



Manual for Organic Certification Operation

*In accordance with
Organic Standard and Guidelines of Government of Nepal,
Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development*



**Prepared by
NEP.CERT**

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Forewords

Across Nepal, agricultural producers and processors are actively seeking advanced quality management solutions. Their aim is to guarantee the integrity of our organic products, protect the natural environment, and uphold ethical practices. This proactive search for excellence is shaping the future of Nepal's agriculture.

To meet these goals, a consensus is forming around an integrated strategy. This strategy combines sustainable farming practices (like Organic, Regenerative, and Vedic) with globally recognized standards such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Business Practices (GBP). Adopting these systems is seen as vital for creating a sustainable agricultural sector that also boosts biodiversity, tourism, and overall socio-economic development.

At the core of our operations, **NEP.CERT** adheres to the foundational principles of Organic Agriculture as established by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). **The Principle of Health** to sustain and enhance the health of soil, plants, animals, humans, and the planet as one indivisible whole; **The Principle of Ecology** to work with, emulate, and help sustain living ecological systems and cycles; **The Principle of Fairness** to build relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities; and, **The Principle of Care** to manage agriculture in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

This manual provides a comprehensive overview of NEP.CERT, including the operational modalities of our Review and Certification Committee. It outlines the specific procedures we have adopted for the certification of organic products and the implementation of our Organic Labelling program. The primary objective of this manual is to transparently inform all stakeholders—including producers, processors, and handlers—about NEP.CERT's certification process and their role within it.

Furthermore, this manual provides the procedures and responsibilities necessary to maintain organic integrity at every stage of the product's journey, from farm to consumer. This information is openly available to any operator or stakeholder interested in the production, processing, or handling of organic agricultural products in Nepal. NEP.CERT is committed to ensuring full transparency for all parties.

The inspection, review of inspection reports, and final certification decisions are the sole responsibility of NEP.CERT and are made based on the operator's fulfillment of all administrative and technical requirements. Throughout this process, any potential conflict of interest involving our officers is carefully considered and will be managed by senior management to ensure impartiality. Our certification guidelines are based on the National Organic Standards developed by the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.

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(Cover photo by Bhupendra Nirajan, location: Champadevi, Kathmandu)

Contents

I	PART-I	3
1.1	BACKGROUND	3
1.2	OBJECTIVES OF THIS MANUAL	3
1.3	IMPORTANCE OF THIS MANUAL	4
1.4	HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL	4
1.5	QUALITY MANAGEMENT POLICY	4
1.6	EMPLOYEES AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	5
1.7	LEGALITY	5
1.8	ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	5
1.9	ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING AND HANDLING STANDARD	5
2	ORGANIC CERTIFICATION MANUAL	6
2.1	INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION APPROACH	6
2.2	CERTIFICATION SCOPE	6
2.3	APPLICATION PROCEDURES	6
2.4	INSPECTION PROTOCOL	6
2.5	EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION	6
2.6	CERTIFICATION FLOW OVERVIEW	7
2.7	RECOGNITION, AUTHORIZATION & EXCEPTIONS	7
2.8	COMPLIANCE CONDITIONS	7
2.9	CERTIFICATION MAINTENANCE & EXTENSION	7
2.10	SURRENDER & PENALTIES	7
2.11	COMPLAINTS & APPEALS	7
2.12	SERVICE COSTS	7
2.13	INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS	8
2.14	DISPUTE SETTLEMENT	8

I **PART-I**

1.1 Background

In Nepal, organic certification was first introduced in the 1990s, focusing on the Orthodox Tea sector for the export market. Today, this awareness of product quality and the authenticity of claims has grown significantly within the domestic market as well. To address this consumer demand and assure product integrity, producers, processors, and traders are increasingly seeking organic certification. It was in response to this growing need that **NEP.CERT**, a dedicated organic certification body, was established in 2009.

NEP.CERT is an accredited certification body established to uphold the standards of organic agriculture in Nepal. Since its inception, NEP.CERT has dedicated itself to ensuring compliance with national guidelines while integrating local farming practices, language, and contexts through its inspection and certification processes.

Since its founding, NEP.CERT has been instrumental in developing the Code of Conduct for Orthodox Tea in eastern Nepal and establishing functional Internal Control Systems (ICS) for various organic commodities nationwide. Today, there is a strong demand from producers for certification services, and NEP.CERT is fully prepared to meet this demand.

Our capacity is built on a team of 17 highly trained Organic Inspectors, developed in collaboration with the **International Organic Inspectors Association (IOIA)**. IOIA is an independent international organization dedicated to the professional development of organic inspectors. These professionals are equipped not only to conduct rigorous inspections but also to provide comprehensive support in other areas of organic agriculture, helping initiatives prepare for a successful certification process.

1.2 Objectives of This Manual

The primary objectives of this manual are:

- To provide a clear procedural framework for certification officials to conduct pre- and post-inspection reviews of all documentation submitted by organic operators.
- To equip Organic Inspectors with the necessary knowledge and tools to conduct independent inspections, providing a standardized foundation for assessing operations and making evidence-based recommendations to the certification committee.
- To serve as a clear and reliable channel for communicating updates on all relevant government rules, regulations, and standards for organic production, processing, and handling to all operators.
- To serve as a primary training and reference tool for building the capacity of all NEP.CERT staff and contracted personnel, thereby ensuring the consistent delivery of high-quality certification services.
- To foster collaboration, teamwork, and networking among operators and other key stakeholders, thereby creating an enabling environment for the sustainable development of Nepal's organic agriculture sector.
- To define the protocols for smooth and functional communication, ensuring that NEP.CERT's activities, progress, and developments are reported clearly and consistently to all relevant authorities.

1.3 Importance of this Manual

This manual is a critical operational tool for all certification staff at NEP.CERT. It establishes a standardized and impartial framework for implementing the certification process and for making all certification decisions. Crucially, every decision must be based on the objective facts and evidence-based findings gathered during on-site inspections.

Beyond its internal function, this manual also plays a vital role for producers and processors embarking on the organic certification pathway. It is important to clarify that an initial system, such as one based on a Code of Conduct (CoC), is a foundational step but does not in itself constitute a certificate of conformity to international organic standards.

However, this manual provides the structured pathway for operators to meet these foundational requirements. By adhering to the procedures outlined here, producers and processors can effectively facilitate their journey toward achieving full, internationally recognized organic certification, thereby ensuring their products meet global market expectations.

1.4 How to Use this Manual

This document, hereafter referred to as "The Manual," constitutes the official operational guideline for the quality control and certification of organic products—including production, processing, and handling—as implemented by NEP.CERT.

The protocols herein are mandatory for all internal personnel, including Inspectors, Certification Officers, and Reviewers, and serve as the guiding framework for all external operators. This Manual shall also be submitted to the relevant accreditation body as a formal declaration of NEP.CERT's operational procedures, which are designed to be in full compliance with the organic standards promulgated by the Government of Nepal.

1.5 Quality Management Policy

NEP.CERT certified Nepali organic products reflects that the product is of higher quality standard and once it enters the market the consumers will be assured that the products from the certification system adopted by NEP.CERT Organic Labelling logo meets the quality standards as stated on Organic Standard Guidelines of Government of Nepal. In addition, it will give self-satisfaction to producers, processors and entrepreneurs with respect to product quality.

The Certification System may help the producers, processors and consumers to adopt other better option which can contribute the fundamental principles of Organic Agriculture and beyond.

For these purposes:

- All members/staff or contracted individual to carry out the organic certification will be communicated about this manual.
- Employees Internal Control System (ICS) involved in Small holder farmers groups affiliated with this program; employees and laborers of processing center and handling should be well communicated about the manual and need to well update with the requirement.
- At each stage for the implementation of this Manual, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) will be developed which further give the opportunity to understand the thrust of Manual to wider level of stakeholders and certification team.
- This policy needs to be updated and revise time to time with the necessary feedback, suggestion and consultation with the relevant stakeholders and subject matter specialist.

1.6 Employees and Resource Management

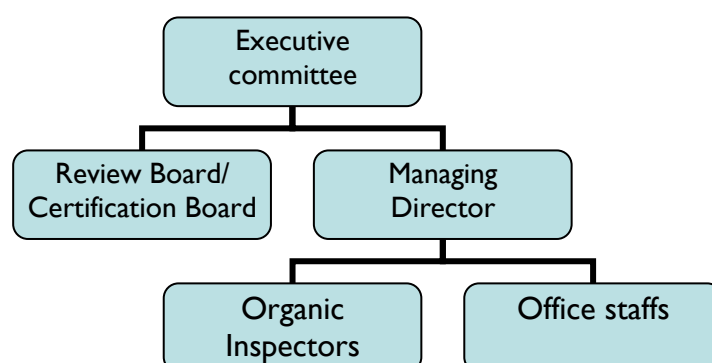
- The employees of NEP.CERT, Review Committee for Organic Certification, Technical Committee should have through knowledge about this Manual.
- Employees at NEP.CERT, Compliance and Technical Committee's members and inspector's Evaluation procedure should be developed. It will pave way for self-evaluation and can improve in future for other level of recognition.
- This whole process needs resources. So, NEP.CERT Secretariat will develop Financial Plan for the sustainability of this programme by preparing Sustainability Indicator.

1.7 Legality

This whole document is part of NEP.CERT Certification Program and the implementation of this manual is directed by the Accreditation body as which looks the proper implementation of Organic Standard guidelines developed by the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (here known as MoALD).

1.8 Organizational Structure

The Organizational structure for the implementation is under NEP.CERT



1.9 Organic Agriculture Production, Processing and Handling Standard

The basis of Organic Standard is MoALD developed Organic Standard Guidelines and associated program relevant to organic production, processing and handling. In addition to this NEP.CERT can develop the additional Organic Standard in harmony with government standard and submit to accreditation body for the information and approval as required.

2 ORGANIC CERTIFICATION MANUAL

2.1 Inspection and Certification Approach

NEP.CERT follows a structured methodology as outlined in its flow diagram for organic certification:

- A. Application Submission: Operators submit documentation and request certification.
- B. Certification fee: Operator pays the certification fee as per estimated by NEP.CERT
- C. Verification & Inspection: Auditors are assigned based on their familiarity with the local language, culture, and farming systems.
- D. Evaluation: All submitted materials, inspection reports, and secondary findings are reviewed against regulatory standards.
- E. Compliance Check: Practices and inputs must align with approved organic methods.
- F. Certification Decision: Final determination made by the Certification Committee.

2.2 Certification Scope

NEP.CERT operates in compliance with the Organic Production and Standard Guidelines approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Government of Nepal.

2.3 Application Procedures

- A. Initial Inquiry: Operators contact NEP.CERT for certification procedures.
- B. Information Package: Provided in Nepali and English, detailing required documentation and formalities.
- C. Administrative Clearance: All financial and administrative processes must be finalized before review begins.
- D. Digital Database Entry: Operator information is entered into the NEP.CERT eCert System.
- E. Service Agreement & Quotation Acceptance
- F. Application Review & Assessment

2.4 Inspection Protocol

- A. Frequency & Timing: Scheduled based on crop cycles and operator activities.
- B. Types of Inspection:
 - Routine
 - Risk-Based
 - Investigative
 - Unannounced
- C. Follow-up Measures: May include soil, tissue, or product analysis.

2.5 Evaluation and Certification

- A. Evaluation of Reports
- B. Non-Compliance Follow-up
- C. Three-Tier Review: Inspector → Reviewer → Certification/ Review Board
- D. Certification Outcome:
 - In-Conversion or Organic status
 - Detailed certificate with scope, validity, operator info, and responsible personnel

2.6 Certification Flow Overview

Key procedures, timelines, and responsible officers are documented in internal flow charts. For example:

- A. Application Response: Within 2–3 days by the Customer Service Section
- B. Progressive Steps: Guided by department-specific officers

2.7 Recognition, Authorization & Exceptions

NEP.CERT grants conditional approvals in accordance with Nepal's Organic Standards, including:

- A. Use of non-organic planting materials
- B. Management of catastrophic circumstances
- C. Parallel or split production under strict buffer conditions

2.8 Compliance Conditions

- A. Non-Compliance Categories:
 - Minor
 - Major
 - Critical
- B. Consequences:
 - Suspension or Withdrawal of Certification
 - Opportunities for Corrective Action
 - Revocation if unresolved within specified period

2.9 Certification Maintenance & Extension

- A. Renewal and extension granted upon justifiable request, including events such as:
 - Political unrest
 - Natural disasters
 - Involvement of multiple certifiers

2.10 Surrender & Penalties

- A. Voluntary Surrender: With signed operator declaration
- B. Violations:
 - Subject to penalties based on category and severity
 - Includes actions against NEP.CERT personnel for misconduct

2.11 Complaints & Appeals

- A. Operators and stakeholders may submit appeals within 15 days of decision.
- B. Violations by NEP.CERT officials are also subject to disciplinary action.

2.12 Service Costs

All procedures and services rendered by NEP.CERT incur costs, which are payable by the applicant.

2.13 Institutional Obligations

NEP.CERT remains fully accountable to the accreditation body's rules and regulations and operates with integrity, transparency, and commitment to organic standards.

Let me know if you'd like this tailored for outreach purposes, translated into Nepali, or restructured as a visual presentation. Happy to refine it further for any specific audience or format!

2.14 Dispute Settlement

Any legal issues or disputes coming during organic certification process will be first dealt by NEP.CERT between the parties as authorized by Organic Standard and Accreditation Body. In a situation of further action need to be done as per rule and regulation of Government of Nepal.



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