

KEY INDICATORS FOR GROUP CERTIFICATION

*A Practical Guide to the Internal Control System
(ICS) for EU Organic Certification*



ABOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT

This knowledge product provides a simple and practical overview of the key indicators for group organic certification within an Internal Control System (ICS). The guide presents the eight key indicators identified as the main things we check to confirm that the Internal Control System (ICS) is working properly and that the farmer group is meeting the requirements for organic group certification.

This guide will help the readers to quickly understand:

- what the indicator means;
- why it is important;
- what should be checked; and
- the key documents or evidence that should be available.

Target Users

This guide is intended for:

- ICS Managers;
- ICS Inspectors;
- Farmer groups and group leaders;
- Extension officers and facilitators; and
- Other actors supporting organic group certification.



The 8 Key Indicators

- 1 Booklets
- 2 Certificate
- 3 Contract
- 4 Other Control Body (CB) Aspects
- 5 Description
- 6 ICS Manual
- 7 Records
- 8 Registration

What to Expect

By using this guide, readers should be able to better understand the main areas that need to be maintained, monitored and documented for an effective ICS and successful group certification.



INDICATOR 1: BOOKLETS

This indicator covers two main elements:

1. **Farming = primary production.**
2. **Preparation** = preserving, processing, or handling products after primary production, including activities such as cleaning, milling, packaging and labelling.

1. Farming/Primary production

The farmer booklet should explain the rules covering:

- Farm/production units – which fields are organic, in-conversion or non-organic; boundaries and surface area
- Conversion requirements – applicable conversion period and what happens if the field is contaminated with prohibited substances.
- Prevention of contamination and mixing – identifying risks from neighboring farms, or facilities
- Preventive and precautionary measures – what farmers should do to avoid contamination
- Seeds, seedlings and transplants / Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) – preference for organic material and conditions for using in-conversion or non-organic material.
- Farm inputs – rules around fertilizers, plant protection products and other substances used in organic production.
- Crop management – soil management, crop rotation/intercropping, pest and disease management, and maintaining organic integrity.
- Harvesting – keeping organic, in-conversion and conventional harvests correctly identified



INDICATOR 1: BOOKLETS

2.Preparation / Post-harvest

The booklet should explain the rules for activities that happen after harvesting or when products are being handled/prepared, such as:

- Cleaning
- Milling or processing
- Storage
- Packaging
- Labelling
- Transport
- Separation of organic, in-conversion and non-organic products
- Prevention of contamination or commingling
- Traceability/lot identification

Simultaneous collection and transport of organic, in-conversion and non-organic products is possible only when measures prevent mixing and the products remain identified at all times.

For packaging and transport, it also requires appropriate closed packaging/containers and labels showing information such as the farmer's name/address, product, organic status, certification-body name/code and lot identification



INDICATOR 2: CERTIFICATE

This indicator checks whether the organic certificate accurately reflects the current status and activities of the farmer group.

What should be checked?

Products and product categories

- Are the certified products correctly listed?
- Are the relevant product categories included?

Activities

- Are the group's certified activities correctly indicated, such as production, preparation, distribution, storage, import or export where applicable?

Validity

- Is the certificate currently valid?

Quantities

- Where quantities are indicated, do they correspond with the group's certified production?

Subcontracting

- Are any subcontracted organic activities correctly reflected where applicable?

Control Body and Accreditation Body

- Is the recognized Control Body correctly identified?
- Is the relevant Accreditation Body information available?



INDICATOR 2: CERTIFICATE

Members

- Are all active certified members reflected correctly?
- Has the ICS Manager informed the Control Body of any changes in membership?

Sites

- Are the locations where organic activities take place correctly identified where applicable?
- Are different storage, collection or handling sites properly covered?

Key documents / evidence

- Current organic certificate
- Current certified member list
- Product and product-category list
- List of certified activities
- List of sites/locations
- Subcontracting information, where applicable
- Communication with the Control Body on changes
- Supporting production/quantity records where quantities appear on the certificate

Important note: The certificate must match what is actually happening in the group. Are the members, products, activities and sites on the certificate accurate and up to date?



INDICATOR 3: CONTRACTS

This indicator checks whether the required agreements between the group and the different actors involved in certification are properly established, signed, and maintained.

What should be checked?

1. Member/Farmer agreement

The member should have a signed agreement with the group confirming that they will:

- Comply with organic production requirements;
- Participate in the ICS;
- Allow access for inspection;
- Accept and implement measures in case of non-compliance;
- Inform the ICS Manager about suspicions or important changes;
- Join only one group for the same product;
- Participate in trainings organized by the group.

2. ICS Manager contract

- Is the ICS Manager formally appointed/contracted?
- Are responsibilities clearly defined?

3. ICS Inspector contract

- Are internal inspectors formally engaged?
- Are their roles and responsibilities clear?

4. Control Body contract

- Is there a valid agreement between the group and the recognized Control Body?



INDICATOR 3: CONTRACTS

This indicator checks whether the required agreements between the group and the different actors involved in certification are properly established, signed, and maintained.

5. Subcontractor contract

- Where external actors handle organic products, the contract should clearly define who is responsible for maintaining organic integrity during the activity.

6. Key documents / evidence

- Signed member agreements
- ICS Manager contract
- ICS Inspector contracts
- Contract with the Control Body
- Subcontractor agreements, where applicable
- Updated contract register/list
- Records showing changes or termination of contracts where relevant

Important note: Every actor involved in the ICS should know and formally accept their responsibilities. Cross check to ensure that all required agreements are signed, updated, and are clear about responsibilities for organic compliance.



INDICATOR 4: OTHER CONTROL BODY (CB) ASPECTS

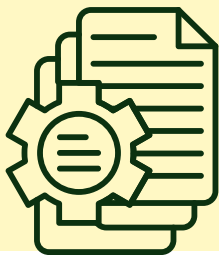
This indicator checks whether the other important certification documents and communications from or with the Control Body are properly received, followed up, and kept by the group. This includes as documents issued by the Control Body that are not the certificate and not the contract

What should be checked?

- External inspection reports
- Non-compliance findings and follow-up
- Requests and approvals from the CB
- Sampling records
- Laboratory reports
- Certificates of Inspection (COIs), where applicable
- Production rules issued by the CB
- Official letters, invoices and correspondence
- Public certification status/website information

Key records/evidence: External inspection reports, non-compliance letters and corrective actions, requests and approvals from the Control Body, sampling and laboratory reports, COIs where applicable, production rules, invoices and other official correspondence.

Important to note: All important certification communications, findings and approvals should be properly documented, followed up and easy to retrieve. Ensure the ICS can quickly show the relevant CB reports, approvals, findings and correspondence when required.



INDICATOR 5: DESCRIPTION

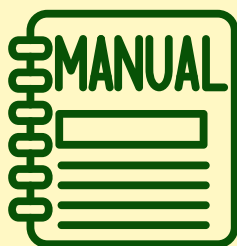
This indicator checks whether the group has a clear written description of how its organic activities are organized and managed. It is a documented overview of the group's activities, facilities, documentation, measures and staff used to ensure compliance.

What should be checked?

- Plans and maps
- Organogram and staff responsibilities
- Production units and sites
- Preventive and precautionary measures
- Traceability system
- Technical support arrangements
- Transport and storage
- Packaging and labelling
- Product flow and separation

Key records/evidence: Field and facility maps, organogram, production-unit and site records, traceability documents, risk and precautionary-measure records, storage and transport procedures, packaging and labelling information, and technical-support records.

Important to note: The written description should reflect how the group actually operates in practice. Can the ICS clearly show where activities take place, how products move, and how organic integrity is protected?



INDICATOR 6: ICS MANUAL

This indicator checks whether the group has a clear and documented system showing how the Internal Control System operates.

It is the set of procedures and documents describing the functioning of the ICS.

What should be checked?

- ICS procedures
- Standard forms and templates
- Roles and responsibilities
- Internal inspection process
- Handling of non-compliances
- Approval and follow-up procedures
- Catalogue of measures: Should describe non-compliance findings, classify them as minor, major or critical, and indicate the corresponding action to be taken

Key records/evidence: Current ICS Manual, approved procedures, standard forms and templates, internal inspection procedures, non-compliance procedures, staff responsibility descriptions and the catalogue of measures.

Important to note: The ICS Manual should clearly explain how the internal control system works in practice. Check if the ICS procedures documented, understood and consistently applied.



INDICATOR 7 : RECORDS

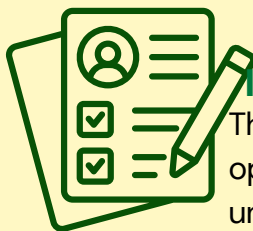
This indicator checks whether the farmer, ICS and group maintain the records needed to demonstrate compliance and traceability.

What should be checked?

- Farmer production records
- Internal inspection records
- Member contracts and related records
- Non-compliance and corrective-action records
- Training records for members and ICS Inspectors
- Group invoices and delivery notes
- Post-harvest activity records
- Records related to impartiality
- Traceability records

Key records/evidence: Farmer records, internal inspection reports, member contracts, non-compliance and corrective-action records, training records, invoices, delivery notes, post-harvest records, impartiality records and traceability documents.

Important to note: Good records provide evidence that the ICS is functioning and that organic requirements are being followed. Are the records complete, up to date, traceable and easy to retrieve?



INDICATOR 8 : REGISTRATION

This indicator checks whether the group of operators is officially registered as a legal entity under the applicable national system.

What should be checked?

- Legal registration of the group
- Official name of the group
- Registration status and validity
- Consistency of the group's legal details across certification documents
- Availability of current registration documents

Key records/evidence: Certificate of registration, legal establishment documents, official group details, and any updated registration records required under the national system..

Important to note: The certified group must have a clear and legally recognized identity. Is the group legally registered, and do its official details match the certification documents?

QUICK ICS CHECKS FOR THE 8 KEY INDICATORS:

This indicator checks whether the group of operators is officially registered as a legal entity under the applicable national system.

What should be checked?

- Legal registration of the group
- Official name of the group
- Registration status and validity
- Consistency of the group's legal details across certification documents
- Availability of current registration documents

Key records/evidence: Certificate of registration, legal establishment documents, official group details, and any updated registration records required under the national system..

Important to note: The certified group must have a clear and legally recognized identity. Is the group legally registered, and do its official details match the certification documents?



QUICK ICS CHECKS FOR THE 8 KEY INDICATORS:

Use this section as a quick reminder of the main areas that should be in place and regularly checked with the ICS

Booklets	Certificate	Contract	Other CB Aspects
Are farmers informed about farming and preparation requirements?	Does the certificate currently reflect members, products, activities and sites?	Are the required agreements signed, current and clear?	Are inspection reports, approvals and official correspondence properly managed?
Description	ICS Manual	Records	Registration
Is the group's operation clearly documented, including traceability, storage, transport and product flow?	Are procedures, forms, and measures clearly documented and applied?	Are farmer, ICS and group records complete, current and traceable?	Is the group legally registered and properly identified?

Publication Information

This knowledge product provides a simplified overview of the key indicators for group organic certification under an Internal Control System (ICS). It has been developed with reference to the Training Manual for ICS Managers in view of obtaining EU organic certification – Farmer & ICS Inspector, which presents the key indicators for group certification and the related requirements for farmers, ICS personnel and groups.

The guide 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. It is intended to help ICS Managers, ICS Inspectors, farmer groups, extension officers and other actors supporting organic group certification to understand the main areas that should be maintained, documented and regularly checked within the ICS.

The eight key indicators covered in this guide are Booklets, Certificate, Contract, Other Control Body Aspects, Description, ICS Manual, Records and Registration.

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

