

Training Report on Organic Certification & Internal Control System for Smallholder Group Certification

For
**Department of Agriculture & Cane Development (Horticulture) & SAMETI
Govt. of Jharkhand, Ranchi**

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The success of any nature friendly initiative greatly depends on the development of location and community specific approaches that are based on the needs and existing strengths of the participants. The fulfilment of the requirements of the eco friendly/organically oriented consumers would also be very significant in ensuring that these attempts are genuinely viable.

Small growers in remote regions lacking infrastructure produce a majority of the agricultural products in countries like India. Since very large numbers of growers are involved, it is essential that a practical and cost-effective inspection scheme is applied, which, at the same time will enable the certifier to guarantee effective, appropriate checks on the production, processing and marketing of organic products.

To allow smallholder organisations to participate in the organic market, IMO has collaborated with Naturland and IFOAM in the development of a specific inspection procedure which can be applied for the group certification of small holders. The concept is based on a combination of an internal control system (ICS) managed by the operator and monitored by the certifier. The ICS model is based on developing the capacities of the smallholder organizations in the regular and objective monitoring of the activities of all registered farmers and delegating a significant portion of the inspection and approval procedures to these organizations. Thereby, the total number of re-inspections by the external certifier is greatly minimized and consequently, the costs of certification are brought down significantly.

The training on organic certification & internal control system for small holder group certification was organised to impart the certification requirements to extension staff of Dept. of Agriculture (4 personnel), State Agriculture University Scientists (7 personnel), officers

ABC (2 personnel), Horticulture selected farmers (12 farmers) of beneficiary villages of Jharkhand. This training was for the Master Trainers who will further train the required groups/personnel. The farmers are involved just to make them understand the certification requirements.

The programme began after providing basic knowledge on organic farming principles in the previous training sessions. The trainer visited one of the beneficiary villages to understand the basic agriculture & socio economic cultural aspects.

The program started with inaugural note of the Director Agriculture, DOA, Jharkhand. Then participants introduced themselves.

On the first day, Organic certification structure and organic certification requirements were discussed. Certification is a procedure by which a written assurance is given by the Certification Agency that a clearly identified production or processing system has been methodically assessed and conforms to the specified requirements.

Here evolution of organic certification, various legal and private organic standards, principles of certification, structure of organic certification, what can be certified, key issues in organic standards (conversion period, parallel production, separation, inputs, product flow, traceability, documentation etc), steps in an inspection and certification system, about IMO etc were covered.

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

In the second part, participants were introduced to following topics elaborately.

1. Introduction to ICS: Who can participate, principles, types and importance.
2. Project Organization: Options, structure
3. Risk assessment in an organic project: Assessing the risks involved in the local situation to a organic project
4. Internal organic standard, ICS manual: Summary of applicable organic regulations that is suitable to the specific situation and sum of all documents regulating the ICS: procedures, forms, internal regulation, contracts, etc.

5. Personnel requirements to set up an ICS system: ICS Coordinator, extension staff, internal inspector, approval committee, their qualifications, duties
6. Importance of training to farmers and ICS staff: to provide farmers and project staff with a clear understanding of the relevant aspects of organic farming and, especially, make them aware of the contents and implications of the internal regulation for organic agriculture.
7. Registration of new farmers –criteria and documentation: Selection criteria of new farmers, documents to be completed like contracts, maps, farm entrance format
8. Internal inspection skills: interview & observation skills, documentation
9. Documentation to run an ICS: Documents to be maintained at farm, ICS and purchase centre level
10. Purchase, processing operations: Organic certification requirements to prevent contamination at purchase and processing stage
11. External certification procedures: Choice of certifier, focus of external inspection, re inspection rate.

The participants were also made to develop some documents such as

1. Internal Organic Standards
2. Farm entry forms
3. Contracts
4. Internal inspection checklists
5. Farm maps

During the training only partial documents (mentioned above) are developed by the participants.

The training was done using power point presentation with lot of illustrations and photographs. Example documents were also shown. IFOAM Guidance manual and partial document on NPOP were made available to all the participants.

Participants also participated in discussions related to adoption of organic standards to local situation and its feasibility. They also participated in exercise activities. It was a first exposure to organic certification for the participants. Participants felt that the requirements are intricate. The participants, especially scientists still felt that organic farming practices are not scientific and need more research. So they could not focus & appreciate on certification requirements fully.

The training was concluded by summarising the certification requirements and future course of action.

Next course of action to achieve certification are

1. Organise an ICS personnel structure (ICS Coordinator, Field extension staff, Internal inspector, approval committee)
2. Develop required documents/formats (1. Internal organic standard & ICS manual, 2. Contracts, 3. Farm entrance format, 4. Internal inspection checklists, 5. Approved Farmers List)
3. Inform all the farmers about internal organic standard
4. Sign a contract with each farmer for organic cultivation & certification.
5. Collect basic information on each farm in Farm entrance format (total area, organic area, area under specific crops, facilities present with farmers such as irrigation, animals, sprayer etc) including field history (past used chemical inputs)
6. Draw maps of individual farm/plot
7. Carry out 100% internal inspection & document in internal inspection checklist
8. Prepare an approved farmers list based on the results of internal inspection
9. Get the approved farmers list approved by approval committee (to be constituted).

In addition, there should be continuous need based training at the farm level on various aspects of organic agriculture.

After completion of above tasks, follow up training will be planned (as per contract with IMO). In this training, the ICS organization and implementation will be reviewed. The results of the review must be incorporated before the IMO inspection. The personnel involved in the implementation of ICS are required to attend this review training in addition to the participants attended the first session.

The first inspection for certification by IMO may be planned in the month of September (first week). So the first set of activities must be completed by first week of August. Then the review training may happen in second week of August so that the inspection for certification may be carried out in the first week of September.

Proposed calendar of activities

First set of activities (Step 1 to 9)	First week of August
Review training	Second week of August
Incorporation of review results	Last week of August
Inspection for certification	First week of September

Kindly inform about the progress of ICS implementation to IMO.