

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION IN INDIA: A GUIDE

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ABSTRACT

The surge in demand for organic produce, fueled by heightened consumer awareness about the advantages of organic farming, has underscored the importance of organic certification for ensuring authenticity and quality. In India, two noteworthy pathways for organic certification have gained prominence: the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) and the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). These pathways play a pivotal role in establishing the credibility of organic products. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) operates under the Government of India, offering a standardized certification process, while the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) involves a decentralized, community-driven approach. This article aims to provide an insightful overview of these certification pathways, shedding light on their distinctive features and the intricacies of the certification process.



INTRODUCTION

In the world of organic farming, certification is very important because it shows that someone has reached a certain level of success or status. This official paperwork is very important for making sure that the organic farming industry is honest and trustworthy. The idea of organic certification is an important quality control measure that aims to protect honesty, stop fraudulent company behaviour, and encourage the sale of more organic products. In order to protect the standards and principles of organic farming and production, this project is very important. Organic certification is a good way for people to find real organic products because it means that a company follows a strict set of rules. It not only makes people sure that organic products are real, but it also makes fair trade and business easier in the organic industry.

PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIC CERTIFICATE

In response to the growing demand for organic food all over the world, experts developed organic certification. When it comes to avoiding fraudulent operations and maintaining the quality of items, certification is an extremely important consideration. The primary purpose of this organization is to



regulate and make it easier for consumers to purchase organic agricultural products. There are a variety of certifying bodies, and each one of them has its own distinctive service marks that consumers can use as branding tools.

CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Currently, India is home to two different organic certification systems. Both systems are based on similar national standards, but they carry out the verification and documentation processes differently.

1. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) focuses on export.
2. The Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India) caters to both domestic and local markets. (Source: PGS India).

INDIA ORGANIC CERTIFICATE

In India, the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is responsible for regulating and certifying organic products. The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), an agency of the Indian government, implements the NPOP. APEDA is responsible for the promotion and export of agricultural and processed food products from India, including organic products. The NPOP follows the guidelines established by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and ensures that organic production and processing practices meet specific standards. These standards cover various aspects such as soil fertility management, pest and disease control, seed and planting material, and labelling requirements.

STEPS INVOLVED IN APPLYING FOR AN INDIA ORGANIC CERTIFICATE

1. **Understand the NPOP (National Programme for Organic Production):**
 - Familiarize yourself with the guidelines and standards set by the NPOP.
 - The NPOP establishes the criteria for organic production and certification in India.
2. **Select an Accredited Agency:**
 - Select a certification agency accredited by the NPOP.
 - Authorized agencies conduct inspections and evaluations for organic certification.
3. **Contact the Certification Agency:**
 - Reach out to the selected certification agency to express your interest in obtaining organic certification.
 - Seek information about the application process, fees, and any specific requirements.
4. **Submit the application and documentation:**
 - Fill out the application form provided by the certification agency.

- Submit relevant documentation, including details about your farming practices, land history, and organic inputs used.

5. Inspection and Evaluation:

- The certification agency conducts on-site inspections of your farm to verify compliance with NPOP standards.
- The inspection includes an evaluation of soil health, pest management, crop rotation, and other organic farming practices.




6. Certification Decision:

- Based on the inspection findings and the documentation submitted, the certification agency makes a certification decision.

Table 1. Inspection and Certification Rates

Category	Details	Fees (Rs)
Small farmers and co-operatives	Travel and inspection, Report preparation Certification	12000/day 5000 flat fee 5000/certificate
Estate manufacturers and processors	Travel and inspection, Report preparation Certification	19200/day 5000 flat fee 5000/certificate
Large and medium sized processors	Travel and inspection, Report preparation Certification	16800/day 5000 flat fee 5000/certificate

Table 2. List of Accredited Certification Bodies

S. No.	Name of the Certification Agency	Accreditation	Certification Mark
1	Bureau Veritas Certification India Pvt Ltd., Mumbai	NPOP USDA NOP	
2	ECOCERT India Pvt. Ltd., Aurangabad	NPOP USDA NOP	
3	IMO Control Pvt. Ltd.(Bangalore)	NPOP USDA NOP	

4	Indian Organic Certification Agency (INDOCERT) Cochin-Kerela	NPOP USDA NOP	
5	Lacon Quality Certification Pvt. Ltd., Thiruvalla (Kerala)	NPOP USDA NOP	
6	Natural Organic Certification Agency (NOCA), Pune	NPOP USDA NOP	
7	OneCert Asia Agri Certification Pvt. Ltd., Jaipur	NPOP USDA NOP	
8	SGS India Pvt. Ltd. Gurgaon-Haryana	NPOP USDA NOP	
9	Control Union Certifications, Mumbai	NPOP USDA NOP	

Source- APEDA

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) is an alternative certification system for organic products that is based on the active participation of farmers and other stakeholders. PGS aims to assure consumers that the products they purchase have been produced using organic practices, even if they lack an official certification label. Unlike conventional third-party certification systems, PGS involves a local group of producers who collectively verify and guarantee the organic status of their products. This system is particularly relevant for small-scale farmers, local markets, and direct sales, where direct trust and relationships play a significant role.

Steps involved in applying for a PGS certificate

1. Formation of a Farmer Group:

- Farmers come together to form a group, fostering a sense of community.
- The group functions collectively, making decisions related to organic practices and certification.

2. Internal capacity building:

- Farmers within the group undergo training to enhance their understanding of organic farming principles and PGS requirements.
- Capacity building includes workshops on sustainable practices, soil health, and organic inputs.

3. Development of Internal Standards:

- The farmer group collaboratively establishes internal standards for organic farming.
- These standards outline the criteria and practices that members must adhere to for organic certification.

4. Peer Inspection:

- Members of the farmer group engage in peer inspections of each other's farms.
- This promotes transparency and ensures that all members are following the agreed-upon organic standards.

5. Documentation and Record-Keeping:

- Farmers maintain detailed records of their farming practices, inputs used, and any relevant information.
- Proper documentation is crucial for transparency and traceability during the certification process.

Table 3. Difference between PGS Certificate and Organic Certificate

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)	Third-party certification
Less paperwork	Heavy documentation by framers and certifying agencies
Certification is for the whole farm.	Certification is for a single commodity or product.
Individual farmers own their PGS certificates.	The certificate is owned by the farmer group, NGO, or the export company
More commitment and responsibility of farmers in the certification process (including inspection and consequence)	Responsibility is with the third-party certifying agency (including inspection and consequences like a fine or license cancellation).
More leeway for farmers in the marketplace	Farmers are bound to sell only certified products and through certified groups.
It is free for farmers in groups of five or more.	It is expensive; inspection visits alone cost around ₹ 20,000.

Source- Down to Earth

6. External Evaluation:

- An external evaluator, often a trained and accredited individual, assesses the compliance of the farmer group with organic standards.
- This evaluation ensures an unbiased assessment of the group's practices.

7. Certification Decision:

- A certification decision is made based on the external evaluation.
- The farmer group is granted the PGS certificate if they meet the organic standards, indicating that their products are organically produced.

CONCLUSION

Organic farming certification, whether through NPOP or PGS, plays a crucial role in ensuring the integrity of organic products and meeting consumer demand for sustainable agriculture. NPOP certification follows a structured process involving accredited certification agencies, documentation, on-site inspections, and evaluation. PGS certification offers a community-based approach, emphasizing peer inspections and internal standards within farmer groups. Both certification pathways contribute to environmental stewardship, consumer trust, and the growth of the organic sector. Farmers can choose the most suitable certification option based on their scale of operation and market objectives.

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