



Industry Advice Notice

Title: Organic Produce Certificates		Number: 2013/04
Date issued: 29 October 2013	Date of Expiry: Until Further Notice	
Distributed to: Approved Certifying Organisations	Last Notice in the category: Nil	
Instruction issued under Export Control (Organic Produce Certification) Orders		Contact details: NPGExports@daff.gov.au

PURPOSE

1. To advise of a new format for organic produce certificates.

BACKGROUND

2. The Department of Agriculture is the central competent authority for the export of prescribed goods, including products labelled as organic or biodynamic.
3. The legal instrument for exporting certified products is the Export Control (Organic Produce Certification) Orders. The basis under which exports of these goods can occur is the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce or importing country requirements.
4. Organic produce certificates reassure importing countries about certified product and labelling integrity.
5. Australia has third country equivalency recognition with Japan, Taiwan, Europe and Switzerland.

CONSIDERATION

6. Following a 1999 review of Australia's organic export certification system, the European Commission recommended that export certification be strengthened:
 - o organic produce certificates were subsequently printed and distributed; and
 - o costs associated with printing and distribution are attributed to the organic program.
7. The physical transfer of organic produce certificates has resulted in issues for some clients and some approved certifying organisations. Such issues include the length of time taken to receive posted certificates, incorrect information requiring the re-issue of new organic produce certificates.
8. Approved certifying organisations were advised that the European Commission was to introduce new Regulations and Certificate of Inspection commencing 1 January 2014.



OUTCOMES

9. The department has now re-developed and partially secured our organic produce certificates. These certificates can now be transferred via e-mail.
10. The department must receive and maintain records relating to organic produce certificates and exports.
11. To allow for a transition from manual organic produce certificates to these MS Word versions, the department will maintain a stock of printed organic produce certificates for up to 3 months after 1 January 2014. Thereafter this stage will be phased out providing there are no lingering issues.

ISSUES

12. Organic produce certificates must not contain an electronic signature of any operator or approved certifying organisation unless it has been agreed by an importing country authority.
13. Approved certifying organisations must develop a code/cipher system for uniquely identifying each organic produce certificate. This system must not mirror any codes/ciphers of other approved certifying organisations.
14. Approved certifying organisations must take effective measures to maintain and control organic produce certificates otherwise this function will be removed by the department.

ACTION

Approved certifying organisations should immediately:

15. document and implement a system for the issue and reconciliation for organic produce certificates and notify operators; and
16. document and implement a system for providing monthly reports to the Department of Agriculture via e-mail. The end-of-month report format must detail each organic produce certificate including exporter and importer details, country of destination, type and quantity of goods exported, consignment departure and arrival dates and the date on which the certificate was signed and the stamp of the approved certifying organisation applied. The format for these monthly reports must be in MS Excel or MS Word, or other program capable of being converted to one of these software programs; and
17. ensure all organic produce certificates (paper form) are either recalled and returned to the Department of Agriculture (ASAP) or used within the next 2 months (starting 1 January 2014); and
18. notify the Department of Agriculture of any issues arising from this change to organic produce certificates.