Inspection and certification by bio.inspecta

bio.inspecta AG is an accredited inspection and certification body in accordance with ISO 17020 and ISO 17065. All of the company's activities are therefore under the supervision of the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

The certification services of bio.inspecta ensure that consumers can have the utmost confidence in organic products – and that our customers can put their trust in bio.inspecta.

In countries outside of the EU (third countries) bio.inspecta carries out inspection and certification based on the EU Organic Regulation 2018/848. Other standards such as NOP are applied as identical standards.

Admission of new operators

New operators register with bio.inspecta AG for the desired services either on the bio.inspecta website or using a paper registration form. bio.inspecta AG then forwards the relevant information materials as well as the General Terms of Business and the Schedule of Charges/price offer. During the registration process bio.inspecta also makes an assessment as to whether the operator can be offered the services requested. In consultation with the potential customer any necessary additional information is requested, and/or any necessary clarifications are sought. Subsequently, bio.inspecta sends out a written confirmation of the registration. Via the e-Cert electronic database, the relevant inspector is then assigned to carry out the inspection.

Once the operator has been enrolled in the inspection process, the operator will receive written documents to prepare for the inspection. These documents must be completed and sent to bio.inspecta prior to the inspection. When the initial on-site inspection is carried out, the procedures and documentation are refined and established. Certification is monitored in accordance with the scheduled frequency as set out in the individual regulations and standards, i.e. generally on an annual basis.

On-site inspection

The inspector agrees on a date for the inspection with the operator to be inspected. This step is omitted for unannounced inspections.

On-site inspection is undertaken aided by a checklist. Prior to the inspection the operator is sent preparatory documents which show the aspects of the operation that will be assessed as part of the inspection. The inspection commences with an introductory conversation in which the inspection process is established.

During the on-site inspection the status quo is established and measures required to address any deviations, where applicable, are discussed and documented. The inspection concludes with a closing conversation in which the results of the inspection are addressed and measures required to address any deviations, where applicable, are summarized and a timescale is set in which these must be implemented.

In the case of grave deviations from the standards, bio.inspecta may take urgent measures (e.g. a ban on placing products on the market). Where the manager does not agree with certain individual conditions imposed, s/he may express his/her disagreement and this will be noted by the inspector in the inspection report. Following the conclusion of the inspection, the inspection report is signed by both the operator inspected and the inspector. The report together with the necessary documentation for the certification process are forwarded to the certifying body. The inspection and certification respectively of a product are thus never carried out by the same person. The deviations noted in the inspection report constitute proposals for the purposes of certification. Based on the deviations as noted, the certifying person sets out the sanctions in accordance with the Rules on Sanctions.

Samples for residue testing

bio.inspecta will take samples for residue testing in suspected cases. Sampling for residues, if necessary, is carried out based on a defined work protocol. Sampling must be documented in a sampling report (on paper with a carbon copy) which is signed by the inspector and the manager. A reference sample and the carbon copy of the sampling report must be handed over to the operator. If a sample tests positive, the operator is asked for a statement prior to a final assessment being made. If it is evident that the operator actively used prohibited or restricted substances the operator must bear the cost of the analysis and a ban on placing the product on the market will be imposed, or in cases of grave infringements the certificate may be withdrawn.

Types of inspections

Three types of inspections are carried out:

- Regular inspection: Annual complete inspection of an operation (producer, processor or other operator), carried out by the inspector.
- Spot check: Random* inspection or inspection due to suspected infringement as established by the inspector/certifier. This inspection may be limited to certain sections of production.
- Additional or partial inspection (subject to fees): The additional inspection, which attracts a fee, is an inspection carried out in accordance with the rules of the organic standards.

* The frequency of spot checks is based on an internal assessment system. Your operation will have been classified based on this system. These checks are used to determine whether the operator continues to meet the rules set out in the EU Organic Regulation 2018/848.

Certification

For certification purposes, all the information arising from the inspection process is checked and it is decided whether the measures taken are correct and have been complied with. Where there is evidence of serious infringements (e.g. the use of non-compliant ingredients or aids) an urgent decision on certification is taken. This decision may also be taken prior to the regular conclusion of the certification process.

In difficult cases the file is presented to the certification committee which consists of a minimum of three persons. If the operators' products are given approval, the certificate is issued and the certification process is concluded.

Appeals service

Operators may appeal negative certification decisions. An independent Swiss appeals service assesses the appeal and makes a final decision taking into account the relevant facts. This ensures that each certification decision is taken correctly.

For further information please see: www.bio-inspecta.ch

Notification system for non-compliant products

In case of suspected infringements or irregularities all necessary measures in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/848 Art. 27 must be taken.

bio.inspecta may demand that the product, where it contains a reference to organic production, may only be placed on the market, if on the basis of information supplied by the operator or based on information from another authoritative source it has ascertained that its initial doubt has been allayed (temporary ban on placing products on the market).

Products which do not meet the requirements of the EU organic standard may only be freely placed on the market if any reference to organic production is deleted from all labels, advertising and documents accompanying the product.

In cases of non-conformant products, bio.inspecta must notify in writing the customer, recipients of the products in question, inspection bodies, authorities in the Member States and, where relevant, also the EU Commission.

Termination of contractual relationship

The inspection contract must be terminated in writing. The termination letter is forwarded to the bio.inspecta AG head office and checked by the certifier and the Managing Director.

With his/her signature the Managing Director accepts the customer's termination of the contractual relationship. The Secretariat enters the relevant data into the e-Cert system.

A copy of the termination letter and the letter confirming the termination of the contractual relationship are uploaded to the electronic database. The customer file is archived.

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