**ORGANIC CERTIFICATION:**

It is a certification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products. In general, any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants. Requirements vary from country to country, and generally involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

•avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc) and genetically modified organisms;

•use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for a number of years (often, three or more);

•keeping detailed written production and sales records;

•maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products;

•undergoing periodic on-site inspections.

In order to certify a farm, the farmer is typically required to engage in a number of new activities, in addition to normal farming operations:

* **Study** the organic standards, which cover in specific detail what is and is not allowed for every aspect of farming, including storage, transport and sale.
* **Compliance**- farm facilities and production methods must comply with the standards, which may involve modifying facilities, sourcing and changing suppliers, etc.
* **Documentation**- extensive paperwork is required, detailing farm

history and current set-up, and usually including results of soil and water tests.

* **Planning**- a written annual production plan must be submitted, detailing everything from seed to sale: seed sources, field and crop locations, fertilization and pest control activities, harvest methods, storage locations, etc.
* **Inspection**- annual on-farm inspections are required, with a physical tour, examination of records, and an oral interview.
* **Fee**– A fee is to be paid by the grower to the certification body for annual surveillance and for facilitating a mark which is acceptable in the market as symbol of quality.
* **Record-keeping**- written, day-to-day farming and marketing records, covering all activities, must be available for inspection at any time. In addition, short-notice or surprise inspections can be made, and specific tests (e.g. soil, water, plant tissue) may be requested. For first-time farm certification, the soil must meet basic requirements of being free from use of prohibited substances (synthetic chemicals, etc) for a number of years. A conventional farm must adhere to organic standards for this period, often, three years. This is known as being in transition.

**Authorization of Inspection and certification agency:**

The National Accreditation Body (NAB) is responsible for giving approval on the authorization of an applicant Inspection and Certification Agency. Before approval, the NAB satisfies itself that the applicant Inspection and Certification Agency meets all the requirements necessary for authorization. On approval given by NAB, the APEDA issues a Certificate of Authorization, containing at least the following details:

(a) Certificate of Authorization Number;

(b) The name and address of the Inspection and Certification Agency;

(c) The nature of the activities covered;

(d) The date of issue and date of expiry;

**Inspection:-**

Standard inspection procedures shall be followed by the inspection and certification agencies. The inspector shall have access to all relevant facilities, including accounts and other documentation of the Licensed Operator. The policies and procedures for inspection shall be documented and shall include-

(a) The basis for assignment of inspectors.

(b) Instructions for inspection visits.

(c) Inspection methods and frequency

(d) Inspection requirements.

(e) Sampling requirements.

(f) Instructions for preparation of reports.

**Inspection Visit and Report:**

Sufficient information shall be made available to the inspectors about the Licensed Operator to allow proper preparation by the inspector. This includes, among others, earlier inspection findings, a description of activities/processes, maps/plans, product specifications, and used inputs, earlier irregularities, infringements, conditions and disciplinary measures. The visit and the questionnaires used during the inspection, and the reports emanating from the inspection, shall be comprehensive, covering all relevant aspects of the production standards and shall adequately validate the information provided. Authorized Inspection and Certification Agencies shall have access to any non-organic production unit, or units associated by ownership or management. Inspection, including document review, should include such units when there is sufficient reason for doing so, such as production of the same kind of products etc. Inspection reports and inspection shall, as far as possible, follow a specified protocol to facilitate a non-discriminatory and objective inspection procedure. Reports shall be designed to allow for elaboration and analysis by the inspector on areas where compliance might be partial, standards might not be clear etc. Inspection reports shall give adequate information on what was actually checked including:

(a) Date and time of inspection,

(b) Persons interviewed,

(c) Crops/products requested for certification,

(d) Fields and facilities visited,

(e) Documents reviewed,

(f) Inspector's observations,

(g) Evaluation of compliance to standards, and certification requirements.

**Inspection frequency:**

The Authorized Inspection and Certification Agencies shall have a written policy on inspection frequency and it shall include-

1. Inspection of Licensed Operators shall take place at least once annually.
2. A minimum number (percentage) of unannounced inspections to be carried out and the number shall be determined along with the basis for selection of the Licensed Operators to be subject to such inspections.
3. The manner in which the cost of "extra" inspection is to be borne.

**Internal Inspections:**

(a) At least two inspections (one in growing season of each crop) shall be carried out by the internal inspector and will be documented.

(b) The inspection will be carried out in presence of the member or his representative and must include a visit of the whole farm, storage of inputs, harvested products, post harvest handling and animal husbandry.

(c) The internal inspector will also verify if the internal standards have been followed and whether the conditions of the previous internal inspection have been fulfilled.

(d) The visit of the internal inspector will be documented in the farm inspection checklist duly signed by the inspector and counter-signed by the member or his representative.

(e) In case of severe non-compliance, the results will be reported immediately to the IQS manager and all measures will be taken according to the internal sanction procedures.

**External Inspections:**

The external Inspector will re-inspect some of the farms for the evaluation of the grower group for efficient internal control system for compliance with these Rules.

**CERTIFICATION PROCESS:** The certification policies and procedures shall be well documented and shall, include:

(a) All procedural steps in processing the application, until final certification.

(b) The certification status of all Licensed Operators and their production be indicated throughout the certification process.

(c) The Authorized Inspection and Certification agencies shall require the Licensed Operator to inform of any changes in production as modification to the products, the manufacturing process, extension of acreage etc. The Authorized Inspection and Certification agencies shall determine whether the announced changes require further investigations. In that case, the Licensed Operator shall not be allowed to release certified products resulting from such changes until the Authorized Inspection and Certification agencies have notified the Licensed Operator accordingly.

(d) The certification decisions be recorded and clearly communicated to the Licensed Operator.

(e) Where certification is denied, the reasons shall be clearly stated.

(f) The Authorized Inspection and Certification Agency shall be able to impose conditions and restrictions. Mechanisms for monitoring compliance with such conditions and restrictions shall be in place.

(g) When asked for by the Licensed Operator, relevant records are released to another Authorized Inspection and Certification Agency.

(h) Processing of inspection reports and certification decision shall be done in a timely manner.

(i) Processing of any issue related to violations shall be done with highest priority.