

# ORGANIC PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS

A Practical Guide for Farmers and ICS Inspectors

Understanding organic farming practices, production  
rules and farmer responsibilities.



For Farmers, ICS Inspectors  
and Farmer Groups



Biovision  
Africa  
Trust



**KHEA**  
Knowledge Hub for  
Organic Agriculture  
in Eastern Africa

## ABOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT

This knowledge product is part of the ICS Training Set and presents the key learning areas covered on Day 1 of the ICS training curriculum for EU organic certification.

Day 1 focuses mainly on farmers and ICS Inspectors and introduces the practical requirements that farmers need to understand and apply in organic production. It covers the differences between organic and conventional production, the rules for organic production, and sharing practical experiences on organic farming.

### Who is this guide for?

- Farmers
- ICS Inspectors
- ICS Managers
- Farmer Groups
- Extension Officers

### Contents

- The main differences between organic and conventional farming
- The basic rules for organic production
- Good practices that protect organic integrity
- Key responsibilities of farmers within the Internal Control System
- Practical issues that ICS Inspectors should check at farm level

### How to use this guide

Use it as a quick reference during training, farmer sensitization, internal inspections and field follow-up

## Main difference between conventional and organic farmers

|                      | What do they do?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | What do they not do?                                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conventional farmers | Synthetic pesticides used<br>Inorganic fertiliser<br>Mono culture<br>Control and BRC, food safety certification                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Conversion<br>Environmental conservation<br>Preserve natural fertility |
| Organic farmers      | Conversion<br>Use bio pesticides and beneficial animals ( <b>predators</b> )<br>Only organic fertiliser<br>Promote <b>biodiversity</b><br>Crop rotation<br>Intercropping<br>Control and organic certification<br>Improve <b>soil</b> characteristics<br>Based on (4) <b>principles</b><br><b>Quality of the seeds</b> (OPV) | Use synthetic fertiliser                                               |

*What does an organic farmer do differently from a conventional farmer?*

## Main difference between conventional and organic farmers

|                      | What do they do?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | What do they not do?                                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conventional farmers | Synthetic pesticides used<br>Inorganic fertiliser<br>Mono culture<br>Control and BRC, food safety certification                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Conversion<br>Environmental conservation<br>Preserve natural fertility |
| Organic farmers      | Conversion<br>Use bio pesticides and beneficial animals ( <b>predators</b> )<br>Only organic fertiliser<br>Promote <b>biodiversity</b><br>Crop rotation<br>Intercropping<br>Control and organic certification<br>Improve <b>soil</b> characteristics<br>Based on (4) <b>principles</b><br><b>Quality of the seeds</b> (OPV) | Use synthetic fertiliser                                               |

*What does an organic farmer do differently from a conventional farmer?*

## CONVERSION TO ORGANIC PRODUCTION

*Understanding the conversion period for annual and perennial crops*



### Annual Crops



**Conversion period: 2 years**



Identify the field



Check boundaries and surface areas



Record the start date of conversion



If conversion starts on **1 February 2025**, crops sown or planted after **1 February 2027** may be sold as organic



### Perennial Crops



**Conversion period: 3 years**



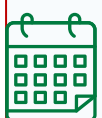
Identify the field



Check boundaries and surface areas



Record the start date of conversion



If conversion starts on **1 February 2025**, products harvested after **1 February 2028** may be sold as organic



**If the field is contaminated**



Contamination during or after the conversion period may lead to an extension of the conversion period



**If the field is treated with prohibited substances**



Treatment during or after the conversion period may require a new conversion period

## UNDERSTANDING PRODUCTION UNITS



A **holding** includes all fields, buildings, equipment, records and staff managed by one farmer.

Within that holding, there may be different **Production Units (PUs)** depending on the production status.

Three possible production units

### 1. Non-organic Production Unit

A field or production area managed under conventional production.

### 2. In-conversion Production Unit

A field that has started the conversion process and is being managed according to organic requirements, but has not yet completed the required conversion period.

### 3. Organic Production Unit

A field that has successfully completed the conversion period and is managed according to organic production requirements.

## SAME CROP IN DIFFERENT PRODUCTION UNITS: ANNUAL CROPS

A holding may have different production units (PUs) with different production status. Rules for annual crops:

### Non Organic PU

“Near the house” with beans



### Organic PU

“Near the river” with beans



### NOT ALLOWED:

1

Same annual crop in non-organic and organic PUs. Not allowed for the same annual crops

### Non Organic PU

“Near the house” with corns



### Organic PU

“Near the river” with beans



### ALLOWED:

2

**Different** annual crops in non-organic and organic PUs. Allowed because the crops are different and seaily distinguished

## SAME CROP IN DIFFERENT PRODUCTION UNITS: ANNUAL CROPS

### In-Conversion PU

“Near the house” with beans



### Organic PU

“Near the river” with beans



3

### ALLOWED with caution:

Same annual crops in in-conversion and organic PUs.  
Allowed but with attention



### IMPORTANT:

- Products from the organic production unit can be sold as organic
- Products from the in-conversion PU cannot be sold as organic
- In the relevant year, the can only be sold as in-conversion.



### ICS INSPECTOR CHECK

- Can the farmer clearly show which crops are grown in each PU, and can the harvests be clearly distinguished?

## SAME CROP IN DIFFERENT PRODUCTION UNITS: PERENNIAL CROPS

For Perennial crops, the same crop may be grown in different production units but **ONLY** under **strict conditions**

### Non Organic PU

“Near the house” with  
banana



### Organic PU

“Near the river” with  
bananas



Same crop  
(bananaS) in  
different PUs,

### STRICT CONDITIONS THAT MUST BE MET:

- Notify the group of the start of the start of the harvest at least 48 Hours in advance
- Inform the certifier of the exact quantities harvested from each PU
- Keep farm inputs for non-organic PU separate from those for in-conversion and organic PUs
- Harvests from each PU must be collected, stored and transported separately
- Keep clear and separate records for each PU
- Have a conversion plan and measures that ensure complete separation
- This arrangement requires annual approval (e.g by ICS manager or relevant authority)
- Conversion of the last area to the crop must begin as soon as possible and be completed within a maximum of five years

## PREVENTING CONTAMINATION AND NON-AUTHORIZED INPUTS

1. **Identify the risks:** Where could prohibited products or substances enter the production process?
2. **Put preventive measures in place:** Examples: use approved seed, avoid prohibited herbicides, maintain buffer/separation, clean tools and equipment, keep harvests separate, control storage and processing.
3. **Check and document:** Train farmers/workers, verify the measures are working, and keep records.

Organic integrity must be protected from field preparation through harvesting, storage and processing.

### ICS Inspector Check:

Can the farmer identify the main contamination risks on the farm and show what measures are used to prevent them?

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION IS SOIL RELATED



## 1. Grown in soil



Crops grown directly in living soil can be certified organic, provided other organic requirements are met.

*Certifiable organic*



## 2. Allowed exceptions



Certain herbs, ornamental plants, seedlings and transplants may be grown in pots or containers and still be certifiable organic.

*certifiable under specific exceptions*



## 3. Not normally allowed



Ordinary food crops grown entirely in containers, such as tomatoes are not normally certifiable organic under this rule

*Not certifiable organic*

**Key Message:**

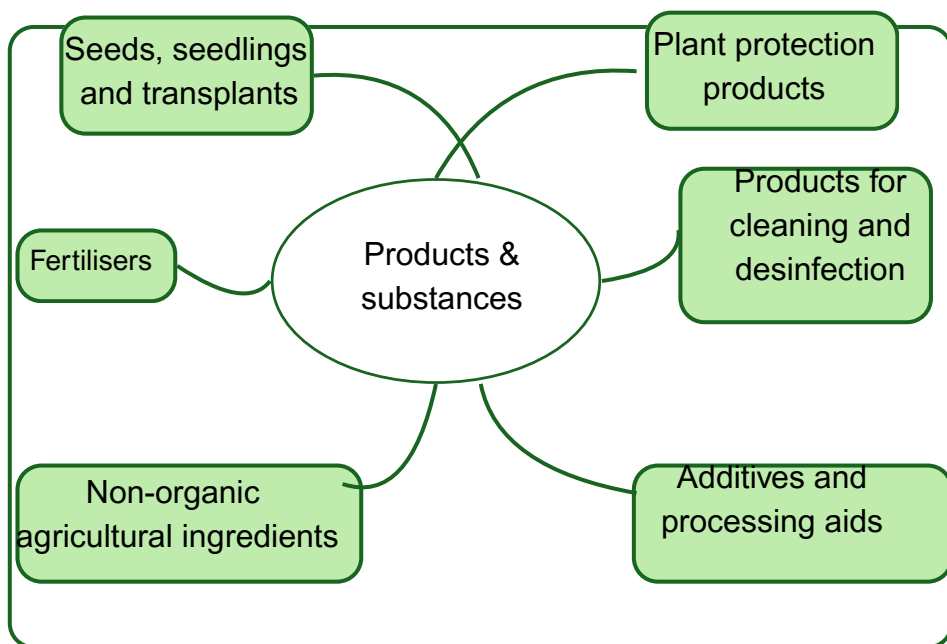
Organic plant production is fundamentally linked to living soil. Container production is only permitted for specific exceptions.

**ICS Inspector Check:**

Is the crop grown in soil, and if it is grown in a container, does it fall within an allowed exception?

## PRODUCTS AND SUBSTANCES USED IN ORGANIC PRODUCTION

This section introduces the main types of products and substances that may be relevant in organic production and highlights the categories covered in this training.



*Only products and substances permitted under organic production rules should be used.*

## Seeds, seedlings & transplants (Plant Reproductive Material (PRM))

| PRM used                              | Can it be used?         | Main condition                                                                                                          | Status of harvest                                                |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organic PRM                           | ✓ Yes                   | Preferred option                                                                                                        | Organic harvest                                                  |
| In-conversion PRM                     | ✓ Yes                   | When organic PRM is not available                                                                                       | Organic harvest                                                  |
| In-conversion PRM from own holding    | ✓ Yes                   | May be used from the farmer's own holding                                                                               | Organic harvest                                                  |
| Non-organic PRM                       | ⚠ Only under conditions | Only when in-conversion PRM is not available; must be chemically untreated and authorised <b>before sowing/planting</b> | Organic harvest, provided all other organic requirements are met |
| Chemically treated non-organic PRM    | ✗ No                    | Not permitted                                                                                                           | Cannot be used for organic production                            |
| Non-organic seedlings of annual crops | ✗ Not authorisable      | The curriculum states that authorization cannot be granted for seedlings of annual crops                                | Not applicable                                                   |

## FERTILIZERS

### Soil Management and Plan Nutrition

Organic soil fertility should first be maintained through good soil-management practices. Only when these preventive measures are not sufficient may authorised fertilisers, soil conditioners and nutrients be used.



#### Build soil first

- Maintain & increase soil organic matter & soil life, prevent compaction & erosion.
- Annual crops: Multi-annual Crop rotation including leguminous crops required
- Perennial crops: plant diversity & use of short-term green manure & legumes.
- Use of livestock manure & compost;
- External inputs kept to minimum
- Mineral Nitrogen fertilisers shall not be used

*Build soil fertility first. Use external fertilisers only when necessary and only if they are authorised for organic production.*

## FERTILIZERS

### Soil Management and Plan Nutrition

Organic soil fertility should first be maintained through good soil-management practices. Only when these preventive measures are not sufficient may authorised fertilisers, soil conditioners and nutrients be used.

#### Build soil first

- Maintain & increase soil organic matter & soil life, prevent compaction & erosion.
- Annual crops: Multi-annual Crop rotation including leguminous crops required
- Perennial crops: plant diversity & use of short-term green manure & legumes.
- Use of livestock manure & compost;
- External inputs kept to minimum
- Mineral Nitrogen fertilisers shall not be used

**If additional fertilisers are needed consider the following**

| Fertiliser / soil amendment | Main condition                                                                      |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Farmyard manure             | Mixture of animal excrements and vegetable matter; factory farming origin forbidden |
| Composted animal excrements | Factory farming origin forbidden                                                    |
| Wood ash                    | Must come from wood not chemically treated                                          |

## PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

## ORGANIC PEST &amp; WEED MANAGEMENT

**1. Prevent pests and weeds first**

Organic farming should first rely on preventive and cultural practices, not immediately on products.

**Main preventive measures:**

- Use well-adapted and pest-resistant varieties
- Practice crop rotation and intercropping
- Promote biodiversity and natural enemies
- Use mechanical or cultural pest control
- Carry out regular crop monitoring
- Manage weeds through mulching, cover crops and mechanical methods

*Only where preventive measures are not sufficient may authorised plant protection products be used.*

**IF ADDITIONAL MEASURES ARE NEEDED**

| Allowed category            | Example                         | Important note             |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Basic substances            | Vinegar, whey                   | Use as permitted           |
| Low-risk substances         | Ferric phosphate                | Use as permitted           |
| Micro-organisms             | Beneficial microbes             | Must be non-GMO            |
| Other authorised substances | Garlic extract, citronella oil, | Follow specific conditions |

## POST-HARVEST HANDLING OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Organic integrity must be protected after harvest through separation, identification, clean handling, traceability and proper records.

### HARVEST



- Harvest produce at the right maturity
- Use clean tools and containers
- Place harvested produce in clean crates

### HANDLING



- Cleaning
- Sorting and grading
- Simple preparation
- Removing damaged or unsuitable produce
- Packing produce into clean containers/crates

### STORAGE



- Place produce in a clean storage area
- Keep products properly arranged
- Keep different product statuses separated
- Protect them from contamination

*Inspector checks: Can the farmer show how organic products are kept separate, identified, transported and recorded after harvest?*

POST-HARVEST HANDLING OF  
ORGANIC PRODUCTS

## TRANSPORT



- Load produce into clean, appropriate vehicles or containers
- Keep products identified during transport
- Prevent mixing, substitution and damage



## SALE/DISPATCH



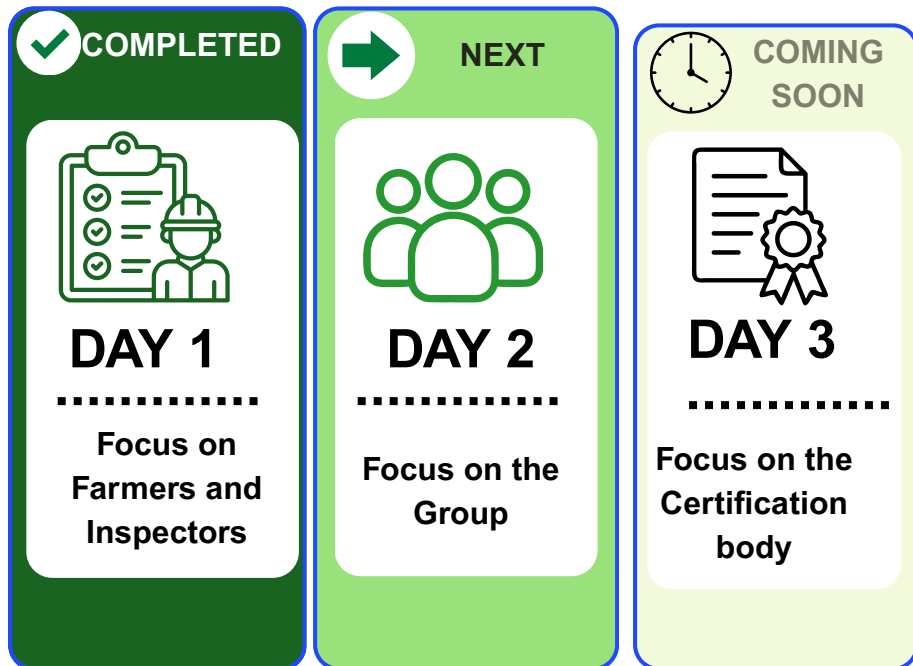
- Keep products clearly identified
- Use proper labelling
- Maintain relevant records
- Hand over or sell the correctly identified product to the buyer



*Inspector checks: Can the farmer show how organic products are kept separate, identified, transported and recorded after harvest?*

**CONTINUE THE ICS TRAINING  
SERIES**

This booklet is part of a 3-part practical reference series for Internal Control System (ICS) training.



Keep the full series together as a practical reference for group organic certification and Internal Control System implementation.

## Publication Information

This knowledge product is part of the ICS Training Set and provides a simplified and practical summary of the key topics covered under Day 1 – Focus on Farmers and ICS Inspectors. It has been developed with reference to the Training Manual for ICS Managers in view of obtaining EU Organic Certification – Farmer & ICS Inspector.

The guide focuses on practical requirements that farmers and ICS Inspectors need to understand and apply in organic production, including conversion to organic production, production units, prevention of contamination, soil-related production, seeds, seedlings and transplants, soil fertility and fertilisers, organic pest and weed management, and post-harvest handling.

This knowledge product has been developed by the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) with support from the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in East Africa (KHEA) Project.

Developed by Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) with support from the KHEA Project and referenced from the ICS Training Curriculum for EU Organic Certification.

