



ACO CONCISE STANDARDS

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PREAMBLE

THESE CONCISE STANDARDS SHOULD BE TRANSLATED INTO LOCAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES TO ASSIST SMALL FARMERS WITH COMPLYING WITH BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE CURRENT *BFA ORGANIC STANDARD* FOR USE IN ACO CERTIFICATION.

IT IS STILL THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEAD LICENSEE TO ENSURE THAT ALL GROWERS MEET ALL REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMPLETE *BFA ORGANIC STANDARD*, WHERE RELEVANT.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS OF ACO REQUIREMENTS ADDITIONAL TO THESE CONCISE STANDARDS, PLEASE CONTACT THE ACO OFFICE.

WHAT DOES ORGANIC FARMING MEAN?

'Organic' means growing food or fibre crops as if they were growing as part of a natural system. The use of chemical fertilisers or pesticides is not allowed. Weeds can be controlled by hand, slashing, by mulching the ground, or by growing things that shade or smother weeds. No genetically modified organisms, (GMOs) are permitted in organic farming.

WHAT CAN YOU PUT INTO THE SOIL?

Soil used for growing organic food or fibre must be kept fertile by using compost, mulch and good rotations of plants. No chemical fertilizers can be used. Weeds, slashed grass, prunings and animal manures can be composted together and dug into the soil or spread on top. Lots of different plants growing together help to replace soil nutrients as the plants drop leaves back to the soil. Leguminous plants and trees help to provide nitrogen, which helps crop growth. Organic material also attracts worms, which are good for the soil.

There are often occasions when testing the soil for nutrients helps growers to know if the soil lacks minerals.

Erosion of the soil must be prevented by good planning and management.

WHAT CAN BE BROUGHT ONTO ORGANIC FARMS?

All seeds and planting materials must be organic and cannot be treated with chemicals. If manures are brought onto organic farms, they should be composted. If manures, mulches or other materials are brought onto organic farms, they must be free of chemicals and other things that may contaminate the soil or plants.

These materials may need to be tested for chemical residues.

Composting should be hot enough to see steam coming off the heap for three days, and then the heap should be turned so that it heats up again. This should be done 5 times. If this is not done, the compost must be spread after harvest, or at least 4 months before harvest.

Waterways must not be contaminated by activities on organic farms, or by run off from them.

PEST, DISEASE and WEED MANAGEMENT

Controlling pests, diseases and weeds should be by good management, not by chemicals.

Pests will usually attack if plants are weak. Good soil management will help to keep plants strong. Growing other plants may attract predators of pests or distract the pests themselves.

Diseases may occur, and it may not be easy to get rid of them. Strong, healthy plants resist diseases, and diversity helps to stop diseases spreading. Burning diseased plants is acceptable, using chemicals is not.

Weeds can take nutrients from the crop, so they may need to be controlled. On organic farms, the weeds may be pulled out, slashed or mulched to stop them growing. The weeds may be composted, or simply left to rot back into the soil. Burning of weeds and other unwanted growth causes nutrients to be lost, and is not recommended. Chemicals must not be used to control weeds.

CAUTION: For some pests or diseases there may be organically acceptable methods of control, but these may also affect existing natural predators as well. Such control methods may upset the natural balance and are for restricted use only.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Organic farmers should look after the environment around them. Clearing primary forests is not permitted. Organic farming should blend into the environment and encourage natural variety on and around the farm.

CONTAMINATION

Organic farms must be protected from chemicals. This means that all neighbours must be aware of the status of the organic farm, and if chemicals are used nearby, there must be protection from any spray drifting onto the organic area. If chemicals are used next to organic crops, there will be a buffer zone, where the harvest may not be sold as organic.

Anyone harvesting, transporting and storing organic produce must make sure that it does not get contaminated with chemicals or dirt, and it must not get mixed with produce that is not organic.

RECORDS

The farmer must keep a record of major activities on his farm. Things such as plantings, harvesting, and any use of treatments for pests and diseases must be recorded. Sales of produce must also be recorded. The farmer must know how much land there is, and how many trees or plants there are on the farm or garden.

In a grower group, the head licensee may assist with keeping some of these records. The records must be available for inspection.

PARALLEL PRODUCTION

Parallel production is when a farmer grows both Organic and Conventional or Organic and In Conversion crops of the same type on the same land. This is not permitted because it can lead to mistakes and mixing of produce. For most small growers, this will not be applicable, but larger farms may convert their operations gradually to organic production, and must make sure that parallel production does not occur.

LIVESTOCK

Livestock certification is not covered under an ACO grower group system

However, animals are encouraged in organic farming systems. Animals should be fed organic feed or natural vegetation. Their manures may fall naturally or may be collected and composted.



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Animals that are treated with prohibited substances are not allowed to graze or walk on organic farms for three weeks.

All livestock must be allowed to practise natural behaviour as much as possible. During the day, animals must not be locked up, and must be allowed to graze on vegetation. Animals must have shelter from extremes of climate according to the needs of the animal.

Animals brought onto the organic farm must also spend three weeks in the quarantine area before mixing with the existing animals unless they are from another organic farm.

For further details about livestock and slaughtering requirements, please see the ACO Organic Standard.

PROCESSING, PACKAGING, STORAGE and TRANSPORT

Simple processing may be carried out on or near the farm. This includes things such as pulping coffee cherries, washing, hulling or husking of nuts, drying and packing into bags or sacks. All these processes must be kept clean and birds and animals must be kept away from the organic produce. There must be no mixing of organic with non-organic goods.

All equipment must be carefully cleaned first before organic produce is processed. This means washing all pulp and other material from the equipment if it is a wet process, and brushing and scraping all equipment if it is a dry process.

Any bags or boxes used for temporary storage or carting must be new or very clean, and there must be no residues from previous loads. Final packaging of processed goods must be in new bags or boxes. Each bag or box used for storing organic goods must be labelled 'organic'.

All organic storage must be clean, dry, and free from other goods. There must be no chance that organic goods can be mixed with non-organic goods. All organic storage must be easy to clean, without cracks and holes. If wet cleaning is done, all chemicals must be washed off with clean water.

Organic storage must have signs that say 'organic only'. No chemical pest controls are allowed.

Any transport vehicle must be thoroughly clean. Organic produce must not be carried with other goods that may contaminate the organic goods. Contamination by mixing with other goods, by splashing with liquids or by strong smells is not permitted.

THESE CONCISE STANDARDS ARE A SUMMARY OF THE *BFA ORGANIC STANDARD*. FOR SITUATIONS NOT COVERED BY THESE CONCISE STANDARDS, PLEASE CONSULT THE FULL BFA ORGANIC STANDARD AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE FROM THE ACO OFFICE OR TO DOWNLOAD FREE AT www.bfa.com.au