



Grower Group Organic Certification



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Jamaica Sustainable Farm Enterprise Project
March 30-April 12, 2015

What Is A Grower Group?



A group of farmers or producers that:

- Have similar production systems
- Are in geographic proximity
- Use coordinated marketing
- Have sufficient resources to support a viable **Internal Control System (ICS)** that assures compliance of individual members with organic standards in an objective and transparent manner

Organizational Requirements



- Organizational business structure who ensures compliance to the organic standards
- Internal Organic Standard
- Farmer approval procedures
- Internal Control System (ICS) documentation
- Non-compliance and sanction procedures
- Procedures for buying, handling, processing and sales
- Training of farmers and ICS personnel

Definition of Internal Control System

IFOAM Definition:

An Internal Control System (ICS) is a documented **quality assurance system** that allows the external certification body to **delegate the annual inspection** of individual group **members to an identified body/unit within the certified operation.**

Why Grower Group Certification?



- The organic market is regulated by various organic standards and regulations.
- Compliance with these regulations includes annual inspection and certified by an accredited organic Certification Body (CB).
- Certification builds trust between the producer and the consumer.

Why Grower Group Certification?



- A majority of farmers, worldwide, are small.
- Income is usually too small to cover the costs of certification for each individual farmer.
- Grower group certification process helps the small farmers get organic certification and market their products.

A Variety of Names



- Grower groups
- Community grower groups
- Smallholder groups (EU) *A farm of small size which mainly relies on family labour.*
- Producer groups
- Operations with multiple production units, sites and facilities (USDA)

Example: Quinoa in Bolivia



Farmer Cooperative of 15,000 Members Growing Quinoa



Organizational business structure;
regional offices

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Geographic Proximity

Size can range from 10 to thousands of members



Similar production systems: Follow internal organic standards

Approved inputs, equipment,
and storage



Use Similar Production Systems

Harvest and post-harvest handling



May Combine Processing and Storage of Finished Product



Have Coordinated Marketing



Sufficient Resources for *Internal Control System*

Organization and Coordinator



ICS: Personnel and Process



Extension agent or field advisor, internal inspector;
organic approval personnel

Example: Tea in Kenya



Similar Production System: Green Tea



Organization: 8000 Member Farmer Cooperative



Geographic Proximity



Records: Weight ticket to producer



Cooperative and Processing Personnel



ICS Personnel



Resources

- JOAM Organic Farming Handbook, Section 2.3.8-9
- IFOAM NORMS, 2014, Section 8.3
- IFOAM Training Curriculum – Smallholder Group Certification:
www.iatp.org/files/451_2_98159.pdf
- The Organic Business Guide: Developing sustainable value chains with smallholders (2010)
- USDA National Organic Program:
www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/nop