

Ecocert Canada
Information Guide

2011 version



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Ecocert Canada Information Guide

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The present version was revised in March 2011. The most recent version takes precedence.

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The masculine form used in this document also designates, when relevant, women as well as men. The masculine form is used to simplify reading of the text.

The following document constitutes the English version of Ecocert Canada's information guide. In case of discrepancy, the French document, being the original, will always take precedence.

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INTRODUCTION

The present Guide is a practical tool to inform clients about “Ecocert Canada” and its services.

Ecocert Canada puts at your disposal the following documents:
Private standards of Ecocert Group for eco and fair trade products

Record-keeping , production plan models

If you have any further questions, feel free to contact us at any time.

ECOCERT CANADA

History and goals of our certification body

Founded in 1995, GarantieBio quickly gained a reputation for excellent client service. In fact, our status as an independent company allows us to offer tailor-made services to meet the present day needs of companies in the agriculture and food services sectors. In the year 2000, GarantieBio partnered with Ecocert SA, a European leader in the field of certification, offering its services in over 95 countries around the world. Ecocert’s extensive experience in with regulations and international standards assures our clients full access to international markets.

In 2006, in response to customer feedback, the company changed its name to Ecocert Canada. That same year, Ecocert Canada joined with certifier from Saskatchewan, named SOCA, who thus became a western Canadian office of Ecocert Canada.

GarantieBio and Ecocert are trademarks for the Ecocert Canada organic certification program.



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Our goal is to offer producers, processors, brokers, retailers and distributors an independent and private certification service.

Our values

Certification of products is a marketing tool which enables consumers to recognize the efforts made by farmers and food companies to offer differentiated products.

The standards are elaborated by official authorities. These are the basis to our control programs. Our approach is global and users are responsible to comply with the requirements of the standards they applied for.

Standards are reviewed frequently to adjust and update requirements.

Certification requirements are communicated through this guide and any modification that could affect your capacity to maintain your certification status is communicated through letters, newsletters or on Ecocert Canada website.

Clients are invited to express their view with regards to changes to the control system and Ecocert Canada commits to consider comments before a final decision is made on procedures and delays.

Accreditation

Accreditation refers to independent third-party control of our certification activities.

The ISO guide/65 (EN 45 011) regulates work methods (procedures, instructions...) for certification bodies no matter what their domain. This is an international standard. This standard is not limited to organic certification programs (all products and services certification).

Ecocert Canada is accredited according to ISO 65 by the “ Conseil des appellations réservées et des termes valorisants”

(CARTV /CAEQ) to offer certification according to Quebec and Canada's organic regulations.

The group Ecocert holds accreditations to offer certification services according to the European Union and the United States organic regulations.

As a subsidiary of Ecocert we can provide organic certification according to other countries organic standards as well as certification according to Ecocert's private eco-products and organic fair trade standards.

To whom does Ecocert Canada offer its services?

The Ecocert Canada certification program is offered to all levels of production and marketing of organic products, such as:

Producer: Any type of agricultural production.

Cooperative: A group of producers with similar productions and common marketing.

Processor: Any business that deals in food processing.

Sub-contracted processors: A processor who has a contract with a producer or another processor, to process or handle their products.

Distributor: Any business specializing in the distribution of products including packing businesses.

Processor having producers under contract: Processors who have contracts with producers and who wishes to have them certified.

Distributor with producers under contract: Distributors who have contracts with producers and who wish to have them certified.

Retailer: Any business specializing in retail sale of organic goods.

Broker: Any business specializing in import/export of products.

Producers and processors with multiple harvest, packaging or sales sites.

The same inspection and certification procedures apply to all types of businesses. The cost and the ownership of the certificate can vary depending on the type of business involved.

Services offered

- Organic certification according to different standards
- Approval of inputs used in organic production

Via the Ecocert group

- Organic and natural cosmetic certification (includes home perfumes)
- Ecological cleaning products certification
- Organic textiles certification
- Organic and fair trade certification
- Ecological public landscape certification
- Quality systems certification (Globalgap, IFS, BRC, ISO 22000, ISO 14000...)
- Carbon and environmental footprint

Under the trademark CONCERT :

- The control of specific labels such as private labels, reserved names, etc.
- Any other control services meeting our values.

Recognition policy

Ecocert Canada recognizes as equivalent any programs authorized by the CFIA within the Canadian Organic Regulation and equivalency agreements . You can consult the updated list of these organizations on CFIA website:

www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbiof.shtml

For the maple syrup and aquaculture products, certification bodies recognized by the CAEQ: www.caeq.gouv.qc.ca

The NOP standard foresees the obligation for all NOP accredited organizations to recognize as equivalent all programs accredited NOP. With the Canada-Us agreement for Import-export, the certifiers recognized by the USDA (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/NOP) can issued certificates for the Canadian market. These certificates must cover the difference between the two standards.

Thus it is the responsibility of all processors, wholesalers, distributors and brokers to make sure that the products they purchase are certified by a certification body included on CFIA's list.

When purchasing products, always demand the proof of product certification and verify on CFIA's list.

Food production, which certification to request?

Many countries have legislation dealing with organic production and have established rules that can have an impact on your marketing practices. You should make sure you target your certification needs when making your request for certification. Late requests lead to mistakes, delays and supplemental fees.

In order to help you with your certification choice, please study the following information as well as the particularities of each one of the standards that can be used. If doubting, contact your buyer:

- The certification to the Canadian standard is mandatory for all clients marketing their products in other provinces or wishing to use the Canadian logo;
- The Quebec certification is mandatory for all Quebec enterprises working in the province of Quebec;
- Following an agreement between CFIA and MAPAQ, valid until June 30th, 2011, the products certified under the Quebec CARTV standard can use the Canadian logo and be sold in others Canadian provinces.
- The terms of the Canada-US agreement for import-export should be added to certificate of products exported to United States;
- For all clients who export to or who sell to a third party liable to export to Europe: certification under EC regulation is mandatory;
- For products that will bear the JAS logo, JAS certification is mandatory. Expect long delays;
- Brazil makes it mandatory since January 2011 that all imported products be certified according to the Brazilian regulation.
- To export to countries that do not have a specific regulation, it's important to verify with the buyer which regulation will be accepted.

To add different standards to your initial registration, contact us as there are specific requirements.

Specific procedures can applied for exportation to some destinations. The document "Exports to Europe" is available in an electronic version

Requirements common to all standards:

Companies must register early enough to enable us to verify their documents and schedule the inspection during the production season. The maximum period between the inspections is 12 months.

An organic System Plan describing their business and how they comply with the organic standards must be submitted and updated as necessary. We must be informed on any changes to the organic System Plan.

Certification is annual and must be renewed each year according to the prescribed timeline.

Not renewing within the prescribed delays may result in cancellation of certification.

I. Quebec

The organic regulation of Quebec is under the responsibility of the Conseil des Appellations Réservées et des Termes Valorisants (CARTV). The certification to this standard allows marketing the products in the province de Québec. A conformity logo is available through the CARTV (info@cartv.gouv.qc.ca)

II. Canada

The Canadian regulation (COR), managed by the Canadian Organic Office, was implemented on July 1st 2009. The standard (COS) is a property of the CGSB

(http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/on_the_net/organic/index-f.html).

The certification to this standard is mandatory for all Canadian business selling its products in others provinces or that wishes to use the Canadian logo.

All ingredients of a processed organic product must also be certified COS

III. USA

The American standard is established by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is available at www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop

In 2009, an agreement between Canada and the United States has been signed. This agreement allows Canadian businesses to export their COS + terms of the equivalency agreement certified goods to United States.

The terms of the agreement covers the difference between the two standards. For the Canadian clients, the certifier must guarantee that no antibiotics have been used in dairy production. For all clients respecting this condition, the COS+ attestation is sufficient to market in the United States. The NOP certification is not necessary anymore to export to the United States.

IV. Europe

European certification is based on the European Regulations (EC 834/2007 and 889/2008. EN 45011 is equivalent to ISO Guide 65.

These regulations are amended as needed and are therefore constantly evolving. The regulations can be found on the Ecocert website: <http://www.ecocert.com>

All ingredients of a processed organic product must also be certified EC

Please note that the regulation EC No 1235/2008 makes it mandatory for importers to receive an import authorization from the European Authorities before they import any organic products into Europe. Contact us to obtain the information before shipping any products.

V. BioSuisse and Naturland

Switzerland is not part of the European Community. BioSuisse standards include criteria's on environmental impact and biodiversity.

Because specific documentation must be completed by the inspector, we must be informed beforehand if you need BioSuisse certification.

Please notice that your file will be studied by BioSuisse only if a buyer in Switzerland asks for it. There is no use asking for BioSuisse certification if no buyer as been found. Your suppliers must also be certified under BioSuisse standard.

BioSuisse standards are available at: <http://www.bio-suisse.ch/en>

Naturland is a private German standard. You need to apply directly to Naturland who will then contact us for the inspection. Naturland websiteis ; <http://www.naturland.de>

VI. Japan

The JAS certification is mandatory to use the JAS logo.

Japanese regulations were elaborated the Ministry of Agriculture, Fish and Forest (MAFF). The JAS standards cover crops and livestock production.

Producers, processors and re packers must be certified JAS.

Fees are more important and a quality control system (grading systems and procedures) is mandatory.

In May of every year, JAS certified enterprises must send us a copy of their "grading records" and JAS sales.

A designated manager must be responsible for the grading and must conduct an audit trail for each product lot sold to Japan. Proof of qualification of staff is required.

The Quality system including the grading system is a very important criteria of JAS.

JAS standards are available at:

<http://www.maff.go.jp/e/jas/specific/organic.html>

Note that if certification is cancelled there is a five (5) year delay before the enterprise can ask JAS certification again.

V11. Brazil

The Brazilian Regulation was implemented on January 1st 2011. It is required that all imported products including all ingredients be certified according to this new Regulation. Contact us if you expect to sell products to Brazil.

STEPS TO CERTIFICATION WITH ECOCERT CANADA

Registration:

Phone or email information request.

Ecocert Canada sends you the necessary information : guide, standards, fee schedule and registration questionnaires

-Once we receive your registration, we will send you the invoice.

-Certification fees must be paid PRIOR to inspection.

First review:

When we receive your questionnaires, we will check to detect any possible non compliance. We may request additional information and documents. A verification letter will be sent to you with

-a contract for every standard requested.

The verification letter mentions the deadline to return any documents requested, the name of the inspector and possible time for inspection.

You can contest the choice of the inspector we assigned. Please contact us within 15 days of receipt of the letter announcing the inspector to explain why you ask for a change. Ecocert Canada may still decide to maintain its choice of inspector.

Inspection (audit):

Remember: The maximum delay between inspections is 12 months

We send the necessary documents to the inspector before the scheduled visit.

Inspector's visits must take place during production season for farms and maple syrup production but can happen at any time for other clients.

We estimate at least 3 hours for farm inspections. If you have livestock or do some processing, anticipate more time.

The inspector will make the final appointment.

At inspection time the inspector will inform you on any non compliance he found. He writes a report for each inspection visit.

Follow-up, surprise visits and sampling for analysis can happen during the year. 3 samples will be taken so counter analysis can be done if needed.

Certification:

A certification officer will study your file and will send a decision letter in the following weeks.

Normal delays between inspection and first decision are 4 to 6 weeks.

Comments, recommendations and the certificate if decision is positive are sent to you with a copy of the inspector's report.

If certification is conditional, the certificate will be issued once the conditions are met. You will need to provide a written corrective plan and we will verify proofs of compliance.

You must inform Ecocert Canada in writing of any mistake or omission in the inspection report or decision. You must meet the conditions as stated in the decision and comply with the recommendations given..

License, attestation and certificate

A certificate is valid for named products or services. An inspection is mandatory each 12 months to continue being certified.

The certificate authorizes you to refer to Ecocert Canada and the organic status of the products on the certificate only.

Pre certification attestation confirms that you could be certified the following season. This does not allow the reference to Ecocert Canada or to the organic status.

Service attestation confirms the capacity of sub contractors to process organic goods.

The license allows private brand owners to use the Ecocert Canada reference of their suppliers.

The company name listed on the certificate must match the business name used to market the certified products and activities. If necessary, proof of registration of the company or used trademark name will be required

If you do not renew your certification you must inform us in writing.

In such case and when certification is cancelled, you must send back any certificate issued and stop referring to Ecocert Canada on your labels, publicity, website...

Transaction certificate (TC):

Some buyers require a TC proving that a given lot is actually organic. In order to issue such a document we must be informed of the quantities harvested and in inventory. Fees apply to TC issuance.

For transactions within Canada, the necessary documents “*harvest record*” and “*transaction questionnaire*” are available on our website (paper copies can also be mailed upon request).

Please note that TC are not necessary for sale between Ecocert’s Canadian clients.

Export certificate:

For the international transactions, please send us a copy of the invoice and of the Bill of Lading of the carrier. A copy of the import authorization of your buyer is mandatory for sales in Europe. Fees apply to export certificate.

Pre certification

All farms requesting certification for the first time or which have stopped the certification procedure for more than a year must undergo pre-certification. Pre certification applies for the complete crop farm, not fields by fields. Pre certification is mandatory under CARTV, COS, EU, JAS and Biosuisse standards.

During pre-certification, the farm fills in the same questionnaires and an inspection visit is done which includes verification of accounting documents from previous years. The farm is not allowed to market its products as certified organic or to make statements on pre certification status.

Fees:

Fee policy is available on request and sent to any new applicant.

Confidentiality and conflict of interest

Any person involved in the certification process, whether they are employees of Ecocert Canada, inspectors or a member of any of the above-mentioned committees, must not have any conflict of interest and are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Accreditation criteria's make it mandatory for certifiers to inform the authorities on certification status.

Ecocert Canada can exchange information with other certification agencies or authorities in order to verify the information given by the clients.

Ecocert Canada will inform its client on any information Ecocert is requested by law to divulgate.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Ecocert Canada's certification program is comprised of:

- a Board of Directors
- a Manager and administration staff
- control staff (Certification officer, Inspectors)
- and committees:
 - o Certification Committee
 - o Appeal Committee

Certification Committee

The Certification Committee is made up of independent volunteers chosen by Ecocert Canada based on their knowledge and experience in appropriate sectors.

Ecocert Canada's clients are represented on this Committee.

The committee supports the work of the control team.

Inspectors

The certification audits will be done by inspectors chosen by Ecocert Canada on the basis of their knowledge and their

practical experience in the sector they will inspect. Basic training concerning the program will be offered to each inspector. The inspectors' mandate is to verify during their visit that the enterprises who apply for certification meets all the requirements of the standards.

Review and appeal procedure

When a certification decision is contested by the client, the latter has ten (10) days following receipt of the decision to send a written review request to the certification officer. This review is free of charge. The client must supplying new elements to justify a review.

If the initial decision is upheld following the review by the certification team, the client can then appeal to the Appeal Committee or directly to the CAEQ or the accreditor within 30 days of the review decision notice.

- a) The burden of proof is on the party that initiates the appeal.
- b) A \$250 non-refundable payment must be sent with appeal request.
- c) CAEQ and accreditor appeal conditions are available on their websites.

Contract

The signed contract between Ecocert Canada and its client is tacitly renewed at the beginning of each year.

Clients must sign a specific contract for each Regulation they applied for.

GLOSSARY

Certificate	Official document issued by a certification agency assuring complete compliance with the certification standards, for all listed products.
Certification Body	The organization that manages the certification process, that is responsible for checking that a product sold or labeled as “organic” is produced, processed, prepared, handled and imported in compliance with present regulations.
Certification inspector	An independent inspector accredited by Ecocert Canada who does on-site verification of the company requesting certification.
Certified Organic	Can apply to a product or an operation that has been verified and has proven to meet organic standards. It is then authorized to use GarantieBio or Ecocert’s logo and trademark or the logo and trademark of the relevant organic certification program(s).
Company	Business or firm which carries out, in relation to agricultural and food production, one or more operations that would permit these products to meet standards for the production, processing and/or labeling of organic products which must undergo certification.
Conditional	Methods or products that can be used under some conditions according to the standards.

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Conventional agriculture	Crop and livestock production methods that do not meet the specifications listed here.
Ecological products	Product whose manufacture and use do not create damages to the environment (plants and animals). These products must be derived from natural sources, biodegradable, not tested on animals and packed in recycled or recyclable material.
Fields	Refers to a defined plot used for agricultural purposes. Forests, orchards & maple plots are included in this term.
Forbidden	Methods or products opposed to the goals of organic agriculture. The use of these methods and /or products can bring about the refusal or suspension of certification.
Inspection	Evaluation of the compliance of a product, process or system with standards. The inspection includes the examination of both the production and processing systems.
License	This document is the “Right to produce”. The official document issued by a certification agency assuring the complete accordance with the certification standards, for all methods.
Operator	Any person, company or organization that produces, handles or processes products designated as organically grown, organically raised, organically produced and certified organic under present standards, for the purpose of marketing these products.

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Organic Integrity	Maintaining the inherent organic qualities of a product, from production through to final sale, in compliance with the requirements of organic standards.
Organic product	Any food or substance that was produced under a system that meets organic standards, and can be prove so by a compliance certificate issued by an accredited certification body.
Pre certification	Control procedure applied by certifying body to firms during the last year of their conversion period.
Standards (Regulations)	Rules stated in this booklet corresponding to the rules put forth by Ecocert Canada for organic certification.
Synthetic	Artificial substance formulated or produced according to a chemical process or a process that chemically alters ingredients taken from natural plant, animal or mineral sources. This term does not apply to mixtures obtained by synthesis or produced through naturally occurring organic processes such as thermal and mechanical processing.
Synthetic products	Substances manufactured by a chemical process or a method that chemically modifies a natural source substance, whether it is a plant, an animal or a mineral substance. This term does not apply to substances created by natural biological processes.

Traceability	The possibility of identifying the origin of a product and tracing the route of a product from its production to its distribution.
Transition	Refers to “producers” who respect all production methods listed in our standards except for the time period (36 months without use of unauthorized products).

REFERENCES

The information in the present document is based on the reference documents listed below:

- ISO Guide 65 Standards:
<http://www.iso.ch/>
- Cartv Organic Reference Standards:
<http://cartv.gouv.qc.ca/>
-
- Canadian standards board on organic agricultural
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml>
- Canadian General standards board:
http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cqsb/on_the_net/organic/index-f.html

UNITED STATES NOP Standards:
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/>

EC Regulations concerning organic production methods for farm products and its presentation on agricultural and food products:
<http://www.ecocert.com>