

**[ DA Department Circular No. 06, s. 2015, July 08, 2015 ]**

**REVISED GUIDELINES FOR THE OFFICIAL ACCREDITATION OF ORGANIC CERTIFYING BODIES (OCB)**

*Adopted: 08 July 2015  
Date Filed: 31 July 2015*

**WHEREAS**, Section 15 (Accreditation of Organic Certifying Body) of Republic Act (RA) No. 10068 otherwise known as the *Organic Agriculture Act of 2010* mandates the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (DA-BAFS) to grant official accreditation to Organic Certifying Bodies (OCB) in accordance to the Philippine National Standards (PNS) for Organic Agriculture (OA) and other relevant standards;

**WHEREAS**, Rule 15.2 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 mandated the DA-BAFS to chair the Technical Working Group (TWG) which shall revisit, prepare and update the guidelines, rules and procedures for the accreditation of organic certifying bodies for the approval by the NOAB;

**WHEREAS**, Rule 15.5 of the above IRR mandated the dissemination through Quad Media - Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) and posted in its dedicated website, including the LGU's information mechanism, the accreditation guidelines, rules and procedures;

**WHEREAS**, Section 17 (Labeling of Organic Produce), in relation to Section 15, of the above law states that the label of organic produce shall contain the name, logo or seal of the organic certifying body and the official accreditation number issued by the DA-BAFS;

**WHEREAS**, Executive Order (EO) No. 802, Series of 2009, strengthens and recognizes the Philippine Accreditation Office, now called Philippine Accreditation Bureau (PAB), attached to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), as the national accreditation body;

**WHEREAS**, international Standards (ISO) help to harmonize technical specifications of products and services making industry more efficient and breaking down barriers to international trade, and conformity to International Standards helps reassure consumers that products are safe, efficient and good for the environment;<sup>[1]</sup>

**WHEREAS**, DA-BAFS, as an accreditation body and as part of the requirements indicated in the ISO/IEC 17011:2004,<sup>[2]</sup> is required to have provisions on dealing with complaints and appeals;

**WHEREAS**, in line with the efforts to harmonize the organic agriculture

accreditation procedure of DA-BAFS as the competent authority on organic agriculture with the DTI-PAB as the national accreditation body, and with the international standards, there is a need to revise the Guidelines in the Accreditation of Certifying Bodies for Organic Agriculture;

**IN VIEW THEREOF**, this Department Circular revises Administrative Order No. 13, Series of 2003, by providing the guidelines for granting Official Accreditation to Organic Certifying Bodies (OCB).

## **ARTICLE I OBJECTIVES**

**Section 1.** The provisions under this Department Circular aim to achieve the following:

- 1.1 Establish harmonized protocols in the approval and surveillance of OCB based on relevant ISO standards and other applicable and relevant international standards; and
- 1.2 Revise the previous guidelines on the official accreditation of OCB that would be applicable to both local and international.

## **ARTICLE II SCOPE**

**Section 1.** This Department Circular provides for the rules and procedures for the official accreditation of both local and international OCB by the DA-BAFS.

**Section 2.** The following are the scopes of operation for official accreditation:

- 2.1 *Unprocessed plant produce* – primary and post-harvest agriculture products of plant origin intended for food;
- 2.2 *Live animals or unprocessed animal produce* – primary and post-harvest agriculture products of animal origin intended for food;
- 2.3 *Processed agricultural and fishery products for use as food* – processed and prepackaged products intended for food;
- 2.4 *Aquaculture* – primary and post-harvest fishery products intended for food; and
- 2.5 *Inputs* – organic materials allowed for organic agriculture production and processing such as seeds, plant propagation materials, plant protection and pest management agents, compost and fertilizers, feeds, processing aids, which are used to comply with the requirements of applicable PNS OA.

## **ARTICLE III DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Section 1.** As used in this Department Circular, the following terms shall be

understood to have the meaning correspondingly provided below:

- 1.1 **Accreditation** – refers to the formal recognition by an independent body, generally known as an accreditation body, that a certification body is capable of carrying out certification.
  - 1.1.1 **Official Accreditation** – refers to the procedure by which DA-BAFS having jurisdiction over OCB formally recognizes the competence of an inspection and/or certification body to provide inspection and certification services. Official Accreditation is issued by the DA-BAFS.
- 1.2 **Appeal** – refers to the request by the applicant for reconsideration of any adverse<sup>[3]</sup> decision by the DA-BAFS related to its desired official accreditation status.
- 1.3 **Applicant** – refers to the OCB applying for Official Accreditation with the DA-BAFS
- 1.4 **Assessment Team** – refers to the team organized by the DA-BAFS responsible for the conduct of witness audits. It shall be composed of not more than five (5) members of which two (2) are personnel from the DA-BAFS Accreditation Section and at least one (1) competent member from the National Committee for Official Accreditation of Organic Certifying Bodies (NCOA-OCB).
- 1.5 **Audit** – refers to the systematic and functionally independent examination to determine whether activities and related results comply with prescribed protocols, standards, rules and regulations and laws.
  - 1.5.1 **Office Audit** – refers to an audit relative to the thorough examination and verification of documentation and records of the OCB in the office where critical processes are being carried out.
  - 1.5.2 **Witness Audit** – refers to an audit relative to field observation of the OCB carrying out inspection within its scope of accreditation.
- 1.6 **Certification** – refers to the procedure by which OCB provides written attestation that food or inputs or food control systems conform to applicable organic agriculture standards and requirements. Certification may be, as appropriate, based on a range of inspection activities, which may include, but not limited to, continuous inspection, auditing of quality assurance systems, and examination of finished products.
- 1.7 **Complaint** – refers to the expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization to the officially accredited OCB relating to its activities/operations.
- 1.8 **Consultancy** – refers to the participation/engagement of OCB or personnel of OCB in activities that involves the designing, manufacturing, installing, maintaining or distributing of a product, process, and/or service certified and to be certified.
- 1.9 **Group Certification** – refers to the certification of an organized group of producers with: (1) a central office; (2) similar farming and production system; (3) working according to a common internal control system, which is established and subject to continued surveillance by the central office. Group certification applies to the group as a whole. Certificate shall be issued to the central office of the group but cannot be used by individual member of such group.
- 1.10 **Infringement** – refers to the encroachment, breach, or violation of law, regulation, or contract.
- 1.11 **Inspection** – refers to the examination of food or systems for control of food, raw materials, processing, and distribution including in-process and finished product testing, in order to verify that they conform to the

requirements. For organic food, inspection includes the examination of the production and processing system.

- 1.12 **ISO/IEC 17065:2012** – refers to the Conformity assessment -- Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services. The same is composed of the international standards to be complied with by the OCB to be required by the DTI-PAB.
- 1.13 **National Committee for the Official Accreditation of Organic Certifying Bodies (NCOA-OCB)** refers to the multi-sectoral committee created under S.O. No. 95 s. 2013, as amended by S.O. 318 s. 2014, renamed and further amended by S.O. No. 308 s. 2015, which evaluates and approves the official accreditation of OCB.
- 1.14 **Official Accreditation Evaluation Panel (OAEP)** – refers to the body responsible for the review and evaluation of the results of witness audits and recommendation for approval or denial of application. The DA-BAFS Accreditation Section shall identify and convene three members of the NCOA-OCB as the OAEP.
- 1.15 **Organic Agriculture Validation Team (OAVT)** – refers to the team of experts and representatives from various DA regulatory agencies and concerned offices organized by the DA-BAFS responsible for the pre-registration validation, monitoring of licensed and registered organic farms and establishments, and post-market surveillance in market outlets.
- 1.16 **Organic Certifying Body (OCB)** – refers to a body responsible for verifying that a product sold or labeled as “organic” is produced, processed, prepared, handled and imported according to the prescribed guidelines.
- 1.17 **Organic Operator** – refers to an individual or a business enterprise that is responsible for ensuring that production, processing, manufacturing, distribution, wholesale, retail, trade, importation and/or exportation of organic agriculture products meets, and continues to meet, the organic standard on which certification is based.
- 1.18 **Post-market Surveillance** – refers to the activities, after market authorization has been issued, relating to safety and quality monitoring of organic primary and postharvest food and non-food products. This shall also include, among others, adverse events reporting, product safety update reporting, collection and testing of products in the market.
- 1.19 **Revocation** – refers to the complete annulment or withdrawal of the granted official accreditation certificate.
- 1.20 **Satellite Office** – refers to an office in a different island (Luzon, Visayas or Mindanao) from the main office, established to serve as a supporting unit of the OCB in the conduct of its operational activities.
- 1.21 **Suspension** – refers to the temporary invalidation of the granted official accreditation certificate. During the suspension period, an OCB cannot issue new certificates.
- 1.22 **Surveillance** – refers to the set of activities including witness and office audits, except reassessment, to monitor the continued fulfillment by the officially accredited OCB of the requirements for accreditation.

#### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **CRITERIA FOR OFFICIAL ACCREDITATION**

**Section 1.** The following are the criteria for official accreditation:

- 1.1 Must be duly registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as legal entity in the Philippines;
- 1.2 Must have a Head Office in the Philippines and, preferably, at least one (1) satellite office located in Luzon, Visayas or Mindanao;
- 1.3 Must comply with the provisions of PNS relevant to organic agriculture; and
- 1.4 Must be accredited to ISO/IEC 17065-2012 with the scope of Organic Agriculture.

## **ARTICLE V PROCEDURES FOR OFFICIAL ACCREDITATION OF OCB**

**Section 1.** The following outlines the various stages of the accreditation process. The step-by-step procedure including detailed description of requirements and issuances is indicated in Annex A.

- 1.1 **Submission of Requirements** – The OCB shall submit the duly accomplished form (BAFS-AS-001) and its corresponding attachments. In case the applicant has no accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065:2012, the DA-BAFS shall officially endorse the submitted requirements to the DTI-PAB.
- 1.2 **Application Review** – The Accreditation Section of the Organic Agriculture Division of DA-BAFS shall initially review the submitted documents. The DA-BAFS and at least one (1) member of the NCOA-OCB shall validate the review of application done by DA-BAFS Accreditation Section. This includes validation of submitted ISO/IEC 17065:2012 accreditation certificate and the physical presence of the applicant's declared office/s.
- 1.3 **Assessment (Witness Audits)** – The DA-BAFS shall carry out the Witness Audits to determine the compliance with the official accreditation criteria. However, for cases where the applicant has applied for accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065:2012 to DTI-PAB, the DTI-PAB and the DA-BAFS shall jointly conduct witness audits. Otherwise, DA-BAFS shall conduct separate witness audits aside from those conducted by their Accreditation Body for ISO.
- 1.4 **Evaluation of the Assessment Report** – The witness audit report shall be endorsed to the OAEP for review and evaluation and then submit to the NCOA-OCB and DA-BAFS Director for approval or denial of official accreditation.
- 1.5 **Approval of the Official Accreditation** – The DA-BAFS Director shall issue the Official Accreditation to the OCB.
- 1.6 **Surveillance** – When officially accredited, the OCB shall be subjected to surveillance assessments to ensure the OCB's continued compliance with the terms and conditions of the Official Accreditation Certificate. This is done every year after the grant of Official Accreditation.

**Section 2.** Application for Official Accreditation is made by accomplishing Form BAFS-AS-F-001, written in English and in triplicate copies. Together with the said