



International food processing

Certification with us offers you:

- The Soil Association organic symbol, the most trusted and recognised organic mark
- A designated Certification Officer to guide you through certification
- Business support, helping you reach new customers
- A not-for-profit, practical certification service with experience in your field
- Additional services like British Retail Consortium and United States' National Organic Program

What makes us unique?

As a not-for-profit subsidiary of the Soil Association, any surplus income is gift-aided to the charity to raise awareness and develop and safeguard the entire organic sector. Find out more on this work at www.soilassociation.org

Pre-application service

We offer a complimentary pre-application service to all our customers to answer any questions you may have when thinking about going organic, for example permitted ingredients or product specifications.

Steps to certification

Going organic is more straightforward than you might think, with just three main stages to certification.

1. Application

Firstly, you submit your application with your product specifications and labels - the application form is available online. Timescales to achieving certification vary, but if you have a specific deadline in mind, we'll work with you to meet this date.

2. Inspection

When we've received your application, we'll arrange an inspection of your operation. After the inspection, your inspector will give you a detailed report and submit a copy to your allocated certification officer.

3. Certification

Your certification officer will review the inspection report and send you a compliance form outlining any areas where standards have yet to be met. We'll ask you to agree corrective actions or provide further information for approval. Once completed, your certification officer will issue your first certificate.

Frequently asked questions

How long does certification take?

The time it takes to achieve certification can vary and depends on a number of factors. We will need to carry out an inspection and agree with you any further actions that are required to meet the standards. If you are working towards a specific deadline, tell us and we'll work with you to meet this date.

It's a big change. Is there any support available?

Our Trade and Producer Support team is on hand to guide you through certification and offer you business support like help with sourcing suppliers. We also have a number of industry experts available for more technical queries.

Do I need to be licensed by a certification body in my own country first?

If your company is based in the European Union (EU) you must be licensed with a certification body in that country first. The situation varies between countries outside of the EU. If your company is based outside the EU, you will need to check whether the national legislation allows you to be licensed with a certification provider outside of this country.

What are the fees for this service?

Application and annual fees, as well as payment options, are detailed on our fee sheet. Fees are payable annually, and are based on your land area or business type.

Will you always send an inspector from the UK?

In most cases we would send our own inspectors to carry out your first inspection. From the second year onwards we would aim to work with a local certification body who would inspect to our standards on our behalf. We have agreements with certification bodies around the world to carry out this service for us. Please contact us for details on which certification bodies we are currently working with.

Once I am licensed as organic, can I add or remove products, update my labels or use a different supplier?

These are usually straightforward changes and can be submitted at any time. There is no additional cost to make these amendments. We aim to approve labels in three days and update specifications in five (if compliant).

What records do I need to keep?

Soil Association standards 40.6

Good records are essential to help you demonstrate compliance with the standards. We have produced some templates for record keeping; please contact us on 0117 914 2406 or email us on goorganic@soilassociation.org if you would like copies.

The types of records that you need to keep include the following:

- product specification sheets
- goods in records
- production records
- derogations for non-organic ingredients (EU based processors)
- non GMO declarations
- sales and goods out records
- certification documents for organic ingredients
- cleaning and hygiene schedules
- pest control records

What are the fees for this service?

Please refer to our fee sheet for details of our certification fees for international processors.

I'm ready to apply, what do I need to do now?

Applying to us is more straightforward than you might think. To apply you will need to send us a completed application form, your application fee and specification forms and draft labels for the products you wish to have licensed (please see the product specifications section on the next page for more information).

Product specifications

For each product that you wish to licence, you will need to complete a single ingredient product specification (SIPS) or multi ingredient product specification (MIPS).

You will need to submit a SIPS form for products containing one ingredient (for example rice, where no salt or water has been added) or bought-in finished products (for example rice cakes produced by another manufacturer).

You will need to complete a MIPS form if you are producing a product containing more than one ingredient.

Product labelling requirements

Soil Association standards 40.10

The checklist below will to help you label your products in accordance with the EU Regulations and the Soil Association's standards:

- To label as organic, products must contain at least 95% of organic agricultural ingredients, and only contain permitted non-organic ingredients, additives and processing aids
- Where products contain 70–95% organic agricultural ingredients, these must be labelled using one of the phrases listed in standard 40.10.5
- The organic certification body code must be displayed for example, 'organic certification UK5'
- The name of the company labeling and/or selling the product must be included
- Products must include a traceability code, such as batch or date coding
- The Soil Association organic symbol must be reproduced from original artwork provided by us
- Retail labels must include a reference to the agricultural method of production, for example, 'organically produced' or 'produced under organic standards'

Single-ingredient product labelling

These products must refer to the ingredients country of origin and if the country of origin varies you can use the phrase 'produce of more than one country'.

Multi-ingredient products labelling

These products must have the same name as detailed on your product specification and where the product is sold in bulk, ingredients must be listed on the label or accompanying documents.

Ingredients panel

An ingredients panel must be included on all labels, whether single or multi ingredient. The panel must match the product specification exactly and show which ingredients are organic and which are non organic. In addition, all ingredients must be listed in descending order by weight.

Making changes to products and labels

All changes to products and labels must be approved by us before marketing and printing. Changes can be made with no extra charge and we aim to review the labels within three working days and update specifications in five. We will contact you to discuss any changes required to achieve compliance.

Additional services

Helping you source and market organic ingredients

Throughout the certification process we provide technical guidance and business support whenever you need it. We have close links across the organic sector, and can give you access to the largest online organic ingredients database in the UK - www.soilassociation.org/sourcemarketplace.aspx