish to set up an organic certification project.

Slide no. 3 demonstrates that in a smallholder group certification the organic certifier comes in only to evaluate the work of this internal inspection body. This is done by an overall assessment of the quality and efficiency of the internal control system and by re-inspection (sample inspection) of a couple of farmers.

Also it is important to note that a smallholder group certification covers only a defined number of farmers who have confirmed their commitment to be organic farmers in a certain organic project.

Definition ICS

IFOAM Definition:

An Internal Control System (ICS) is a documented quality assurance system that allows the external certification body to delegate the annual inspection of individual group members to an identified body/unit within the certified operator.

Certification of a Smallholder Group

