Instruction
Accreditation Policies and Procedures

1. Purpose and Scope

This instruction provides general policies and procedures for organizations seeking accreditation to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) organic regulations, which are administered by the National Organic Program (NOP). Organizations that are accredited are called accredited certifying agents, or certifiers. The NOP Accreditation and International Activities Division applies policies and procedures to determine and maintain certifier accreditation. This instruction applies to U.S. and foreign organizations who wish to obtain, maintain, or renew accreditation to the USDA organic regulations.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 AMS Administrator

The AMS Administrator is responsible for executing the USDA organic regulations and making final appeals decisions affecting certifiers and certified operations located in States without established State Organic Programs.

2.2 NOP Deputy Administrator

The NOP Deputy Administrator is responsible for accrediting and assessing certifiers, providing guidance and training to certifiers, and reinstating suspended accreditations. The NOP Deputy Administrator may assign specific tasks related to these activities to qualified NOP personnel, but retains final responsibility for their proper execution.

2.3 Accreditation and International Activities (AIA) Division

The AIA Division is responsible for administering the NOP's accreditation activities. These activities include, but are not limited to:

a. Determining, planning and managing audits of certifiers and applicants for accreditation;
b. Directing Accreditation Committee activities pursuant to "NOP 2012 Accreditation Committee Instruction";
c. Recommending accreditation, suspension, or revocation of certifiers to the NOP Deputy Administrator;
d. Notifying applicants for certification of accreditation decisions; and
e. Making publicly available all certifiers' current accreditation statuses.

The AIA Division Director may delegate specific tasks related to these activities to qualified NOP personnel, other AMS Programs, or qualified State or private organizations, but retains final responsibility for their proper execution.

2.4 Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee reviews new and renewal accreditation applications and prepares recommendations to the NOP Deputy Administrator for final accreditation decisions.

The Accreditation Committee is comprised of NOP personnel who have experience with applying the USDA organic regulations, agricultural production and processing practices, and/or evaluating audit-based certification programs. Members of the committee are seated based on their availability and the need for specific areas of expertise.

2.5 Auditors

Auditors conduct accreditation audits under the direction of the AIA Division. Auditor responsibilities include:

a. Planning, conducting and reporting the results of pre-onsite quality manual audits (desk audits);
b. Planning, conducting and reporting the results of pre-decisional, mid-term, and renewal audits, and notifying applicants for accreditation in advance of the names of the audit team members, to allow any certifier to object to the appointment of any team member;
c. Providing audit estimates and collecting published hourly user fees and travel expenses for accreditation-related services provided by the NOP; and
d. Other duties as determined appropriate by the AIA Division.

2.6 Certifiers

Certifiers are responsible for:

a. Meeting the applicable requirements of the USDA organic regulations;
b. Providing access to information, documents, and records as necessary for the audit and maintenance of accreditation;
c. Providing access to documents that provide insight into a certifier's level of independence and impartiality from its related bodies, where applicable;
d. Arranging witness audits and operational visits of certified operations as requested by the NOP or authorized auditors; and
e. Attending required NOP training.

3. Accreditation Process

This section outlines the accreditation procedures for applicants for accreditation and certifiers that certify organic operations pursuant to the USDA organic regulations.

3.1 Eligibility

Accreditation services are available regardless of the number of certifications to be issued by an applicant for accreditation. Accreditation is not conditioned on the number of certifications issued, agency size, or membership in any association.

a. Nondiscrimination

USDA prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, limited English proficiency, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 260-1026 or (800) 877-8339 (local or Federal relay). USDA is an equal opportunity service provider and employer.

b. Travel restrictions

NOP accreditation is not available to certifiers that are based only in or conduct key activities in areas where the U.S. Department of State has issued travel warnings, travel alerts, or other restrictions that could affect the health, safety, or security of Federal employees. Applicants for accreditation that are affected by such warnings, alerts, or restrictions will be denied consideration and have their applications and fees returned.

If an audit of a certifier cannot be conducted as required by the regulations due to U.S. Department of State travel warnings, travel alerts, or other restrictions, the NOP may suspend the certifier's accreditation until conditions change and/or restrictions are lifted. The NOP will explore alternative methods for conducting audits but if no viable alternatives exist, accreditation will be suspended.

c. Accreditation Audit Cycle of Certifiers

Table 1 below illustrates the type and frequency of AIA Division accreditation audits during the five-year accreditation cycle. Actual timeframes during which the audits occur may differ based on the certifier's previous audit. Renewal audits are conducted as close as possible to the five-year accreditation anniversary date.

Table 1 – Audit Cycle

Application Stage		Initial 5-Year Cycle	Subsequent 5-Year Cycles
0-3 months: Documentation adequacy review	3-9 months: Pre-decisional audit	0-24 months: Initial audit	24-36 months: Mid-term audit
		54–72 months: Renewal audit	54–72 months: Renewal audit

4. Accreditation Applications

Initial accreditation applicants and certifiers seeking accreditation renewal must submit an application package to the AIA Division according to procedures described below.

4.1 Application Package

The application package must be submitted in English. It must include two identical copies—one printed, and one electronic. The application package must include:

a. All supporting documents and procedures required by 7 C.F.R. §§ 205.503-505[1], and fees required by 7 C.F.R. § 205.640.
b. An original signed copy of TM-10CG Application for Accreditation.
c. An original signed copy of LS-313 Application for Service.
d. A $500 application fee in the form of a check or money order made payable to "AMS." Contact the NOP for submission of electronic payments.

Submit the application package to:

USDA, AMS, National Organic Program
Accreditation and International Activities Division
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2648-South
Washington, DC 20250
Phone: (202) 720-3252
Email: AIAInBox@usda.gov

4.2 Renewal Application

Certifiers must renew their accreditation or surrender their certificate of accreditation pursuant to § 205.510 of the regulations. Certifiers must apply to renew their accreditations one year to six months prior to the anniversary date of their accreditation period, or risk a lapse in their accreditation.

[1] Section 205.503(e) includes countries where operations are certified through cooperative agreements and inspections are contracted with other certifiers.

4.3 Processing Applications

The AIA Division initially reviews all applications to determine whether all the required information was submitted, and whether the applicant is affected by any of the travel restrictions described in Section 3.1 above. The NOP will notify the applicant whether the application is accepted or denied. If it is accepted, it will be referred to auditors to conduct a quality manual audit review.

4.4 Accepted Applications

The objective of the documentation adequacy review is to evaluate the applicant or certifier's documented quality manual's compliance with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA), the USDA organic regulations, the NOP Program Handbook, and any other identified requirements. The review is conducted before the onsite audit. Its scope is based on the scope of each audit.

The documentation adequacy review for an initial application is conducted as follows:

a. The AIA Division Director selects and assigns auditors to conduct the review. The auditors may request additional information from the applicant. The applicant must respond to an auditor's request for additional information within the designated timeframe. All auditors' requests must be adequately addressed for the applicant to be further considered for accreditation.
    i. If the applicant does not respond, or submits inadequate information, the auditor will notify the AIA Division Director that they are unable to complete the review due to insufficient information. The AIA Division will then send the applicant a Notice of Denial of Accreditation citing 7 C.F.R. § 205.502 as the reason, and stating that the review has been discontinued due to insufficient or inadequate information.
    ii. The auditor will complete the review and submit a report to AIA within 90 days of receipt of the application package.
    iii. The AIA Division will review the report for content and clarity, and will contact the auditor for clarifications if necessary. Based on the results of the review, a pre-decisional onsite audit will be scheduled or denial of accreditation will be issued.
b. Auditors must report findings in the appropriate sections of the "NOP 2005 NOP Accreditation Assessment Checklist".

5. Accreditation Audits

5.1 Pre-decisional Audit

a. A pre-decisional audit is conducted of the within six months of completion of the quality manual audit review to determine if the applicant is capable of complying with OFPA and the USDA organic regulations.

b. The audit team reviews key activities, conducts witness inspections, and reviews certification files.
c. This audit is conducted in accordance with the procedures described in this instruction.

Accreditation may be granted as a result of the pre-decisional audit. If granted, AMS will issue the accreditation certificate at this time.

5.2 Initial Audit

a. After accreditation is granted, an initial audit is conducted to determine if the certifier is complying with the audit criteria and has the competence required by the audit criteria scope. The initial audit also verifies the implementation and effectiveness of any corrective actions. It includes a review of the certifier's key activities, witness audits, and certification file reviews.
b. The initial audit is conducted within two years of the date of accreditation during the initial five-year accreditation cycle (see Table 1).

5.3 Mid-term Audit

a. At the mid-term audit, the audit team reviews the certifier's key activities, verifies the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions, conducts witness inspections and/or review auditsand reviews certification files, and conducts any other activity as directed by the AIA Division.
b. A mid-term audit is normally conducted between 24 and 36 months from the date of accreditation or accreditation renewal.
c. This audit is conducted in accordance with the procedures described in this instruction.

5.4 Renewal Audit

a. The renewal audit is conducted to determine if the certifier is complying with the regulations, to verify the implementation and effectiveness of any corrective actions taken, and to determine whether the certifier has maintained the competence required by the regulations.
b. The renewal audit is conducted between 6 months before and 12 months after the anniversary date of the certifier's accreditation.
c. This audit is conducted in accordance with the procedures described in this instruction.

5.5 Audit Planning Guide

The Audit Planning Guide in Table 2, below, may be used as a tool to estimate the number of days to complete an audit. The presence of additional auditors may decrease the audit time.

Table 2 – Audit Planning Guide

Standard Duration (days)				**Total**
Pre-Onsite	1			
Onsite	2			
Witness inspection and/or review audits	1			
Time Increase Factors				
Number of countries with certified operations	1	additional countries		
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day per country		
Number of certified operations	< 100	100-1000	> 1000	
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day	+ 2 days	
			TOTAL DAYS	
Number of auditors	1	1 -2	2	

Example
ACA has:

- 4 countries where certified operations are located
- 1,500 operations

Audit Planning Guide- Example

Standard Duration (days)				**Total**
Pre-Onsite	1			1
Onsite	2			2
Witness inspection and/or review audits	1			1
Time Increase Factors				
Number of countries with certified operations	1	additional countries		4
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day per country		
Number of certified operations	< 100	100-1000	**> 1000**	2
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day	**+ 2 days**	
			TOTAL DAYS	**10**

Example
ACA has:

- One country where certified operations are located
- 75 operations

Audit Planning Guide- Example

Standard Duration (days)				Total
Pre-Onsite	1			1
Onsite	2			2
Witness inspection and/or review audits	1			1
Time Increase Factors				
Number of countries with certified operations	1	additional countries		0
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day per country		
Number of certified operations	< 100	100-1000	> **1000**	0
	+ 0 days	+ 1 day	**+ 2 days**	
			TOTAL DAYS	**4**

6. Onsite Audits

The objective of the onsite audit is to verify that the certifier has sufficient expertise in organic production and handling, and has the ability to comply with the USDA organic regulations. The audit team assesses a combination of office locations/sites with key activities and certification files, and conducts witness inspections or operational visits to make this determination.

6.1 Pre-onsite review

Planning and preparing for the onsite audit can improve the efficiency of the audit. Numerous items can be reviewed prior to the onsite audit, including:

a. Quality Manual;
b. Policy and Procedure Manual;
c. Previous audit report; and
d. Certification files (at least one file should be selected onsite).

6.2 Onsite Audit Process

Onsite audits include activities described in 7 C.F.R. § 205.508. The audit team consists of a lead auditor and may include additional auditors or technical experts as determined by the scope of the audit. Employees and technical experts who have provided consultancy services or were employed by the certifier within two years of the audit may not participate in the audit.

Onsite audits are conducted in accordance with clause 6 of "ISO/IEC 19011: 2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems," clause 7 of "ISO/IEC 17011: 2004 Conformity assessment—General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies," these accreditation policies and procedures, and other applicable documents.

6.3 Onsite Review

If the certifier operates satellite offices in addition to its main office, then all of its offices are assessed to ensure that sufficient objective information is collected to verify that the certifier's program quality manual system and NOP certification requirements are effectively implemented and requirements are met.

a. The audit team assesses the certifier at the location(s) where it performs key activities. Key activities include, but are not limited to:
    i. Policy formulation;
    ii. Process and/or procedural development;
    iii. Contract review;
    iv. Application review;
    v. Inspection planning;
    vi. Review, approval, and decision-making on the results of inspections;
    vii. Adverse action decisions;
    viii. Material, ingredient, and input review, approval and decision-making; and
    ix. Label review, approval, and decision-making.

b. Pre-decisional Audits
    i. The audit team visits all offices where key activities under the scope of the accreditation are performed.

c. Mid-term and Renewal Audits
    i. The audit team visits the certifier's main office during each onsite audit.
    ii. The audit team also selects other offices to visit based on the certifier's total number of offices.
    iii. All of the certifier's offices are assessed during the five-year accreditation cycle.

7. Witness Inspections and Review Audits

Witness inspections and review audits are typically part of a larger onsite audit of the certifier. These can also be conducted independently of onsite accreditation audits. Examples include inspections to support complaint investigations, corrective action verifications, or those directed by the AIA Division Director.

Witness inspections and review audits are selected based on the number of certified operations per scope and the geographical areas of operation. For certifiers with satellite offices, a witness inspection or a review audit will ultimately be conducted at each office. For certifiers with broad geographic reach, audits will be conducted at representative sites across that area.

7.1 Witness Inspections

Witness inspections assess the performance of the certifier and the inspector(s) in verifying an operation's compliance with the regulations, and determine whether the operation's Organic System Plan (OSP) accurately reflects its practices. Specifically, a witness inspection ascertains whether the inspector(s) conducted the activities required by 7 C.F.R. §§ 205.403(c)-(e).

a. A witness inspection of an operation must be an actual inspection, not a demonstration.
b. One operation may be selected to witness audit multiple scopes of accreditation.
c. If a certifier certifies grower groups, at least one grower group must be selected for a witness inspection.
d. A representative of the operation must be present at all times during the witness inspection.
e. In addition to practices and procedures, the audit team should assess whether the inspector reviewed the operation's corrective actions for any previously cited noncompliances.
f. Except for brief introductions, the audit team should refrain from asking questions or making comments during a witness inspection. Questions or comments from the operation are to be directed toward the inspector or certifier's representative.
g. The audit team may choose to leave a witness inspection before the inspection is complete if sufficient information has been collected.
h. The audit team must complete the "NOP 2005-4 Witness Inspection Checklist," when conducting a witness inspection.

7.2 Review Audits

Review audits assess a certifier's ability to fully comply with and implement an NOP certification program, assess the certifier's oversight of the operation, and determine whether the operation's compliance with the regulations observed during the review audit matches the findings in the inspection report.

a. A review audit is not a witness inspection. Rather, it is a broadly-scoped visit by the NOP audit team with the operator to assess the certifier's certification and oversight of the operation.
b. Auditors lead the review audit, conducting interviews with the operation's representatives and other relevant persons.
c. Auditors should conduct a brief introductory meeting describing the purpose of the review audit, and a brief exit meeting with the operator to thank them for their participation. Auditors are to conduct a separate exit interview with the certifier to discuss the auditors' findings.
d. Auditors may use the review audit to investigate issues identified during the pre-onsite review or the onsite audit.
e. The audit team may interview the operation's personnel to ask about the certifier's oversight activities.

f. When possible, auditors should assess whether the operation has implemented corrective actions for noncompliances identified by the certifier, and how the certifier oversees the corrective action process.
g. Auditors can follow up with the certifier to clarify review audit events.
h. The audit team must complete the "NOP 2005-6 Audit Checklist – Review Audit" when conducting a review audit.

8. Certification File Review

The audit team conducts full and partial certification file reviews, the process for which should be started before the onsite audit. All of the following items will be reviewed for full file reviews; for partial reviews, the audit team will determine which item(s) to review based on findings identified during the audit:

a. File documentation (e.g., signed contracts, updated OSPs, inspection reports, decision sheets, label approvals, copies of certificates, and other correspondence) is complete and up to date;
b. Reports include sufficient information needed to make a certification decision, and decisions made by the certifier are appropriate with the evaluation of the certified operations' OSPs, as applicable, and inspection reports;
c. The certifier has monitored the implementation of all necessary corrective actions that it requested from each certified operation; and
d. The certifier is operating in accordance with relevant audit criteria, such as using appropriate personnel in the certification process, label compliance, handling of adverse actions, etc.

8.1 Certification File Review Requirements

a. Pre-decisional Audit Certification File Review

Certification files are selected for the purpose of verifying the applicant's ability to comply with its quality manual procedures, as required by §§ 205.503 and 205.504 of the regulations.

b. Initial or Renewal Audit Certification File Review

The audit team selects certification files for review based on:

i. The scopes of certification conducted by the certifier;
ii. The geographic area(s) where the certifier certifies operations;
iii. Files the AIA Division Director requests for review; and
iv. A number of files, based on the number of certified operations, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 – Initial or Renewal Audit Certification File Review

Number of certified operations	Number of files to be reviewed
100 or less	Between 7 and 10, 6 of which must be full reviews
101 - 240	11 or 12, 10 of which must be full reviews
241 - 400	Between 13 and 15, 10 of which must be full reviews
401 - 1000	Between 16 and 20, 10 of which must be full reviews
More than 1000	Between 21 and 25, 10 of which must be full reviews

c. Mid-Term Audit Certification File Review

The audit team selects certification files for review based on:

i. The scopes of certification conducted by the certifier;
ii. The geographic area(s) where the certifier certifies operations;
iii. Files the AIA Division Director requests for review; and
iv. A number of files, based on the number of certified operations, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4 – Mid-term Audit Certification File Review

Number of certified operations	Number of files to be reviewed
100 or less	Between 5 and 7, 5 of which must be full reviews
101 - 240	Between 8 and 10, 6 of which must be full reviews
241 -400	11 or 12, 6 of which must be full reviews
401 - 1000	Between 13 and 15, 6 of which must be full reviews
More than 1000	Between 16 and 20, 6 of which must be full reviews

9. Audit Reports

Within 30 days of completing the audit, the audit team must prepare and submit to the AIA Division Director a detailed report of the audit using the audit report template. The report must provide information on General Agency Information, Personnel, Certification Process, Administrative Procedures, Fee Structure, Witness Inspections, and Findings, including the status of the effectiveness and implementation of corrective actions for previously cited noncompliances.

9.1 Review and Approval of Audit Reports

The AIA Division Director reviews and approves the audit report and ensures the certifier receives a copy.

a. If the audit report identifies noncompliances, a Notice of Noncompliance is issued to the certifier requesting proposed corrective actions within 30 days of receiving the Notice.

b. If no noncompliances are identified, then reports associated with pre-decisional or renewal audits are forwarded to the Accreditation Committee. For Mid-term audits, a Notice of Continued Accreditation is issued to the certifier.

10. Corrective Action Review

a. The certifier is responsible for submitting sufficient corrective actions within designated timeframes when requested by the AIA Division.
b. The AIA Division reviews the certifier's proposed corrective actions and determines whether the noncompliances were adequately addressed. A corrective action report is prepared and a copy is provided to the certifier.
    i. Corrective action reports associated with initial or mid-term audits result in appropriate notices being issued.
    ii. Corrective action reports associated with pre-decisional and renewal audits are sent to the Accreditation Committee.
c. It is necessary to periodically conduct an onsite compliance audit to verify the implementation and effectiveness of corrective actions.
d. The NOP Deputy Administrator is responsible for either granting or denying accreditation, and may propose adverse actions for any unresolved noncompliances.

11. Accreditation Committee Review

The Accreditation Committee reviews reports for pre-decisional and renewal audits and recommends final accreditation decisions to the NOP Deputy Administrator.

12. Accreditation Decision

The NOP Deputy Administrator either grants or denies accreditation. Decisions are based on the Deputy Administrator's review of the information submitted in accordance with 7 C.F.R. § 205.506(a)(3), the audit report, the Accreditation Committee's recommendation, and any other relevant supporting documentation.

a. Initial accreditation is granted for a period of five years from the date accreditation is approved.
b. An unexpired accreditation is renewed for a period of five years from the end date of the previous accreditation term.

The AIA Division notifies the certifier of the decision and issues the appropriate notice.

13. Publication of Accreditation Status

Upon initial accreditation or any change in a certifier's accreditation status, the AIA Division updates and makes publicly available the accreditation status on the NOP Web site at http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop. This includes:

a. The name and address of the accredited certifier;
b. The date of granting accreditation;

c. Scopes of accreditation;
d. The certificate of accreditation,
e. The most recent audit report; and,
f. Areas of operation (states and countries).

14. Submission of Information

Certifiers must submit the following to the AIA Division:

a. Changes to policies, procedures, and operating protocols, pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 205.510(a);
b. Relevant notices, as required by 7 C.F.R. § 205.501(a)(15)(i); and
c. A current list of certified operations as of January 2 of each calendar year, pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 205.501(a)(15)(ii).

15. Changing the Scope of Accreditation

Certifiers may request to extend or reduce their scope of accreditation at any time by submitting a new application to the AIA Division.

15.1 Extending the Scope of Accreditation

A quality manual review is conducted and a pre-decisional onsite audit may be conducted prior to extending the scope.

15.2 Reducing the Scope of Accreditation

a. The AIA Division reviews the request and prepares a report for review by the NOP Deputy Administrator.
b. Once approved, the certifier's certificate of accreditation, list of certified operations, and any other relevant information, is updated to reflect its reduction in scope.

16. Cessation of Certification Activities

A certifier whose accreditation is surrendered, suspended or revoked must adhere to the requirements described in 7 C.F.R. § 205.665.

17. Suspending or Revoking Accreditation

When a certifier fails to comply with the regulatory requirements for accreditation, the NOP Deputy Administrator follows the noncompliance procedures described in 7 C.F.R. § 205.665.

18. Surrendering Accreditation

Certifiers who no longer wish to maintain their NOP accreditation must surrender their accreditation by submitting a written notification to the AIA Division Director. Certifiers who

wish to surrender their accreditation should work with their certified operations to transfer their certifications to another certifier.

Certifiers who discontinue certification services without notifying the NOP and do not surrender their certificate of accreditation or provide the NOP with records of their certification activities will be issued a Notice of Noncompliance and Proposed Revocation for failure to comply with 7 C.F.R. § 205.505.

19. Appeals

Persons, as described in §§ 205.680 and 205.681 of the regulations, may appeal an adverse action such as a denial of certification or Notice of Proposed Suspension or Revocation to the AMS Administrator. Appeals must be filed in writing within 30 days of receipt of the Notice, and in accordance with the requirements described in §§ 205.680 and 205.681. They must be addressed to:

USDA AMS NOP
c/o NOP Appeals Team
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2095-South, Stop 0203
Washington, DC 20250

Appeals may also be submitted electronically to: NOPAppeals@ams.usda.gov

20. Complaints

a. Complaints Regarding Violations of the USDA Organic Regulations

Certifiers, certified operations, or any other interested party may file a complaint regarding certification, label usage, or other regulatory violation with the NOP Compliance and Enforcement Division. Refer to "NOP 4001 NOP Complaint Handling Standard Operating Procedures" for specific guidance on submitting complaints. Complaints may be submitted electronically to NOPCompliance@ams.usda.gov.

b. Complaints Regarding the Accreditation Process

Certifiers or certified operations may file a complaint regarding the accreditation process with the AIA Division. Complaints may be submitted to the address in Section 5.1 of this Instruction.

21. Fees for Accreditation

Fees for accreditation are assessed pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 205.640, 7 C.F.R. § 205.641, 7 C.F.R. § 62.300, and 7 C.F.R. § 62.301, as appropriate.

22. Contact Information

For more information regarding NOP accreditation policies and procedures contact:

Director, Accreditation and International Activities Division
USDA, AMS, NOP
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2648-South, Stop 0268
Washington, DC 20250
Phone: (202) 720-3252
Fax: (202) 205-7808
Email: AIAInBox@ams.usda.gov

23. References

USDA Organic Regulations (7 C.F.R. Part 205)

7 C.F.R. § 205.2 Terms Defined
Person. An individual, partnership, corporation, association, cooperative, or other entity.
7 C.F.R. § 205.403 On-site inspections.
7 C.F.R. § 205.503 Applicant information.
7 C.F.R. § 205.505 Statement of agreement.
7 C.F.R. § 205.508 Site evaluations.
7 C.F.R. § 205.510 Annual report, recordkeeping, and renewal of accreditation.
7 C.F.R. § 205.640 Fees and other charges for accreditation.
7 C.F.R. § 205.641 Payment of fees and other charges.
7 C.F.R. § 205.665 Noncompliance procedure for certifying agents.
7 C.F.R. § 205.680 General.
7 C.F.R. § 205.681 Appeals.

NOSB Recommendations

November 2008 Meeting, Final NOSB Recommendation on Certifying Operations with Multiple Production Units, Sites, and Facilities under the National Organic Program.

Other Laws, Regulations, and Standards

7 C.F.R. § 62.300 Fees and other costs for service.
7 C.F.R. § 62.301 Payment of fees and other charges.

ISO/IEC 17011:2004 Conformity assessment—General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies

ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines auditing management systems

NOP Program Handbook: Guidance and Instructions for Accredited Certifying Agents and Certified Operations

NOP 2005 NOP Accreditation Assessment Checklist. May 15, 2013.
NOP 2005-4 Witness Inspection Checklist. May 15, 2013.
NOP 2005-6 Audit Checklist – Review Audit. May 15, 2013.
NOP 2012 Accreditation Committee Procedure. August 24, 2010.
NOP 4001 NOP Complaint Handling Procedures. July 22, 2011.

Other References:
Form TM-10CG - Application for Accreditation
Form LS-313 - Application for Service

Document Control: This document supersedes NOP 2000 Accreditation Policies and Procedures Rev07, dated February 28, 2014, which is now obsolete.

Approval

Miles V. McEvoy
Deputy Administrator
National Organic Program

Approved on May 7, 2015.

Attachment A

Instructions for Completing TM-10CG Application for Accreditation

Form TM-10CG must be included in the accreditation application package for both initial and renewal applications. While the TM-10CG does not need to be submitted with annual updates, certifiers must notify the AIA Division in writing any time information submitted on this form changes due to business relocations, personnel changes, or other events.

Except where noted, all applications must include the following basic business information:

a. Under "Business Name, Mailing Address, and Primary Office Location," print or type the name of the accreditation applicant, and the applicant's primary office location and address (include both mailing and physical addresses, if different).
b. Under "Name of person responsible for day-to-day operations" and "Title of person responsible for day-to-day operations," enter the name and title of the primary contact person responsible for the applicant's day-to-day operations.
c. Under "Tax ID," enter the applicant's tax identification number.
d. Under "Telephone Number" and "Fax Number," enter the telephone and facsimile numbers of the primary office location or of the primary contact person.
e. Under "EMail address," enter the applicant or primary contact person's email address.
f. Enter the estimated number of operations the applicant plans to certify annually for each area of operation (crops, livestock, wild crop, and handling).
g. Check the type of entity applying for accreditation (e.g., Government, For-profit Business, Not For Profit Business, or Other).
h. After reading the affirmation statements, print or type the name and title of the person signing the form, and sign and date the form.

Attachment B

Instructions for Completing LS-313 Application for Service

Form LS-313 must be included in the accreditation application package for both initial and renewal applications. It provides the USDA Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program, which conducts documentation adequacy reviews as directed by NOP, with the authority to charge for its services. While the LS-313 form does not need to be submitted with annual updates, certifiers must notify the AIA Division in writing any time the billing address or the responsible party for the certification body changes.

To complete Form LS-313:

a. Under "Name of Applicant" and "Billing Address," enter the name and address of the person to whom accreditation billing information should be sent. This may be a street address or a post office box number.
b. Under "Physical Address of Service Location," print or type the street address where the certifier's office is located. Onsite audits will be conducted at this location. Do not use a post office box number. If the certifier maintains more than one office, this information should be included in another part of the application package.
c. Under "Tax ID Number" print or type the applicant's tax identification number.
d. Under "Telephone Number," print or type the phone number of the applicant or representative who signs the form.
e. Under "Email Address," print or type the email address of the applicant or representative who signs the form.
f. Under "Grading Services," "Type of Service Required," check the box next to "Other" and print or type "Organic Accreditation." Under "Verification Services," "Type of Service Required," check the box next to "Other" and print or type "Certifying Agent."
g. Leave the box labeled "Legal Status" blank. This information is collected elsewhere.
h. Leave the box labeled "Financial Interest in Product" blank. This information is not applicable to NOP accreditation.
i. Print the form, and under "Signature of Applicant or Representative," sign the completed form. Enter the date under "Date."
j. Under "Print or Type Name of Signee," print or type the name of the person who signed the form.