

# Sri Lanka Accreditation Board and Organic Agricultural Practices in Sri Lanka

'Organic agriculture' is certainly the hottest topic in Sri Lanka as of today.



SLAB provides accreditation for certification bodies conducting audits for organic agriculture.

According to The World of Organic Agriculture - Statistics and Emerging Trends 2020, published by FiBL & IFOAM, over 71.5 million hectares of farmland are now organic. It is 1.5 percent of the total farmland in the world, and it continues to grow. Along with these growing organic practices, more than 87 countries have developed their organic legislation and standards, and more than 17 nations are setting organic standards. The next step is certification. Through certification, organic integrity is protected in every step and verified

by an independent body. During the certification process, production, storage, processes, handling, and marketing activities are evaluated to comply with specific requirements (standards) and then certified as "organic" by a certification body.

When a certification body has verified conformity with organic standards, the product is certified as organic and likely to afford a label. This label possibly will vary based on the certification body, the standard/specifications they use for the verification. Different types of

standards/specifications are being developed at global, regional, and national levels by various entities such as standard bodies and non-profit organizations, where certification bodies worldwide consider during the verification of the compliance in organic agricultural practices. The European Union, the United States, Canada, and Japan have developed comprehensive organic certification schemes. In countries without organic regulations or government requirements, certification is handled by non-profit organizations or private



entities. These diverse organic certification schemes focus on certifying various organic products such as crops, livestock, processed or multi-ingredient products, and wild crops as organic. In the context of Sri Lanka, SLS 1324 (Organic agriculture production and processing) is being developed by the SLSI (Sri Lanka Standards Institution) as the national standard developer. The standard prescribes the requirements for production, wild harvest, post-harvest, handling, storage, processing, transportation, packaging, labeling, and marketing of organic produce and products. Certification bodies functioning in Sri Lanka now certify various organic produce and products against this standard.

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Providing organic products/ processes conforming to technical regulations (mandatory) or standards (voluntary) requires efficient procedures for assessing conformity to relevant stipulated requirements. Conformity assessment activities that include inspection, testing, certification for voluntary or mandatory systems based on organic products are carried out by Conformity

Assessment Bodies (CAB's) having the necessary competence to carry out such tasks.

In such operations, both domestic and global, there is an increasing demand for independent verification of CAB's for competence, impartiality, and credibility. These verifications are done by authoritative accreditation bodies that act impartially concerning both CAB's and their clients. Accreditation demonstrates the competence, impartiality, and performance capability of the accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies.

Accreditation of a certification body that conducts evaluations in organic agricultural practices undoubtedly upsurges the assurance, credibility, and legitimacy of organically certified products. It is a procedure adopted by a National Accreditation Authority for ascertaining the competence of a certification body and its personnel to certify organic farms, products, and processes as per the different organic standards. In our country, The Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB) is the national authority that provides accreditation services for certification bodies. Certification Bodies providing organic product certification issue product certificates or licenses to organizations that entitle them to display a mark of conformity on their product or issue a certificate indicating the product's conformity with the organic standard. In this way, the consumer is assured that the organic product they purchase has reached an organic standard and has been tested by qualified personnel to the applicable codes and standards.

SLAB accredits organic certification bodies against ISO/IEC 17065 - Conformity assessment - requirements for bodies certifying

**The Sri Lanka Accreditation Board (SLAB) is the national authority that provides accreditation services for certification bodies.**



The SLSI has developed the requirements for organic agriculture production and processing under SLS 1324.

Similarly, when the SLAB accredits a certification body for organic certification, the entire organic certification process aligns with international guidelines. SLAB has gained international (IAF – International Accreditation Forum), (ILAC – International Laboratory Accreditation Co-operations), and regional recognition (APAC – Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation). Therefore, through arrangements for mutual recognition of equivalency across boundaries, the organic certificates issued by an accredited certification body get international acceptance. This would support Sri Lanka's export market to minimize the non-tariff technical barriers across international borders. These international recognitions also enable more freedom to compete in many markets worldwide, often without the requirement for a duplicative test or mark. Apart from the evaluations done by certification bodies, testing laboratories and inspection bodies would also be essential to complete the organic certification process. With the testing laboratories being accredited for ISO/IEC 17025 and inspection bodies being accredited for ISO/IEC 17020, the validity and the international recognition of the test results and inspection report would be increased.

Once the accreditation is granted, the status is valid for three years. During the three years, two surveillance assessments are carried out. At the end of each accreditation cycle, the status of accreditation shall be renewed. The competency of the SLAB is also being assessed once in four years as per ISO/IEC 17011 by a team of peer evaluators from the regional and international arrangements. □

products, processes, and services to deliver a range of Product Certification Schemes such as organic agriculture, energy labeling, green building, fisheries, and food sector. Certification bodies are accredited in compliance with ISO/IEC 17065:2012 for organic products and processes. These are detailed in the scope of accreditation,

which is annexed to the organization's accredited certificate. Benefits of accrediting bodies that certify organic products and processes are,

- Broader market access
- Effective risk management in all the aspects
- Competitive advantage
- Enhanced customer confidence



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