



**APPLICANT / OPERATOR GUIDE FOR
ORGANIC CERTIFICATION**
دليل الزراعة العضوية للمزارع والشركات
EGYCER

٢٤ شارع عمر بن الخطاب – الدقي – الجيزة

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1. **Introduction:**

Organic farming is an agricultural method that aims to produce food for human consumption and feed relying only on natural substances and processes. This way, organic farming has a limited environmental impact, by encouraging:

- the responsible use of energy and natural resources
- the maintenance of biodiversity
- preservation of regional ecological balances
- enhancement of soil fertility
- maintenance of water quality
- respect of natural cycles and animal welfare
- absence of use of chemical and synthetic products,
- absence of GMO
- transparent labelling for consumers

European Union (EU) Regulations and other National and International Standards on organic farming are designed to provide a clear structure for the production of organic agricultural products. This is to satisfy consumer demand for trustworthy organic products whilst providing a fair marketplace for producers, distributors and marketers.

EGYCERT has developed its private system of controls for organic products, in equivalence with the requirements laid down in European Union Regulations (EC) 834/2007 & 889/2008, **which is applicable for export to Great Britain. EGYCERT Production Standard and Control Measures is available upon request to any operator interested in submitting his undertaking to EGYCERT Control System. Send your inquiry at info@egycert.com**

A new EU Organic Regulation has come into force in the EU member states on 01.01.2022, while for operators in third countries, there will be a transitional period until 31.12.2024 to switch to certification according to the new regulation. The amended regulation aims at guaranteeing fair competition to producers, prevent fraud and increase consumer confidence in organic products. It consists of the basic act Regulation (EU) 2018/848, as well as secondary legislation (so called delegating and implementing acts). **An overview on the applicable Regulations can be found on Egycert Website under the document Overview of New EU Organic Regulations.**

2. **Transition period for switching to the new regulation for operators in third countries:**

All clients of Egycert requesting export to EU, currently certified according to the Egycert Production Standards & Control measures will switch to certification under the new regulation (EU) 2018/848. From first January 2024, inspections will be done according to the new Regulation. Until then, COIs are issued according to Article 57 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848, as it is stated in the COIs in TRACES, box 18: This is to certify that this certificate has been issued on the basis of the checks required under Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1698 (2) for compliance (Article 46 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848) or Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1342 (3) for equivalence (Article 47, 48 or 57 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848) and that the products designated above are in line with the requirements of Regulation (EU) 2018/848.

3. What are the major changes in the new EU regulation?

3.1 General provisions:

- Except for countries with trade agreements, the new regulation is binding also for third countries. Certification will no longer be according to equivalent standards by certification bodies (e.g. Egycert Production Standards & Control measures), but according to the EU regulations.
- The range of products that may be certified is increased. Added are e.g., salt, beeswax, cotton, wool, silkworm cocoons, essential oils (also those not intended for human consumption).
- An operator or a group of operators may not obtain a certificate from more than one Egycert in relation to activities regarding the same category of products (e.g. production/processing).
- The new regulation is more specific about and gives much more importance to the duty of certified operators to take precautionary measures at every stage of production, preparation and distribution to avoid contamination and commingling with products or substances not authorized. Operators must develop a quality assurance system with measures that are proportionate and appropriate to identify and avoid risks of contamination and commingling. The measures must be regularly reviewed and adjusted.
- Operators must have a system of self-control (e.g., quality management system). Control bodies must control the system of certified operators and assess its effectiveness.

3.2 Plant production

3.2.1 Soil bound crop production

- The new regulation is more specific about requirements on soil bound crop production. Crop cultivation must be done in living soil or in soil that is mixed or fertilized with materials and products that are allowed in organic production in connection with the subsoil and bedrock (excepted are those plants which are naturally grown in water). Hydroponic production remains prohibited.
- Culture in pots is permitted for the production of ornamentals and herbs to be sold together with the pot to the final consumer and for growing seedlings or transplants in containers for further transplanting.

3.2.2 Seeds and other plant reproductive material

- Plant reproductive material (including seeds and vegetative propagating material such as cuttings, seed potatoes, rootstock) must be of organic origin, in case of proven unavailability in the country of the certified operator, a derogation to use conventional seeds may be granted by the Egycert (as before, approval for the derogation must be obtained before sowing).

- Seeds of in-conversion quality may be purchased. In such case, evidence must be obtained that no organic material is available. The evidence will be verified during inspection. No derogation is possible for seedlings with a cultivation cycle completed in one growing season (from the transplantation of the seedling to the first harvest of the product). Such seedlings must be organic.

3.2.3 Soil management and fertilization

- It is new compulsory that a crop rotation must include leguminous crops as the main or cover crop for rotating crops and other green manure crops (grassland and perennial forage are exempted from this obligation).
- For perennial crops other than forage or greenhouse crops, short-term green manure crops and legumes must be used. In addition, the soil fertility of these areas must be maintained and increased through the diversity of cultivated plants.
- In all cases, soil fertility shall be maintained by the application of livestock manure or organic matter, both preferably composted, from organic production.
- As before, external fertilizers and soil conditioners may only be used if the nutrient requirements of the plants cannot be covered by measures of tillage and cultivation practices, crop rotation, application of livestock manure or organic matter.
- The allowed substances are listed in Reg. (EU) 2021/1165, Annex II. The same list is in Annex I of Egycert Production Standards & Control measures.

3.2.4 Plant protection

- It is new defined that besides the listed active substances, all safeners, synergists, co-formulants and adjuvants according to Reg. (EC) 1107/2009 (general plant protection law of the EU) are allowed.
- More emphasis is given to “preventive measures”. Production shall include the principle of maintenance of plant health by preventive measures, in particular the choice of appropriate species, varieties or heterogeneous material resistant to pests and diseases, appropriate crop rotations, mechanical and physical methods and protection of the natural enemies of pests. Only if preventive measures are not sufficient to protect the crop, allowed substances as listed in Reg. (EU) 2021/1165, Annex I may be used. The same list is in Annex II of Egycert Production Standards & Control measures.

3.2.5 Cleaning and disinfection

- A list of products for the cleaning and disinfection of buildings and installations used for plant production, including storage on an agricultural holding is planned to be published in 2024. Until then, there are no changes in Egycert Procedures.

3.3 Groups of operators:

3.3.1 Structure of the Group Operators:

- Farmer groups must have an own legal personality.
- The requirements for a farmer to become a member are as follows: The individual certification cost represents more than 2% of each member's turnover and whose annual turnover of organic production is not more than EUR 25000 or who has a holding of maximum:
 - 5 hectares;
 - 0,5 hectares, in the case of greenhouses;
 - 15 hectares, exclusively in the case of permanent grassland.
- The maximum size of a group of operators shall be 2000 members. Larger groups will need to create new groups (maximum 2000 members, individual legal personality). Groups of operators certified according to the previous regulation for which important administrative, legal and structural changes are necessary with regard to the maximum size of the group of operators have a transition period until 31.12.2025.
- A member of a group of operators shall register to only one group of operators for a given product, also where the operator is engaged in different activities (production, processing) related to that product.
- A group of operators may not obtain a certificate from more than one control bodies in relation to activities regarding the same category of products, including cases in which that group of operators operates at different stages of production, preparation and distribution.

3.3.2 Tasks of Internal Control System (ICS manager) and (ICS inspectors):

- The tasks of an ICS manager and ICS inspectors are now clearly defined in Article 36.1 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 and I.C of Regulation (EU) 2021/715.
- ICS manager and ICS inspectors may be a member of the group, but the ICS manager may not be an ICS inspector.

3.3.3 Notification of the group to EGYCERT

- The ICS manager shall immediately notify EGYCERT in case of: any suspicion of major and critical non-compliance;
- any suspension or withdrawal of a member or a production unit or premises, including purchase and collection centers, from the group;
- any prohibition of the placing on the market of a product as organic or in-conversion, including the name of the member or members concerned, the relevant quantities and lot identification.

3.3.4 ICS group controls by Egycert

- Egycert must annually visit at least 5% of the members of a group and take annually at least sample for analysis from 2% of the members.

3.3.5 Measures in case of the ICS not being effective

- If deficiencies in the setup or functioning of the ICS system are found, in particular as regards failures to detect or address non-compliance by individual members of the group affect the integrity of organic products, the certificate of the group must be withdrawn.

3.4 Processed food

3.4.1 Engineered nanomaterials

- Prohibition of intentionally engineered nanomaterials (particle size <100 nm). Naturally occurring nano- materials are not concerned.

3.4.2 Non-organic agricultural product ingredients

- The list of non-organic agricultural ingredients allowed has been reduced to very few products (as before, these products may be only up to 5% of total agricultural ingredients in the certified product). The products are listed in Annex V, Part B of Regulation (EU) 2021/1165.

3.4.3 Flavours

- The kind of conventional flavours allowed are more restricted. Allowed are products labelled as natural Flavouring substances and natural Flavouring preparations. The Flavouring part of the flavor must be obtained exclusively or by at least 95% (w/w) from the source material used in the name, e.g., «natural orange flavour» from oranges. The max. 5% not obtained from the source material in the name can only be used for standardization or to give a specific note.

3.4.4 Cleaning and disinfection

- A list of products for the cleaning and disinfection in processing and storage facilities is planned to be published in 2024. Until then, there are no changes in the Egycert procedures.

4. Control System

4.1 Aim & Scope:

- **EGYCERT Control System is applicable to any operator involved in activities, at any stage of production, preparation and distribution, relating to the following products categories:**
 - (a) unprocessed plants and plant products, including seeds and other plant reproductive material;
 - (d) processed agricultural products, including aquaculture products, for use as food;
 - (g) other products listed in Annex I to this Regulation or not covered by the previous categories.

It is applied within the framework of the Egyptian, other national or international law, concerning the specific product categories, such as provisions governing production, preparation, marketing, labeling and controls.

- Mass catering operations are not subject to EGYCERT Organic Control System.

4.2 Official investigation

- As before, in case of a suspicion about unallowed substances in organic products, an investigation must be conducted. As before, marketing products concerned and their use in organic production shall be provisionally prohibited until end of the investigation. New, this is called official investigation. If a EGYCERT receives substantiated information about unallowed substances in organic products, it must immediately do an official investigation. The investigation must find the source and the cause of the unallowed substance.
- **The new regulation describes in more detail in which cases a product shall be decertified. This is the case if the investigation finds the following:**
 - Active application of unallowed substances
 - No sufficient precautionary measures (not proportionate and appropriate)
 - Certified operator did not take measures regarding previous non-compliances identified by the EGYCERT

4.3 Non-compliances and catalogue of measures

- The sanction catalogue, categorizing the severity of non-compliances according to the EGYCERT Production Standards and control measures will be replaced by a catalogue of measures, with a classification of non-compliances as minor, major and critical.

5. Principles for organic farming & processing

5.1 Organic production should:

- respect natural systems and cycles;
 - maintain and improve the state of the soil, water and air, and plant and animal health, and the balance between them;
 - preserve the elements of natural landscapes;
 - use energy and natural resources responsibly;
 - produce a wide variety of high-quality products to meet consumer demand;
 - ensure the integrity of organic production at all stages of the production, processing and distribution processes of food and animal feed;
 - exclude the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)* and products produced from or by GMOs*, other than veterinary drugs;
 - restrict the use of external inputs;
 - design and manage biological processes using methods based on risk assessment and the use of precautionary and preventive measures;
 - exclude animal cloning;
 - ensure a high level of animal welfare.
- **Requirements; Among other things, organic farming must:**
 - maintain and enhance soil life and its natural fertility, stability, water retention capacity and biodiversity;
 - use seeds and animals with a high degree of genetic diversity, disease resistance and longevity;
 - choose plant varieties – taking into account the characteristics of specific organic production systems – focusing on agronomic performance and disease resistance;
 - choose animal breeds to take into account their genetic value, longevity, vitality and resistance to diseases and health problems;
 - practice site-adapted and land-related breeding.

5.2 Production

To avoid adverse effects on the environment and on animal and plant health, producers must:

- take preventive measures at each stage of production, preparation and distribution to:
 - preserve biodiversity and soil quality,
 - prevent the occurrence of pests and diseases,
 - control these pests and diseases;

- take proportionate and precautionary measures to avoid contamination with products or substances not authorised for use in organic production.

5.3 Conversion period

- When a farm wishes to produce organic products, it must go through a conversion period during which it must be managed according to organic production rules, although its products at this stage are not considered to be organic. It can only place its products on the market as organic products once this conversion period has elapsed and has been checked.
- Moreover, food and feed products of plant origin containing only one agricultural crop ingredient can be marketed as in-conversion products, provided that there has been a conversion period of 12 months before the harvest. This rule now also applies to plant reproductive material (including seeds and plants at any stage of growth used to produce entire plants).
- Following the conversion period, any farm wishing to move to organic production must be managed fully in line with organic production requirements.
- The regulation also allows farms with both organic and non-organic production, on condition that their activities (non-organic, in-conversion and organic) are clearly and genuinely separated.

5.4 Certification

- Operators (e.g., producers, processors and distributors) must notify EGYCERT of their activities so that the EGYCERT can officially certify that they comply with the organic production and labelling rules.
- The regulation introduces a new system of group certification* for small farmers, making it easier for them to switch to organic farming

6. Official controls and labelling

- EGYCERT Organic Control System comprises at least the application of precautionary and control measures according to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 and described in EGYCERT Production Standard and Control Measures. In this context, the nature and frequency of the controls is determined on the basis of an assessment of the risk of occurrence of irregularities and infringements as regards compliance with the requirements laid down in the Standard by the Operators. In any case, all operators, with the exception of wholesalers dealing only with pre-packaged products and operators selling to the final consumer, shall be subject to a verification of compliance at least once a year. This means that EGYCERT shall carry out at least once a year a physical inspection of all operators. However, where previous controls have not revealed any instance of non-compliance over the previous 3 years, the period between physical on-the-spot inspections may be extended to up to 2 years.

- Moreover, EGYCERT collects and analyses samples every year which correspond to at least 5% of the number of operators under its control. The selection of the operators where samples have to be taken shall be based on the general evaluation of the risk of non-compliance with the organic production rules, also as laid down in EGYCERT Production Standard and Control Measures. EGYCERT shall also take and analyze additional samples in each case where the use of products or techniques not authorised for organic production is suspected. In such cases no minimum number of samples to be taken and analyzed shall apply.
- Upon the end of a physical control (inspection), a control report shall be drawn up and shall have to be countersigned by the operator and by EGYCERT Inspector.
- Finally, to better support the efficiency of its Organic Control System, EGYCERT shall carry out random control visits, primarily unannounced, based on the general evaluation of the risk of non-compliance with the organic production rules.
- If EGYCERT suspects an operator of trying to place a non-authorised product on the market as 'organic', it must formally investigate and temporarily ban the placing on the market of that product pending the investigation's outcome. In the event of serious or repeated infringements, operators may be prohibited from selling products described as organic for a given period or may have their certificate withdrawn.
- All controls (inspections) are carried out by EGYCERT competent staff. Operators are informed in due time about the scheduled control visits, unless these controls are selected by EGYCERT to be unannounced.

7. Certification & Measures

- The certification process starts after the completion of the on-site inspection (physical control). The inspection reports as well as the farm/firm files are submitted to the EGYCERT Certification Committee to take decisions during its regular meetings, at least twice per month. This procedure is followed for all types of inspections (initial, yearly, additional, follow up, sampling and unannounced).
- Upon a positive certification decision, EGYCERT shall provide the Documentary Evidence (Certificate of Conformity) to any such operator who is subject to its controls and who in the sphere of his activities, meets the requirements laid down according to organic regulations. The documentary evidence permits the identification of the operator and the type or range of products as well as the period of validity and is used for the marketing of the organic products covered by the Scheme.
- Where irregularities are found as regards compliance with the requirements laid down according to organic regulations, EGYCERT shall ensure that no reference to the organic production method is made in the labelling and advertising of the entire lot or production run affected by any irregularity, where this

would be proportionate to the relevance of the requirement that has been violated and to the nature and particular circumstances of the irregular activities.

- Where severe infringements or an infringement with prolonged effect are found, EGYCERT shall prohibit the operator concerned from marketing products which refer to the organic production method in the labelling and advertising for a defined period.
- EGYCERT may suspend, reduce the certification scope, withdraw the certification or even terminate the contract of any given Operator subject to its Organic Control System, based on evidence collected by any evaluation activity. Decisions for measures affecting Operators or sanctions imposed, are taken by EGYCERT Certification Committee based only on objective evidence according to EGYCERT Procedures.
- Information on cases of irregularities or infringements affecting the organic status of a product shall be immediately communicated between EGYCERT and equivalent control bodies, control authorities, competent authorities in the Countries of operation and European Member States concerned and, where appropriate, to the European Commission.

8. Use of EGYCERT Logo

The indication that a product is covered by the Certification Scheme must be shown in the same language as used for labeling, for example: “Organic Farming” in combination with EGYCERT label. Operators subject to EGYCERT Organic Control System who have a valid Documentary Evidence, may voluntarily use EGYCERT logo as a mark of conformity with EU Organic regulations as well as EGYCERT Production Standard and Control Measures. The conditions concerning the use of the EGYCERT logo are determined in EGYCERT System Document “Rules of Use of EGYCERT Logo (ADM-030)” . Any interested operator may send an inquiry for the document at (info@egy-cert.com)

- A written approval from EGYCERT is required before using of its logo
- The logo shall be displayed only in the appropriate form, size and color.
- Reproduction of the logo shall be based on the master versions supplied by EGYCERT.
- The Accreditation Body Mark shall not be used by any mean.
- When EGYCERT logo is used, it shall be displayed in a size not larger than the certificate holder logo
- EGYCERT shall evaluate the proper use of EGYCERT logo by certificate holders during inspection.
- EGYCERT reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the certificate in case of misuse of the EGYCERT logo.

9. Implementing acts

The European Commission has adopted the following legal acts.

- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/464**, which provides rules for applying Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards: the documents needed for the retroactive recognition of periods for the purpose of conversion; the production of organic products; the information Member States need to provide to the Commission.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/279**, which provides rules for: official investigations in cases of suspicion of non-compliance; the size of operator groups and the documentation of their system of internal controls; minimum control requirements; the national catalogue of measures in cases of non-compliance; the exchange of information between the Member States and the Commission.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1165**, which authorises certain products and substances for use in organic production and establishes their lists.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1378**, which provides rules for the certificate issued to operators, groups of operators and exporters in non-EU countries involved in the imports of organic and in-conversion products into the EU, and for establishing the list of recognised control authorities and control bodies.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1935** amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/723, which provides information and data on organic production and the labelling of organic products to be submitted by means of the standard model form to be used in annual reports submitted by Member States in relation to Regulation (EU) 2017/625.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2119**, which provides detailed rules for certain records and declarations required from operators and groups of operators and on the technical means for the issuance of certificates, and which introduced amendments to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/1378 regarding the issuance of the certificate for operators, groups of operators and exporters in non-EU countries.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2307**, which provides rules for documents and notifications required for organic and in-conversion products intended for import into the EU.
- **Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/2325**, establishing the list of non-EU countries and the list of control authorities and control bodies recognised under Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 for the purpose of importing organic products into the EU.

10. Delegated acts

The Commission has adopted several delegated acts amending Regulation (EU) 2018/848 or its annexes.

- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/427** amends Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards certain detailed production rules for organic products. This was amended in turn by Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/269.

- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/1794** amends Part I of Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards the use of in-conversion and non-organic plant reproductive material.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/642** amends Annex III to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards certain information to be provided on the labelling of organic products.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/715** amends Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards the requirements for groups of operators.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/716** amends Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards organic production rules on sprouted seeds and chicory heads, on feed for certain aquaculture animals and on aquaculture parasite treatments.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1006** amends Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards the model of the certificate attesting compliance with the rules on organic production.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1691** of 12 July 2021 amends Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards the requirements for record-keeping for operators in organic production.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1697** amends Regulation (EU) 2018/848 as regards the criteria for the recognition of control authorities and control bodies that are competent to carry out controls on organic products in non-EU countries, and for the withdrawal of their recognition.

In addition, other delegated regulations supplement Regulation (EU) 2018/848:

- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2123** – rules for the cases where and the conditions under which identity checks and physical checks on certain goods may be performed at control points, and documentary checks may be performed at distance from border control posts, **later amended by Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2305.**
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2124** – rules for official controls of consignments of animals and goods in transit, transshipment and onward transportation through the EU, **later amended by Delegated Regulations (EU) 2020/2190 and (EU) 2021/2305.**
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/2146** – exceptional production rules in organic production.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/771** – specific criteria and conditions for the checks of documentary accounts in the context of official controls in organic production and the official controls of groups of operators.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1189** – the production and marketing of plant reproductive material of organic heterogeneous material of particular genera or species.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1342** – rules on the information to be sent by non-EU countries and by control authorities and control bodies for the purpose of supervision of their recognition under Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 for imported organic products and the measures to be taken in the exercise of that supervision.

- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/1698** – procedural requirements for recognising control authorities and control bodies that are competent to carry out controls on operators and groups of operators that are certified organic and on organic products in non-EU countries, the rules on their supervision and the controls and other actions to be performed by those control authorities and control bodies.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2304** – rules on the issuance of complementary certificates certifying the non-use of antibiotics in the organic production of animal products for the purpose of export.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2305** – rules on the cases where and conditions under which organic products and in-conversion products are exempted from official controls at border control posts, the place of official controls for such products.
- **Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2306** – rules on the official controls in respect of consignments of organic products and in-conversion products intended for import into the EU and on the certificate of inspection.