

Brief Info Inspection and Certification cycle for organic certification

1. Introduction

As a recognized organic control body, CERES conducts certification activities for a wide range of organic and private standards. To maintain organic certification and ensure full compliance with all applicable standards, regular inspections are carried out. Certificates are issued based on the results of these inspections.

2. Annual Control Requirements

All certified operations must undergo at least one main on-site inspection per year, regardless of the certificate validity period. This inspection confirms continued compliance with the relevant organic standards.

Inspections performed by control bodies must take place regularly, follow a risk-based approach, and occur at frequency appropriate to the operator's or group of operator's activities. They must cover all stages of production, preparation, and distribution, and be scheduled according to the likelihood of non-compliance.

- ⇒ An annual on-site main inspection is mandatory.
- ⇒ The physical on-site inspection and any associated sampling must take place at the most suitable time to assess compliance at critical control points.

3. Timely Scheduling

Timely scheduling of annual inspections is essential to ensure continuous certification. This is the responsibility of the operator.

A minimum lead-time of two months is necessary to schedule the inspection and the inspector to prepare accordingly to the inspection.

4. Certificate Period

- Certificates with validity (specially certificates based on Regulation (EU) 2018/848):


Certificates are **valid for 18 months from the inspection date**. This may result in the certificate's validity extending beyond the annual inspection cycle. Nevertheless, an annual on-site inspection is required to meet the standard's mandatory annual inspection requirement. Operators must ensure the inspection can be scheduled and carried out in due time.

- Certificates based on National Organic Program (NOP) of USDA:

Certificates have an **anniversary date 12 months after the inspection date**, which serves as the deadline for submitting the Organic Management Plan (OMP) for the respective season. An annual on-site inspection remains mandatory. The 12-month anniversary date helps ensure timely preparation and scheduling.

- Certificates based on Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS):

Certificates include a re-inspection date set **12 months after the previous inspection**. A new on-site inspection must be completed by that date to maintain uninterrupted certification.

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5. Importance of Timely Inspections

Delays in scheduling or conducting your annual inspection can lead to certification gaps and potential interruptions in the ability to market products as organic. It may even result in sanctions, such as suspension of the certificate. Maintaining a valid certification throughout the year is essential for both you and your customers.

A proactive scheduling approach helps ensure that the inspection and certification processes can be completed without delay, ensuring that your certification remains uninterrupted.

To avoid gaps:

- ⇒ Contact us in a timely manner before your current certificate expires to schedule your inspection.
- ⇒ Inspections should be scheduled during periods of active operations to allow verification of compliance at critical control points.