OCIA Certification Manual

EN-NQ-M-043, Rev. L

OCIA International, Inc.

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Introduction

OCIA is a non-profit, member-owned, organic certification agency. The OCIA International Headquarters is located in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. OCIA has offices in Canada, Mexico, Japan, Nicaragua, and Peru.

OCIA provides organic certification services to any applicant that has the ability to comply with any of OCIA's organic certification programs without discrimination. The applicants access to certification services is not contingent upon the size of the applicant's operation, membership in OCIA or any other organization, nor number of certifications the applicant has already been issued. OCIA may decline to accept an application if demonstrated reasons exist, such as the client participating in illegal activities, having a history of repeated non-compliances with certification/product requirements, or similar such issues.

Applicants new to OCIA can apply through our offices and website. All of OCIA's forms and documents necessary for certification and identified in this manual, are maintained on OCIA International's website, www.ocia.org, and are available for download under the "Search Resources" section of the website. An inquiry form on the 'Contact OCIA' section of OCIA's website, https://ocia.org/contact-us/ can also be submitted. If you do not have access to the internet or would prefer to receive the forms by mail, please contact the OCIA International Office at (402) 477-2323 and we will assist you.

1. Purpose

This document outlines important information about OCIA's certification services and processes for new and returning applicants.

2. OCIA Operational Authority

OCIA maintains the following organic accreditations:

- **National Organic Program (NOP)** – under the authority of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This applicable standard is the "USDA Organic Regulations". The "USDA Organic Regulation" is the governing regulations for organic products in the United States. The USDA/NOP has also entered into various equivalency arrangements with other countries allowing NOP certified products to be sold as 'organic' within that country, accepting it as equivalent to the countries own organic regulation. Selling products under these arrangements requires additional shipping documentation and attestation statements by the certifying body.
    - US-Canada Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - US-Japan Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - US-Taiwan Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - US-EU Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - US-Korea Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - US-Switzerland Organic Equivalency Arrangement

- **Canadian Organic Regime (COR)** – under the authority of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and IOAS. The applicable standards are the "Canada Organic Production System Standards" and the "Canada Organic Production System Permitted Substances List". The "Canada Organic Product System Standards" and the "Canada Organic Production System Permitted Substances List" are the governing regulations for organic products in Canada. Operations whom are granted COR certification may also be eligible to sell their COR certified product under the following equivalency arrangements:
    - US-Canada Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-EU Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-Swiss Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-Costa Rica Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-Japan Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-Taiwan Organic Equivalency Arrangement
    - Canada-Mexico Organic Equivalency Arrangement

- **Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS)** – under the authority of the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestries, and Fisheries (MAFF). The applicable standard is the "JAS Standard". The "JAS Standard" is the governing regulations for organic products in Japan.

- **Reglamento Técnico para Los Productos Orgánicos (RTPO) -** under the authority of El Servicio Nacional De Sanidad Agraria (SENASA). This regulation (DECRETO SUPREMO N0 002-2020-MINAGRI amending REGLAMENTO TÉCNICO PARA LOS PRODUCTOS ORGÁNICOS Conforme a Ley N° 29196, D.S N° 044-2006 Y D.S N°061-2006-AG) is required for Peru operations that wish to sell organic products domestically.

- **Recognized by Great Britain for UK Equivalency** - The applicable standard is the "Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries". The "Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries" is the regulations necessary for exporting organic products to the European Union. Since there are equivalency agreements in place, this is not available to operations in the U.S. or Canada.

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- **ISO/IEC 17065 with the scope of the European Union Equivalency Program** – under the authority of the IOAS. The applicable standard is the "Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries". The "Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries" is the regulations necessary for exporting organic products to the European Union. Since there are equivalency agreements in place, this is not available to operations in the U.S. or Canada.

- **ISO/IEC 17065 with the scope of the Ley de Productos Orgánicos (LPO)** – under the authority of the Mexico Servicio Nacional de Sanidad, Inocuidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASICA) and IOAS. The guideline ("Lineamientos"), regulations ("Regulamento"), and law ("Ley") make up the program

- Acuerdo de Equivalencia MX-Canadá

- **OCIA International Standards** – OCIA's private standard,the applicable standard is the "OCIA International Certification Standards".

OCIA is approved to offer OCIA Shade Grown, and Smithsonian Bird Friendly certification for coffee producers.

Standards on Website:

- OCIA International Certification Standards
- USDA Organic Regulations (NOP)
- Canada Organic Production System Standards
- Canada Organic Production System Permitted Substances List
- IACB Equivalent European Union Organic Production & Processing Standard for Third Countries (EU and UK)
- EU 2018/848 and related acts
- JAS Organic Agricultural Products Standards (Unofficial Translation)
- JAS Organic Feed Standards (Unofficial Translation)
- JAS Organic Livestock Standards (Unofficial Translation)
- JAS Organic Processed Foods Standards (Unofficial Translation)
- BIO SUISSE Standards – Prod. Proc., and Marketing of Produce from Org. Farm
- Reglamento de la Ley de Productos Orgánicos (LPO)
- Acuerdo por el que se dan a conocer los lineamientos para la operación orgánica de las actividades agropecuarias (LPO)
- Acuerdo por el que se da a conocer el distintivo nacional de los productos orgánicos y se establecen las reglas generales para su uso en el etiquetado de los productos certificados como orgánicos (LPO)
- Acuerdo por el que se modifica el artículo segundo transitorio del similar por el que se dan a conocer los lineamientos para la operación orgánica de las actividades agropecuarias, publicado el 29 de octubre de 2013. (LPO)
- REGLAMENTO TÉCNICO PARA LOS PRODUCTOS ORGÁNICOS (RTPO)

3. Certification System

OCIA's product certification system is based upon the process of application, inspection, review, and continual oversight to ensure compliance to the applicable organic program(s). OCIA-certified operators are inspected and evaluated by OCIA to determine compliance and identify any non-compliances or points of information.

The following scopes of organic certification are offered by OCIA*:

- Crops
- Livestock
- Processing
- Handling
- Wild Harvest
- Maple Syrup
- Garden/Greenhouse
- Mushroom/Sprout
- Apiaries
- Coffee (including Shade Grown)
- Community Grower Groups (CGG)

OCIA does not delegate authority to any outside bodies for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending, or revoking certification.

*Not all scopes are available for all programs. Please contact us for more information.

4. Transition Program

In order to sell a certified organic crop, the land on which it was grown must have been free of prohibited substances for 36 months prior to the harvest of the first organic crop. OCIA offers an optional transition program for crops only, which will verify the year of transition through an on-farm inspection and application review.

5. Certification Process & Inspections

OCIA offers organic certification services to multiple private and governmental organic certification programs. The documentation necessary for certification to each program are generally the same, but the individual requirements for certification vary from program to program. Please see the applicable standards for each program for specific certification requirements.

5.1 Application Process

Below are the six steps to certification.

- Research the organic regulations in your region.
- Call, click or write for an application and supporting documents.
- Submit the Operator Licensing Agreement (OLA), Organic System Plan (OSP), Certification Application, supporting documents, and nonrefundable certification fee and inspection estimate to the OCIA International office.
- Meet with the inspector that has been assigned to your farm. A copy of the inspection report will be sent to you after the certification decision has been made.
- A review of your file, complete with application and inspection report, will take place by an OCIA Certification Specialist to verify whether your operation is in compliance.
- A certification decision will be made and if compliant, a certificate will be sent. Review your certificate and the requirements of each organic program regarding the period of time the certificate is valid. Under the NOP and COR, your certificate will remain in effect until it is surrendered/voluntarily cancelled, suspended/unvoluntarily cancelled, or revoked. An annual update of forms and inspections are required in order to maintain your organic certifications.

5.2 Inspections

Organic certification is an inspection and documentation based system. Upon submission of an application/organic system plan, OCIA will conduct a pre-inspection review (PIR) to ensure all necessary documents have been received and to ensure that you are capable of complying with the applicable standards. If your operation is capable of complying, OCIA will assign an inspector to inspect your operation to ensure that your organic system plan is accurate to the management of your operation and to assess any potential threats to the organic integrity of your product.

Operators may contact their assigned Coordinator to refuse the choice of inspector. The following reasons are acceptable reasons for refusal of an inspector:

a) Perceived conflicts based upon previous communication with the inspector;

b) Previous inspections conducted by the inspector at the operation;

c) Fees charged by inspector relative to other inspectors operating in the region; or

d) Availability of the inspector.

All other reasons for refusal of an inspector will be evaluated by OCIA International on a case-by-case basis. If the operator refuses the choice of the inspector, OCIA will attempt to assign another inspector. If no other inspector is capable of completing the inspection (based upon qualifications, timing, or location) or if all other proposed inspectors are refused, OCIA will communicate with the operator to inform them that if they do not accept the inspector, they have the right to withdraw their request for certification/surrender their certification. If the operator does not accept the inspector or withdraw their request for certification/surrender their certification, OCIA will deny the application/begin the noncompliance process for failure to have an annual inspection.

- **Crop/Livestock Production:** The inspector will inspect your organic fields and may inspect your conventional fields as necessary. Additionally, the inspector will review your entire audit trail, including seed documentation, planting/harvesting dates, storage records, sales records, buffer disposition records, equipment cleaning records, livestock records/health records, and feeding documentation. The inspector will review your management records, such as accounting documents and complaint log.
- **Processing/Handling:** The inspector will inspect your entire processing plant, including all organic and conventional lines. Additionally, the inspector will review your entire audit trail, including purchase records, storage records, equipment cleaning records, pest control methods/records, and sales records. The inspector will review your management records, such as accounting documents and complaint log.

Upon completion of the inspection, OCIA will review the organic system plan, inspection report, and all supporting documentation. The review will be conducted by a qualified Certification Specialist. The Certification Specialist will determine if your operation is compliant with the applicable standards, will issue any necessary Notices of Noncompliance, and will identify issues that require further follow-up by the operator.

5.3 Inspection Policies

All OCIA inspections must occur at a time when the organic management practices can be observed. The inspection must occur during the following periods:

a) **Farm:** Prior to harvest when crops are in the field and at a time when management of the crops can be verified. For U.S. and Canadian operations, the deadline for new applicants is August 1. Exceptions may be allowed if the operation is in a region where management practices can be fully verified later in the year and crop is not harvested.

b) **Livestock:** For the initial livestock inspection, all livestock types requested for certification must be on the premises at the time of inspection. For re-inspection, the types of livestock requested for certification do not have to be on the premises at the time of inspection, but that type must have been inspected previously. Additionally, for the inspection of ruminant livestock, inspection must occur during the grazing season when access to pasture, pasture quality, and/or DMI from pasture may be observed and verified.

c) **Specialty Crops/Production:** When production of the specialty crop/product is occurring.

d) **Processor/Handler:** Should be during a time when organic product is being processed. The inspector must be able to verify that the applicant has the capability of meeting the organic standards.

e) **Broker/Trader:** The inspection can occur at any time as long as recent organic transaction records are available.

f) **Community Grower Group (CGG):** Before an OCIA inspection can occur, the CGG internal inspection must take place. CGG external inspections (OCIA) must occur prior to or during harvest when crops are in the field and at a time when management of the crops can be verified during inspections/audits (see OCIA Community Grower Group Inspection Guidelines).

g) Exceptions:

- Returning operators: The inspection may occur after harvest has occurred, as long as management practices can still be verified. For COR farms, the inspection must take place during the production season.
- New farm applicant: The inspection may occur after harvest has begun as long as "adequate" strips are left in all fields requested for certification for the inspector to view. Crop residue is not considered to be check strips, because inspectors must be able to verify that no prohibited substances were applied to the crops. Crop must be standing and representative of the field. A determination of whether "adequate" strips were left for the inspection is up to the inspector on sight and is not appealable. New operators growing perennial crops, such as hay, must be inspected prior to their first harvest. Any cuttings taken prior to inspection are not eligible for certification, but cuttings taken at and after inspection are eligible for certification.
- New processor/broker/warehouse (handler) applicants: During a time when organic processing/handling procedures can be carried out to demonstrate capability of meeting the organic standards.

h) NOP Reinstatement Inspections: For reinstatement inspections, the criteria for initial of new applicant inspections will apply if a period of 2 or more years has elapsed since the date of the last on-site inspection by a certifying agent.

i) COR Processing: Processing on-site inspections may be carried out any time during the year, except for operations engaged in parallel production. In such cases the inspection shall be carried out at a time when the products that are targeted for certification are being processed. The main process being certified must be occurring at the time of inspection. If it is not possible to conduct the inspection while organic product is being processed, OCIA shall record the reason(s) supporting this determination. OCIA shall then arrange for the inspection to be conducted at a time when the facilities and activities that demonstrate compliance or capacity to comply can be assessed. There shall be no more than two consecutive years without an inspection when organic product is being processed.

j) Move to new handling facilities: Certified handlers (including processing and repacking) that move to new facilities or buildings must have an inspection prior to marketing product that is processed at the new facility. The OSP and all applicable documents must first be provided to notify

OCIA of the changes. After a pre-inspection review, an inspection will take place, preferably when organic processing occurs. Products produced at the new location or building cannot be sold as organic until after updated certification documents are issued.

New applicants for certification will be inspected prior to the issuance of a certificate of compliance. Currently certified operations will be inspected at least annually based upon the date of their most recent annual inspection. Additionally, operations may be required to have additional inspections throughout the year, either announced or unannounced. OCIA will pay for any additional inspections outside of the annual inspection unless it is discovered that the operation has a major non-compliance for any of their certification programs or the additional inspection is announced and required to verify noncompliances have been resolved. The operation will then be required to cover the costs of the additional inspection.

OCIA reserves the right to take soil, tissue and/or product samples for analytical testing in combination with an on-site inspection of the operation. Such testing under the NOP program will be at the expense of OCIA International.

Operations that experience a change in ownership or request to add new fields or facilities to their organic operations outside of the annual organic inspection cycle will be required to have a partial or full re-inspection and evaluation at the expense of the operator. The re-inspection and evaluation must occur prior to any organic production or processing occurring. Exceptions will be granted on a case-by-case basis by OCIA.

All OCIA inspectors are centrally approved, managed, and evaluated by OCIA. OCIA does not subcontract the certification decision to another entity.

6. Fees

OCIA is a non-profit organization. All of OCIA's financial support comes from fees associated with the organic certification process. OCIA does not manufacture products or provide other services outside of the certification process. For OCIA's current fee structure, please refer to the OCIA Fee Schedule.

The Fee Schedule outlines certifying as either a Chapter Member or a Direct Associate. If you chose to certify as a Chapter Member, then it is required to join an OCIA chapter and send chapter dues directly to that chapter. Chapter dues pay for chapter meetings, on-farm tours, and field days. Please visit our website for a complete list of chapters: https://ocia.org/about-ocia/find-an-ocia-chapter/.

Certification fees and inspection estimates are due at the time of application. Please contact a Regional Office for assistance in determining fees.

7. Rights and Duties of Applicants

Each OCIA-certified operator has defined rights and duties with OCIA. The legal representative of each operation is required to sign the OCIA Operator Licensing Agreement (OLA) when applying for certification. The OLA specifies the rights and duties of the operator as well as the rights and duties of OCIA.

Only operations that have submitted an application, been inspected, reviewed, and approved by OCIA may use the OCIA name or logo on their certified organic products or advertisements. Certified operations may only make reference to certification for programs for which they have been approved.

When an operation loses their certification or surrenders it, products and crops are no longer "organic." Any crop in the field or in storage is no longer certified and must be sold as non-organic. If an operation is retiring from farming and has crop in storage, the operation would need to maintain certification to sell any remaining crop.

8. Complaints, Appeals, and Disputes

Each certified operation has the right to appeal any certification decision, noncompliance, or requirement issued by OCIA or appeal any decision based upon the finding of a complaint filed against your operation. Appeals of certification decisions, noncompliances, or requirements vary between programs:

- **National Organic Program:** Operators may appeal a notice of noncompliance and/or minor noncompliance to OCIA. Mediation requests or appeals of certification decisions, notices of proposed suspension, or notices of proposed revocation must be made directly to the National Organic Program administrator.
- **Canadian Organic Program:** Operators may appeal a certification decision and/or a notice of noncompliance and/or minor noncompliance to OCIA. Operators may request mediation to OCIA for a Notice of Proposed Cancellation or appeal to the OCIA Internal Review Committee.
- **OCIA, LPO, or EU Program:** Operations may appeal a certification decision, notice of noncompliance, or minor noncompliance to OCIA. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the operation has the right to appeal to the OCIA Internal Review Committee.

- **JAS:** All appeals for certification decisions, notices of noncompliance, or requirements must be made to the Japan Regional Office.
- **Bio-Suisse:** OCIA facilitates the certification of this program, but the final decision is rendered by Bio-Suisse. All appeals to certification decisions must be directed to Bio-Suisse according to the Bio-Suisse appeals process.

For COR, OCIA, LPO and EU Programs, appeals must be made in writing to the applicable OCIA Regional Office within 30 days from the date of the letter of certification decision. Review of appeals made after 30 days will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Any appellant who wishes to remain anonymous must request confidentiality and justify the need for this status to the Internal Review Committee. Otherwise, the name of the appellant shall not be confidential. If confidentiality is denied, the appellant may withdraw the appeal.

The appellant, except in an expedited appeal, must sign and date a written statement that contains the following information:

- Which decision or action is being appealed, listing each noncompliance, condition, or reason for denial;
- The reason(s) for the appeal, including any allegations that the decision or action was not proper or made in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, or procedures;
- Any evidence that supports the appellant's position, including, without limitation, any evidence that demonstrates compliance or that any non-compliance has been corrected; and
- Agreement to pay appeal costs in the event that the appeal is unsuccessful.

When an appeal is accepted for review, the IRC liaison shall notify the appellant and any accused party in writing via a delivery method that requires a dated receipt. If the appeal is rejected, the IRC liaison shall notify the appellant in writing and inform the appellant that they may request a hearing. Requests for hearings must be postmarked within 30 days of notification of rejection.

If the appellant requests a hearing, the IRC chairperson, shall schedule a hearing as soon as reasonably possible after the collection of information regarding the case is complete and the committee members have had sufficient opportunity to review the information.

If the appellant does not request a hearing, the IRC chairperson, in consultation with the IRC liaison, shall schedule a meeting to consider the case as soon as reasonably possible after the collection of information is complete.

The IRC shall determine if more information is required for review and, if so, shall seek relevant information from other sources, including, without limitation, documentation from OCIA or other bodies and statements and/or other information from the appellant, the accused, and third parties.

After deliberation, the IRC, by majority vote, shall reach a decision regarding the appeal. The IRC may:

- Recommend or provide mediation between the parties;
- Recommend that the Board of Directors levy fines or reimbursements;
- Uphold the action and impose or modify noncompliances, including remedial actions;
- Overturn the action and impose or modify noncompliances, including remedial action; or
- Recommend any other lawful action not prohibited under the OCIA International Bylaws or Standards.

The IRC liaison shall prepare a written summary of each decision. This written summary shall be maintained in the appellant's file.

All parties involved shall be notified of the decision of the IRC in writing via a delivery method that requires a dated receipt.

For the COR Program, upon completion of the appeal decision by the IRC, the operation may not appeal the final decision of the IRC. The operation may choose to file a complaint about OCIA to the IOAS.

8.1 Mediation (NOP)

An applicant for certification for NOP who has received a Notice of Denial of Certification or a certified operation that has received a Notice of Proposed Suspension or Revocation of Certification may, within 30 days of the receipt of the letter containing the notice, request mediation by submitting a request in writing to the applicable OCIA Regional Office.

The Executive Director or designee shall determine whether mediation would be expedient in that case.

Examples of cases in which mediation may be accepted may include:

- Cases of noncompliance that involve minor and resolvable recordkeeping;
- Cases in which a settlement agreement could be presented to the operator;

- Cases that involve payment of fees.
- Cases where the violation is correctable

Examples of cases in which mediation may be rejected may include:

- Cases that involve an argument or dispute over the validity of the Noncompliance(s) involved;
- Cases that involve willful violations of the regulations.
- Cases where any party refuses to participate in the mediation process in good faith.
- Cases where the operator has already been issued prior settlement agreements for same or similar issues.
- Cases where the proposed notice was issued for a repeated noncompliance over multiple years and where corrective actions haven't been implemented or haven't been sufficient to resolve the noncompliance.

For cases where mediation is accepted, OCIA will default to pursuing informal mediation.

An operator may request formal mediation initially or requests formal mediation at any time during the informal process.

OCIA will not offer an operation more than two settlement agreements for the same or similar issues. If mediation is requested after a second settlement agreement has already been issued for the same or very similar issues, it will be denied. If the request for mediation is rejected, the Executive Director or designee will notify the requester by letter that mediation will not be accepted by OCIA International but that an appeal of the certification decision may be filed in writing with the Administrator within 30 days of the date of the notice.

OCIA may also choose to offer the operation a settlement agreement upon acceptance of the mediation request where appropriate. Settlement agreements may be used as an informal form of mediation where all terms of the agreement must comply with USDA organic regulations and be mutually agreed upon. Settlement agreements will include:

- The Actor(s);
- The activities to be carried out;
- The outcome; and
- The timeframe for implementation, completion and/or duration.
- The due dates for the terms of the agreement; the terms cannot continue indefinitely.

Settlement Agreements must also contain clauses for consequences in failure to abide by and uphold the enacted agreement, effective dates for the agreement, and signatures of the authorized parties involved.

Examples of possible terms for a settlement agreement may include:

- Additional inspections;
- Testing at the operator's expense;
- Specific documentation and submission requirements.

For operations in California, the settlement agreement must be sent to CDFA for review and approval prior to being offered to the operator.

The costs of mediation shall be paid by the applicant or certified operation that requests mediation. Mediation will be considered unsuccessful if the operator is unwilling to pay or does not pay the expenses. For informal mediation, the operator must at least return the mediation fee for mediation to continue. For formal mediation, the agreement to pay all fees (i.e. completing and returning the Notice of (Formal) Mediation Acceptance) must occur for mediation to continue.

The mediation session will be held according to terms agreed to by the parties. The parties shall have no more than 30 days to reach an agreement following a mediation session.

If mediation is successful, a copy of the settlement agreement will be sent to the Administrator to document the resolution of the adverse action.

If mediation is unsuccessful, the application for certification or certified operation shall have 30 days from termination of mediation to appeal the certification decision to the Administrator.

8.2 Complaints

Complaints may be received from any OCIA operator, Board member, committee member, staff member, inspector or other person contracted by OCIA. Complaints from others not affiliated with OCIA may be accepted if they are not in litigation.

Any contestant who wishes to remain anonymous must request confidentiality and justify the need for this status to the Executive Director. Otherwise, the name of the contestant shall not be confidential. If confidentiality is denied, the contestant may withdraw the complaint.

Complaints should be lodged in writing within 90 days of the date the facts giving rise to the complaint became known to the contestant.

The contestant should sign and date a written statement that contains the following information:

- The name and mailing address of the person or entity accused (operator);
- The Bylaw, Standard, governmental law, regulation, or licensing agreement provision allegedly violated;
- When and in what manner the Bylaw, Standard, governmental law, regulation, or licensing agreement provision was allegedly violated;
- On what date the facts became know to the contestant;
- In what manner the action has the potential to cause harm to OCIA, an OCIA certified operator, or the organic industry in general;
- What evidence supports the alleged violation; and
- What action is requested to correct the alleged violation.

The contestant may contact OCIA for assistance in submitting this information in written form.

Oral complaints may be received at the discretion of the Executive Director or designee. Oral information that is supplied must be verified by written documentation or compelling oral testimony from an independent resource that clearly demonstrates the basis for the complaint. Complaints will not be reviewed when they cannot be verified using objective information.

The complaint shall be reviewed to ascertain whether the following requirements are met:

- The complaint must comply with the bulleted points above; and
- The complaint must have merit.

If the requirements are met, the complaint shall be accepted for review. If the requirements are not met, the complaint shall be rejected and the contestant notified in writing in a method requiring a dated return receipt or delivery confirmation. The contestant may revise the complaint, or provide additional information and resubmit it.

The contestant and the operator will be sent notice that the complaint has been accepted for review. This notice will be sent via a delivery method that requires a dated return receipt or delivery confirmation.

- Notice shall include all information noted above.
- A copy of this procedure shall accompany the notice.
- The letter of notice shall request that the operator send a response to the allegations within 15 days of notification.

The review shall include the request for relevant information from the operator(s) including but not limited to, information that rebuts any non-compliance or information that any non-compliance has been corrected. Relevant information may also be sought from other sources, including, but not limited to, documentation from the OCIA International Office, statements and/or other information from third parties, and additional information from the contestant.

Complaints received that involve alleged application of prohibited materials or practices, fraud and/or willful neglect of the organic integrity and regulations should be handled with urgency where possible.

After review, lawful action may be taken to resolve the complaint. Such lawful action may include, but is not limited to, recommending or providing mediation and recommending remedial action. Complaints will be resolved in a timely and efficient manner.

All parties shall be given a written summary of the final settlement of the complaint via a method requiring a dated return receipt or delivery confirmation. Where complaints involve confidential information, complainants will be advised if their complaint was founded, unfounded, or partially founded. If an unsatisfied contestant wants to appeal a decision and requests that the complaint be forwarded to the IRC, the IRC shall be given information regarding the initial review of the case as required by this procedure.

In investigations of certified operators, the Executive Director or designee will notify the applicable accreditor(s) of all compliance proceedings and actions taken by OCIA

9. Transaction Certificates

A transaction certificate (TC) is a document issued by OCIA for auditing purposes to verify the origin. It is an optional document offered by OCIA as a service to operators. When export documents are requested by operations, a TC is issued as part of issuing the export document.

TCs will not be issued for operations after a major noncompliance or other adverse action is issued . OCIA's full Transaction Certificate Policy is available online under Resources.

10. Directory of Certified Operators and Products

Operator lists of OCIA certified operations to COR, EU, and LPO are available from the OCIA website: www.ocia.org/organic-product-search. Operator lists of OCIA certified operations to the NOP are available from the USDA's Organic Integrity Database website: https://organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity.

11. Additional Resources

- OCIA chapters were formed by members to conduct chapter meetings, field days and workshops that provide regionalized educational opportunities to organic farmers.
- OCIA members formed OCIA Research & Education (R&E) to provide scholarships and micro grants that support organic research. OCIA R&E also offers a valuable mentorship program to potential members.
- OCIA attends several trade shows each year as exhibitors and presenters (listed on the OCIA website) to provide face-to-face information to organic farmers.
- OCIA Certification Specialists are available to speak with if you have a specific question about what's allowed or not allowed in organic farming.
- OCIA posts announcements and videos on Facebook, YouTube, and online forums. So be sure to 'like' us on social media.

12. Addendum

Application forms, logo/seal guidance, and other documents are available from the OCIA website via Resources and Forms and Organic Resources when certifying with OCIA. You can also request the forms and documents from the appropriate Regional Office or by completing an Inquiry Form on the 'Get Certified' section of OCIA's website: http://www.ocia.org/get-certified/inquiry-form.