



Lao People's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

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Application Manual
for Lao organic agriculture certification

To develop party and government policy in clean agriculture, food and commodity production planning of the agriculture and forestry sector, the Department of Agriculture has developed some laws and regulations as background for execution by several organizations.

The Application Manual for Lao organic agriculture has been created to advise and facilitate producers and entrepreneurs interested in applying for certification of organic agriculture as well as facilitating technical staffs in applying easier and less time consuming steps for certification application and to encourage more producers and entrepreneurs to apply for certification.

This manual has been compiled and developed from practice and from different sources of references. Therefore the Department of Agriculture hopes that the manual will help producers and entrepreneurs in facilitating application for organic agriculture certification.

As this is the first edition of the manual, shortcomings cannot be avoided in some aspects. The Department of Agriculture is happy to receive criticisms and comments from readers in order to improve future editions.

Director General
Department of Agriculture
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1. Scope of the organic agriculture certificate

The scope of the organic agriculture certificate in Lao PDR consists of 3 standards as follows:

- 1) Certification of post production standards.
- 2) Certification of post harvesting and processing standards

3) Certification of standards of forest products

2. Individual, legitimate persons and organizations, who intend to apply for certification should proceed as follows:

2.1 Filling in of Application form

Applicants should completely and correctly fill in the form according to the rules for application of Lao organic agriculture certification.

There are two application forms for Lao organic certification:

1. Application form for farm certification
2. Application form for processing certification

In the case of a request for both farm and processing certification application can be made by an organic agriculture farm

2.2 Withdrawal of application form.

In the case of the applicant having sent the form and having already paid the fee to the certificate unit but wanting to withdraw the application form or to ask for validity extension, the applicant should follow the following step:

- Withdrawal of the application form should be communicated in writing to the certification unit. However, fee paid to the unit can in no case be refunded.

3. Category of application for organic agriculture certificate

The Application form for organic agriculture certificate is classified in 4 categories according to the principle of production and entrepreneurship.

Application category	Applicant	Certification
1. Application for farm certificate	Producers or entrepreneurs practicing organic agriculture farming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farm and farm products. - Packing of organic agriculture products. - Family processing or small scale processing using organic agriculture products from own farm.
2. Application for	Producers or entrepreneurs	- Processing

processing certification	<p>who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process own products of organic agriculture. - Process products of other organic producers or combined in processing. - Purchase organic agriculture products for repacking and distribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processed products - Packing
3. Application for group certification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Producers group or entrepreneurs. - Producing organic agriculture and processing for marketing in group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processing - Processed products. - Packing.
4. Application for forest product certification.	Village member or management group, who collect non-timber forest products (NTFP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest Products - Packing - Family or group processing.

In addition to application for certification of organic agriculture as mentioned above, the certification unit offers other services such as:

- Export service.

The Certification unit can facilitate and coordinate with the international certification organizations through being a member of the control and certification organization, for instance: we can export to Europe, United State of America and Japan.

- Certification of production factors of organic agriculture.
- The Certification unit can certify production factors with trade name and need to sale to producers under the certification of the certification unit.

4. Application condition producers and entrepreneurs.

Producers and entrepreneurs applying for organic agriculture certification to the certification unit should proceed as follows:

- Record of purchase and use of raw materials, sale of organic products and storage of products purchase and sale documents (Receipt and others...)
- Record of raw material purchasing, products sale and production documents
- Allow inspectors to survey the total area of ownership (Including tending and renting) and the entrepreneurship applying for certification including storage of farm products, materials and implements, warehouses for raw materials and dormitories not notified to the certification unit.
- Inform immediately the certification unit if there are some changes in production for instance: type of crops and location of entrances or execution according to the regulations and condition prescribed by the certification unit.

5. Inspection of farm and entrepreneurship location.

5.1 Inspectors.

The inspectors shall have knowledge and very good experience in organic agriculture production and shall be registered as inspector of the certification unit.

The inspectors must inspect the location of production and entrepreneurship according to the documents (Application form/Validity extension) and also the activity of producers and entrepreneurs.

The Certification unit is responsible for the overall expenses of the inspectors. Inspectors are not allowed to receive additional payments from producers and entrepreneurs including accepting any gifts or valuables from producers and entrepreneurs.

In the case of unsatisfactory behavior by the inspectors producers and entrepreneurs should inform the certification unit.

5.2 Type for inspection.

Inspections can be classified in 3 types:

1. An Initial inspection is the inspection of the farm area and entrepreneurship location to evaluate the activity of producers and entrepreneurs. An initial inspection should be notified in advance and producers and entrepreneurs should be at the place to meet the inspectors.
2. An Annual inspection is the inspection of a production and entrepreneurship location that takes place once a year and should be notified in advance to the producers and entrepreneurs.

3. A Special inspection is an inspection in addition to the annual inspection which takes place due to:

- The conditions prescribed by the certification committee members.
- Complaints or rumors and suspicions.
- New reconsideration of certification.
- Overlap in yield and production.
- Pollution risk to the production and processing between organic agriculture and chemical agriculture.

Special inspection can be classified as follows:

- Follow up inspection is the follow up of an annual inspection to ensure that producers and entrepreneurs execute the conditions prescribed by the certification committee. All expenses are the responsibility of the producers and entrepreneurs.
- A Follow up inspection to answer complaints and suspicions. This inspection is not notified in advance to producers and entrepreneurs and the certification unit will bear all expenses. After the inspection, if the producers and entrepreneurs have broken the standards and regulations as mentioned on appeal, they shall be responsible for all expenses.
- Extra inspection on appeal is an inspection carried out according to the recommendation of the committee members. On considering the new decision, this inspection may or may not be notified in advance to the producers and entrepreneurs. Producers and entrepreneurs will bear all expenses.
- Internal audit control is performed by the accreditation body (AB) in order to inspect the working system of the inspectors in executing the duties of the certification unit. Normally this inspection may not be notified in advance to the producers and entrepreneurs. The certification unit will be responsible for all expenses without payment of a fee.
- An Additional inspection for new production is the inspection of certified producers and entrepreneurs that need certification for additional production areas and entrepreneurship location. This inspection must be requested additionally.

5.3 Inspection methods.

After receiving an application form and having sufficient data as prescribed, the certification unit will inform in advance the producers and entrepreneurs that a team of inspectors has been assigned to inspect the production farm area and entrepreneurship location.

When the producers and entrepreneurs receive the names of the inspectors they may reject them on the grounds that these inspectors derive some profit from producers entrepreneurs. This would have an unfair effect on the producers and entrepreneurs and they should report it in writing immediately to the certification unit.

The inspectors will make an appointment directly with the producers and entrepreneurs. During the inspection both should be present all time at the farm or entrepreneurship location. If there are some inevitable reasons for absence they must postpone the appointment with the inspector or the certification unit.

The producers/entrepreneurs must cooperate with the inspectors in the inspection of the farm and entrepreneurship location. In the case of producers/entrepreneurs wasting the inspectors' time they shall have to pay for the extra-time.

The inspection of organic agriculture standards follows the following methods:

1. Interview producers-entrepreneurs/directors and people concerned with production and processing.
2. Inspect the production records, purchase and sale documents and others.
3. Inspect farm and entrepreneurship location (Including organic and chemical agriculture).

When the inspection is completed, the inspectors shall write a report and give it to the producers entrepreneurs for confirmation. Producer-entrepreneurs that need a copy of the report they should request it from the certification unit.

5.4 Sampling for residue analysis

In the case of risk or suspicion of toxic residue in water, soil and products, ingredients etc. the inspector take samples for analysis of toxic residue and the producers-entrepreneurs should understand the process.

6. Inspection and certification of organic agriculture.

In Lao PDR the inspection and certification of organic agriculture is the inspection and certification of production, processing systems, NTFP harvest and group production systems as follow:

1. Inspection and certification of farm	Control from planting to harvesting of
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	products, storage, packing and sale.
2. Inspection and certification of processing system	Inspection from products and raw material management to processing methods, packaging, transport and distribution.
3. Inspection and certification group	Inspection starting from planting to harvest, processing, storage of products and packaging for sales.
4. Inspection and certification of non-timber forest products (NTFP)	Inspection from the origin of products and raw material management to processing methods packaging, transport and sales.

7. Certification result report and issuing of certification.

7.1 Certification result report

When the inspection is completed, the certification unit will inform producers-entrepreneurs within 6 months from the date from which the inspection certification committee agrees to issue a certificate to the producers-entrepreneurs. In some cases, the certification committee may set additional conditions or recommendations for the producers-entrepreneurs to execute, for instance:

- Contract signature between producers-entrepreneurs and employees with one copy to be sent to the certification unit.
- Improve protection dike before next cropping season. This conditions shall be monitored by the certification unit by annual or special inspection to ensure that it complies with the conditions or recommendations.

These condition and recommendations are mentioned in the letter of consideration report for certification. When the producers-entrepreneurs receive the letter they should acknowledge the conditions and apply their signature to legalize their future execution and send to the certification committee within 30 days.

7.2 Issuing Certification

Certified producers-entrepreneurs have the right to use the seal of Lao organic agriculture. Producers and entrepreneurs can utilize the certificate as a document to certify their products as of organic agriculture.

Entrepreneurs should purchase organic agriculture products from organic farms certified only by Department of Agriculture. Collectors-buyers should keep copies of the organic agriculture certificate and other related documents for inspectors to certify that the products are from an organic farm.

An organic agriculture certificate is valid for 1 year from the date of signature and producers entrepreneurs can extend the validity with the certification unit.

In the case of the inspector finding that some standards were broken the certification unit has the right to immediately withdraw the certificate.

The certificate mentions the name and address of producers-entrepreneurs, area and production and products. If there are some changes in production such as: change of formula or methods of processing, relocation of entrepreneurship, the producers-entrepreneurs shall inform the certification unit and apply for a complementary certificate.

8. Renewal application for certification.

If producers-entrepreneurs do not have a certificate, they have the right to renew the application for certification.

For contract producers or group producers applying for renewal of the application they should proceed with the following steps:

- The applicant should address a letter with complementary data to the committee to review the certification.
- The Certification unit considers the request and offers some preliminary advice to the applicants. If producers and entrepreneurs made a mistake due to a misunderstanding of the inspectors decisions the certification unit will explain and will correct it immediately.
- In the case that producers-entrepreneurs do not agree with the explanation, the certification unit will escalate the process to the committee for consideration but the applicant should pay a fee in advance of 500.000 kips.
- If the consideration results in a change from the previous decision the fee paid in advance shall be refunded to the applicant.

9. Rule of use of organic agriculture seal.

Producers-entrepreneurs that have received a certificate of organic agriculture have the right to sell their products with a sticker of the Lao organic agriculture seal. Before applying the

sticker of the organic agriculture seal producers and entrepreneurs should follow the rules on the use of the Lao organic agriculture seal by the Department of Agriculture as follows:

- Products left over from previous periods cannot use the Lao organic agriculture seal. An entrepreneur may not stick the Lao organic agriculture seal on products purchased for processing, packing and sale in a transitional period.
- Should producers and entrepreneurs have a trade mark and the Lao organic agriculture seal on their products, it is forbidden for the size of the organic agriculture seal to be less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the trade mark sticker.
- The organic agriculture seal should not be affixed to products not certified by the certification unit as this would be misleading to consumers.

10. Breach of Lao PDR organic agriculture standards.

If the offenders has breached organic agriculture standards after certification, the certification unit shall considers punishment according to acts committed as follows:

- Advertisement in writing.
- Proceed with special inspection with producers-entrepreneurs bearing all expenses.
- Fine in cash.
- Ban of the use of organic seal
- Cancellation of the certificate
- Withdrawal of the certificate
- It the certification unit has found a serious breach of standards by the producers-entrepreneurs, the unit may temporarily suspend the certificate but for not more than 45 days. During this period the producers-entrepreneurs may sell the organic agriculture products and report the problems to the committee for consideration or the certification or punishment.

11. Cancellation and withdrawal of certificate

Cancellation and withdrawal of a certificate will occur if, after careful study, it has been proved that there is a breach of standard regulations of the certification unit or there is an intentional breach of the conditions and rules and regulations prescribed by the unit that affect the reputation and progress of the certification unit.

In the case of producers and entrepreneurs having their certificate cancelled and withdrawn, their right to use the organic agriculture seal is immediately banned. Producers-entrepreneurs should proceed as follows:

- Producers-entrepreneurs should immediately cancel or hide the Lao organic agriculture seal sticker on their products and submit to the certification unit for consideration. Any expenses are born by the producers-entrepreneurs.
- The Certification unit may give permission for the suspended and withdrawn products in stock to be sold with the organic agriculture seal. The date of cancellation and withdrawal of the certificate should be written in a special agreement signed by the producers-entrepreneurs and certification unit.
- The producer-entrepreneurs have the right to appeal against the withdrawal of a certificate. The withdrawal is in effect until the committee considers the release of the certificate.
- Producers-entrepreneurs that have a certificate withdrawn are banned from applying for a new certificate for not more than 3 years.

12. Validity extension of a certificate

The validity of an organic agriculture certificate is 1 year. Producers-entrepreneurs that have received a certificate from the certification unit should be inspected at least once a year to see whether they practice organic agriculture standards in order to get continued certification.

The certification unit will send application form for validity extension at least 120 days in advance. Producers-entrepreneurs should declare in the application form their targets of the annual production plan. The certification unit will use the data for inspection and release of the annual certificate. All products for the application should be the same as the first year.

To get continued validity of the certificate producers-entrepreneurs should apply as least 60 days before the end of the validity of certificate.

If the products are similar to the previous year, the certificate unit can release the certificate immediately. In the case that there are product changes, it will be necessary to make an additional inspection before issuing the certificate.

In the case that the annual and special inspections have found that the producers-entrepreneurs have breached the standards or changes their production without informing the certification unit, the certification unit shall cancel the certificate.

12.1 Application for extension of validity.

If there is change of production such as: increase of organic cultivation area, producers have to review the history and lay-out plan of the farm and attach it to the application form for extension of validity. In the case of having added products the entrepreneurs should declare this in the validity extension form.

In the case of producers-entrepreneurs who have already been certified but need additional certification for new crops or new products, they should apply to the certification unit for additional certification before the products can be sold.

The Application for additional certification should proceed as follows:

1. Production or processing of new products. For example having a certificate in rice but growing corn.
2. Change of product seed such as: having a certificate for pine seeds to be applied to jam processing with one formula but changing to a new formula.
3. Change in production location such as: Purchase of new area for organic agriculture of rice or relocation of factory.
4. Change in method of processing such as: change from small scale rice mill to big scale.

Producers-entrepreneurs applying for additional organic agriculture certification may request an application form from the certification unit. In the case of a new farm with new processing (the Certification unit has to inspect the application form for additional certification), producers-entrepreneurs have to pay an extra fee for the additional inspection including travel and daily allowance of the inspectors. The certification unit will release a new certificate with specifications of the crop type and new products added.

12.2 Application for parallel crop certification.

Producers-entrepreneurs who have received an organic agriculture certificate from the certification unit for a new production area that needs to be certified (with the same crop as previously certified). The certification unit shall allow producers to undertake parallel crop growing by informing in advance the producers to fill in a form notifying of the parallel crop growing management and avoidance of product contamination with pollutants. The application shall be sent to the certification unit and with payment of the fee for parallel crop growing as prescribed in the regulations. The certification unit will send inspectors during the harvest period to inspect and see whether the producers can separate organic agriculture or not. In the case of

the inspectors finding that producers cannot isolate organic crops the certificate unit shall consider using certificate at this time.

If producers do not inform the certification unit in advance of the parallel crop production of organic agriculture and change in area, and, during an annual or special inspection, the certification unit proves that the producers have broken the organic agriculture standard rules the unit may withdraw the certificate. The unit allows producers to grow organic agriculture parallel crop only in unchanged areas. If producers grow crops in chemical agriculture areas the certification unit will not release the certificate.

13. Complaints

Producers-entrepreneurs may complain about the execution of duties by the certification unit technical staff and by the inspectors including any discrepancies between them. The application unit shall collect detailed data in relation to the events and the name of applicants to facilitate coordination. In the case that case the certification unit needs some more data but applicants do not mention their name the certification unit has the right to cancel the inspection and consideration of the complaint.

Data of complaints will be kept confidential and shall have no negative or positive effects on the certification unit in inspections and certification of producers-entrepreneurs.

14. Fee for application of organic agriculture standard certification.

There is a different fee payable every year depending on a decision by the Department of Agriculture based on a ruling by the Ministry of Finance. The certification unit will notify the new fee payable every year.

In conclusion the steps for organic agriculture certification are as follows:

1. For the issuing of an organic agriculture certificate producers-entrepreneurs (Applicant) must fill in an application form as prescribed.
2. The Certification unit shall assigns inspectors to inspect the farm and entrepreneurship location and an appointment will be made directly between them.
3. The inspectors shall inspect the farm and entrepreneurship location.
4. When the inspection is completed a report should be sent by the inspectors to the certification unit.
5. The certification unit will send the report to the certification committee for consideration of issuing the certificate.

6. The certificate unit reports the results of the certification. If the results are positive the applicant will receive the certificate and may affix the organic agriculture seal on the products.
7. In the case of not receiving a certificate the applicant may apply to the committee for reconsideration by sending complementary data with an explanation to the certification unit.

For the application for organic agriculture certification producers-entrepreneurs must carefully study the rules and regulations of organic agriculture standards of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. If producers and entrepreneurs wish to know more about the standard conditions they can send questions to the certification unit or if they are forming a group they can contact technicians at the certification unit to organize a technical meeting to discuss in detail agriculture standards and methods for application for organic agriculture certification or they may ask for clarification from: The certification unit, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Tel: 412350 Fax: 412349.