

Lao People's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Manual on the internal management system of organic agriculture groups

Department of Agriculture
Standards division, Vientiane, August 2011

Foreword

To develop the government's policy of clean agriculture, food and commodity production of the agriculture sector, the Department of Agriculture has developed legal acts and regulations as guidelines for various users for application.

The Manual on the internal management system of organic agriculture groups was developed as guidelines and manual on the standard management of technical and organic agriculture groups of organic agriculture in production groups, following the standards and principles of organic agriculture in order to better develop organic agriculture.

This manual was compiled and developed from practice and from different sources of references. Therefore the department of agriculture hopes that it will facilitate producers, entrepreneurs in the application of organic agriculture in village development groups or farms. It serves as a guideline for technical staffs to improve the product quality of organic agriculture.

This is the first edition of the manual. If any shortcomings are found, critical views are welcome in order to improve the next edition.

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1. Principle and reason

In Lao PDR the agricultural production is small scale separated in small holdings. Standards certification it is difficult and costly for individual farmers. Therefore to reduce the cost it is necessary to organize farmers' groups and certify them together in a group. To apply for standard certification in a group, it is necessary to elaborate internal management systems and control and supervise the production system and quality standards in a production group

1.1. Objective

To facilitate organic agriculture groups and technical staff in developing the internal management system, complying with organic agriculture standards to ensure quality standards of organic agriculture.

1.2. Scope of use:

The Manual for the development of internal management system has the following uses:

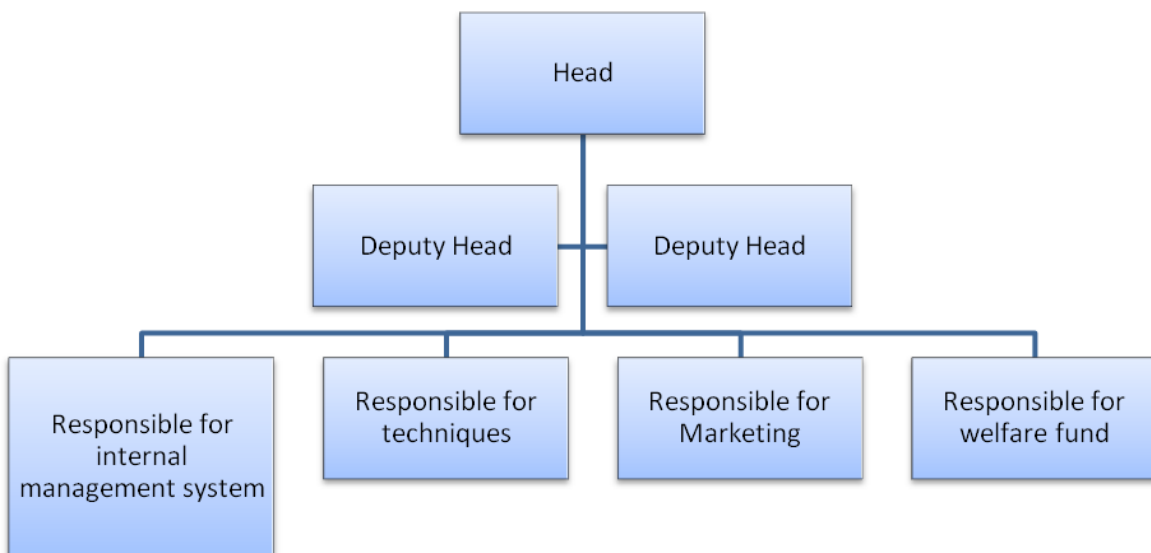
- Transfer of knowledge in organic agriculture to producers' groups, interested individuals and intellectuals.
- Internal management system of producers' groups should conform to organic agriculture standards.

2. Importance of the groups

Producers' groups play an important role in giving direction and development planning of groups to follow to the directives and policies of the government and the party. Furthermore, producers' group can easily access financial sources and technical assistance from outside and increase their negotiating power in pricing and marketing.

3. Organization chart

In general any producers' groups consist of a head of the group and some board members and someone responsible for the following activities: quality standard management systems, techniques, marketing and group welfare fund.



4. Committee member

The committee members comprise a Head of group, a deputy head and various sectors responsible such as: Internal management system, techniques, marketing and fund.

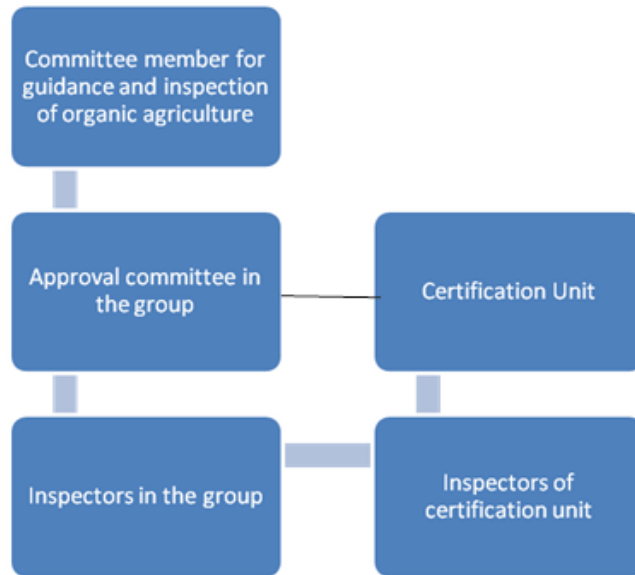
Role of committee group

Function	Responsibility	Nomination person
Head of group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-approve manual of internal management production group by committee consensus.- Sign agreement between group members.- Approve the decision of committee members.	Group committee members.
Deputy group head responsible for internal management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Support, plan general policy of organic agriculture and internal management system.- Develop internal management system of organic agriculture- Coordinate with certification unit, ensure that the group complies with the regulations of the internal management system.- Coordinate with external certification unit.- Delegate the internal management system to every group inspectors.	Group committee members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design documentation system of internal management system. - Inform the result of certification to the producers group. 	
Deputy group head responsible for techniques of organic agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organize external activities, train producers' groups in organic agriculture knowledge and standards of organic agriculture. - Collect documents such as maps, location farm background and farm regulations. - Organize training of technical staffs inside the organic agriculture group. - Recommend techniques, related to the use of production factors and organic fertilizers, compost , EM extract and other techniques related to organic agriculture 	Group committee member
Deputy group head responsible for marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inspect commodity purchasing of organic agriculture, screening and storage of organic agriculture products. - Data collection of products, buying and selling commodities. 	Group committee members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounting and group fund. 	
Inspector staffs for internal management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Keep documentation system of data information of group members complete and on-going. - Knowledge transfer to producers' group in regulations and standards of organic agriculture and improve group rules according to standards. - Farm inspection, internal management system of group members. 	Group committee members.

Organization chart of approval committee members for certification of organic agriculture.



6. Role of group committee members: consists of 2 functions:

- Training on production techniques to the producers’ group members.
- Knowledge and information transfer of production factors to the producers’ group.

6.1. Training of members in the production of organic agriculture to get knowledge and good understanding of standards and regulations of the certification unit: training of members on the following topic:

- Soil improvement and fertility in organic agriculture.
- Compost marketing and EM extract techniques.
- Organic fertilizer use planning.
- Crop protection in organic agriculture.
- Post-harvest management
- Protection front
- Standards of organic agriculture in relation to production-Farm management of group members at least once a year or as needed. The training should relate to the inspection and certification of standards of organic agriculture and the rules and regulations for members.

6.2. Information data supply on production factors

Organic agriculture should coordinate, transfer knowledge and data information in the procurement of production factors, that can be used in production such as:

- Seeds.
- Organic fertilizer.
- Biological agent and organic solution to use in plant protection.
- Product containers, production group inspects the origin of production factors from the locations surrounding members, chicken manure in particular (and other poultry manure), whether substances can be used in organic agriculture and list the origin of production factors and inform the members.

7. Role of the internal management system

The role of the internal management system of producers group consists of the 4 following items:

- Implementation and elaboration of regulations in the group.
- Accession of new members and farm inspection.
- Regulation of members in the group.
- Coordination with certification unit.

7.1. Elaboration and improvement of law and regulations of the group

The organic agriculture group should elaborate internal regulations, based on the standards and exemptions of the country and abroad for organic agriculture groups. It should upgrade the regulations in the groups, when standards and exemptions have improved and changed in order to meet the standards of organic agriculture groups.

7.2. Membership and farm inspection

Organic agriculture groups should develop a form of request for membership for those who are interested in joining the group to create a database of farms composed of: agreement of group accession, farm history, farm map and annual production plan.

Organic agriculture group shall define the schedule of farm inspections for members by considering production risk and application of organic agriculture standards and also determine appropriate timing for inspectors of the group to proceed with farm inspection. However, group inspectors cannot inspect their own farm and also the farm of a relative. A farm must be inspected at least once a year.

7.3. Registration of internal members

Group committee members will be responsible for considering and approving members' registrations; informing group members of the result of the approval; recording registered members' names that have been approved according to group regulations; and sending one copy to the certification unit.

In case of a member having broken a group regulation, the group will define an appropriate penalty such as: advertisement, fine, suspension, product purchase price increase, period of rotation, cancellation of membership or other appropriate penal measures.

Members who commit offences can request the group committee members that they should reconsider the decision. During consideration of the request, the decision of the group committee members remains in force.

7.4. Relationship with certification unit

The Deputy group head, responsible for the internal management system, is the one who coordinates with the certification unit from request, to extension (including documentation for certification and extension) until group inspection and approval by the certification unit.

Every year organic agriculture producers should report on the internal management system to the certification unit.

8. Application details

8.1. Application for membership

1. Producer interested in becoming a member of an organic agriculture group should register as a group member, inform the group committee members and proceed with documentation as follows:

- Contract (Producer and producer group)
- Farm history

- Production Plan
 - Total farm map and organic agriculture farm map
2. After submitting membership request, producers commence the application of the group rules and regulations as of the date of the producers joining group.

3. In case that the membership documents are not complete, the producers group will return all documents to the requesting producer or refer them to the technicians concerned to proceed accordingly; such as:

- Sign the contract, farm history and production plan
- Maps of organic agriculture farms
- Annual production
- Detailed area of organic agriculture production

4. If the membership documents are correct and complete:

- Producers' group assign an index number to the member and this number will be used for all documentation and data records of this producer.
- The producer should be informed of the data record in the admission request. The registration of a group member of an organic agriculture group should be written in a database.
- The producers who are members of the group will receive the following documents from the group:
 - + Rules and regulations of organic agriculture
 - + Form of production factors record.

5. For an annual extension, the group should prepare an annual production plan to serve as annual extension document for every member except in the case where land history and maps should be upgraded urgently.

8.2. Inspection assignment

1. The Deputy group head responsible for internal management systems should comply with the following principles:

- The inspector should be trained by the certification unit of the agriculture department or other certification unit and should have been selected as internal management system inspector.
- The inspector assigned to inspect farms cannot inspect his own farm or the farms of relatives, as that may influence the integrity of the inspector.

2. In farm inspections, the Deputy group head responsible for the internal management system assigns an inspector to inspect at the time of production, such as: time of planting, during period of high risk of insects and diseases and of risk of using chemical pesticides.

3. The Deputy group head of the internal management system shall classify producers in 2 groups: high risk groups and low risk groups by considering the following:

- Period of membership of the group (Producers participating in the first year will be classified as a high risk group.)History of inspection, certification and request for certification during previous years due to high risk of contamination with products from chemical agriculture.

4. The Deputy group head responsible for the internal management system will assign to high risk farm inspections the more experienced inspectors, while the low risk groups will be inspected by the less experienced inspectors.

5. All documents held by the applicant, including past inspection reports, should be presented to the inspectors.

6. Inspectors will proceed with a farm inspection within 15 days of being assigned to that duty and may or may not advise members in advance.

7. Farm inspections should be carried out twice a year in the case of crops that need to be certified more than once a year. The group may ask for additional special inspections.

8.3. Farm inspection

1. Organic agriculture groups should carry out internal farm inspection of members to evaluate whether they practice the standard regulations of organic agriculture.

2. The production farm area for organic and chemical agriculture of every member must be inspected.

3. For the first annual inspection the inspectors will proceed, both for organic and chemical agriculture, with inspecting every member's farm. For the second annual inspection they will inspect only organic agriculture farm (some chemical agriculture farms may be inspect if necessary.)

4. For every inspection, the inspectors shall examine the materials and equipment warehouse and the product storage facilities as well as other documents.

5. The inspectors will inspect the performance of the organic agriculture process of the applicant and shall evaluate the products of organic crops of every member as prescribed in the farm inspection report form. In the case of high risk the farm inspectors should inspect further than the data prescribed on the inspection form and may ask the members for supplementary document.

6. Farm inspectors shall proceed with inspection by interviewing members, observation of farm production and examination of all related document.

7. Farm inspectors should record on the form all data on the farm inspection before giving the report to the members.

8.4. Regulation of members in the group

1. When the inspection of the internal management system of a farm is completed, the farm inspection report should be sent to the group committee members for considering registration of the member in the group .

2. For consideration, group committee members shall classify members' documents according to risk (Risk, low risk, no risk), shall review the farm inspection report and past registration application of each

member including new conditions that the farm inspectors may submit to the group committee members to consider registration of each member.

3. Result of the registration consideration may have the following outcomes:

- Insufficient data, no decision is made and a new partial or full inspection of the farm is recommended
- Sufficient data but not registered due to the breach of group rules and regulations
- Sufficient data, registration of member under some conditions
- Sufficient data, registration of member with no conditions

4. Consideration of member registration of their internal management system should be recorded and reported of each meeting.

5. Producers' groups should inform members each time of the result of certification.

8.5. Evaluation of rules and regulations of the group

1. In the case that the farm inspectors have found a breach of the rules and regulations of the group the producers' group shall determine a penalty and shall inform this penalty decision to the members.

2. Punishment of members, who break group rules and regulations consists of:

- Fine in products or money
- Cancellation of products purchasing
- Extended rotation period
- Exclusion from membership
- Other measures

8.6. Proposal for reconsideration

1. Members who were punished or disagree with the certification of the internal management system can submit a request for reconsideration of the decision.

2. The presentation of documentation for reconsideration should be in writing and submitted to the deputy group head responsible for the internal management system to inform group committee members for consideration. A meeting shall be arranged within 30 days of receipt of the documents.

3. During the reconsideration period, the final decision shall remain in the force.

4. The reconsideration by group committee members may uphold the old decision or may issue a new one. The member should be informed immediately of the decision.

9. Data record of the internal management system:

Documents relating to the internal management system of the group should be recorded in 2 parts:

9.1. Data information of the internal management system of each member

1. copy of the individual data of each group member will be stored in the group's office. 1 copy is given to the membership as follow:

Document	Group office	Member
1.Contract of group membership	Original	Copy
2.Data base of members -Farm history -Farm map - Production plan	Original	Copy
3.Annual inspection report	Original	Copy
4. Report on the result of group membership	Original	Copy

In addition, the member should keep other documents as follows:

- Rules and regulations of group
- Record on the use of production factors on farm
- Record on receipt/payment of production factors or related documents for sale of products for organic agriculture.

9.2. Report of internal management system

One copy of the report of data on the internal management system shall be kept by the group as witness of execution and compliance. The execution of the management system shall be as follows:

1. Data base of group internal management system.
2. Sending registered members' name to the certification unit
 - Members' name
 - Members' index number
 - Total area and organic agriculture area
 - Date of group admission
 - Final date of forbidden chemicals application
 - Final date of inspection of internal management system
 - Result of certification and other related data
3. Name of punished members including reason and period of punishment, if available

4. Name of certified registered members and data on product evaluation for the buyers of production

5. Report on result of considerations for registration and certification of members

6. Annual group report

7. Annual member report

8. Report on technical training of group

9. Application demand to certification unit

- Rules and regulation of group
- Application for certification, application for extension of producers groups
- Contract Documents of internal subsistence
- Annual review report of the internal management system
- Report of inspection of the internal management system from the certification unit
- Result of certification consideration by certification unit.

10. Personal development

All group technicians such as extension agents of organic agriculture, inspectors, certification committee member and related technical staffs shall be primary trained by the group.

In addition the group will organize complementary training at least once a year. For each training course the curriculum taught, the subject and the name of participant shall be recorded.