

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Organic Certification in Sri Lanka

Organic agriculture is a sustainable eco-friendly system practiced in line with four principles, namely: health, ecology, fairness, and care. The non-availability of a proper organic agricultural policy and a program to promote a National Standard with a regulatory mechanism were the major reasons to hinder the expansion of organically certified lands in the country.



Sri Lankan spices.

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The aforementioned drawbacks were successfully solved when the National Organic Control Unit (NOCU) was established within the purview of the EDB under the Extraordinary Gazette Notification No 1870/71 dated 11.07.2014, to streamline the organic operations of the country such as cultivation, handling, processing, certification, labeling, imports, and exports in order to ensure the credibility of Sri Lanka's organic products. NOCU facilitated the Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) to develop and publish the Sri Lanka Organic Standard SLS 1324:2018. The Sri Lankan Organic standard was prepared by an expert committee appointed by the SLSI after having studied the international organic standards of export markets relevant to Sri Lanka such as the EU, Japan and the USA as well as Sri Lankan traditional agricultural systems. The SLS standards entail the principles of organic production and processing.

Certified organic products provide assurance to consumers that such products are free from residues of harmful agrochemicals, heavy metal toxins, and harmful pathogens while assuring the products meet a

consistent standard. Even though our farmers/processors follow organic agricultural and processing practices, the products would not be marketed as "organic" unless they are verified and certified by a third-party-accredited certification body.

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a few local certification bodies as well. Exporters willing to sell organic agricultural products to countries with established organic standards and regulations, have to either certify their products conform to the respective standard in the importing country (example the US, EU, Japan, Australia, China, and Taiwan) or sign equivalent agreements for the National Standard. At present, Sri Lankan exporters



obtain conformity certifications for farmer groups operating under them according to the organic standards of the export destinations and due to the high cost involved with the certification, the cultivation is limited only to the farmer groups operating under these exporters.


Many countries in the world have developed National Organic Standards encouraging their farmers to convert production into organic from conventional agriculture. Most of them have obtained international recognition by upgrading the National Standards to the international level and some have obtained equivalent status with other countries.

The Sri Lanka Organic Certification has to be issued by an accredited certification body operating in Sri Lanka. The National Organic Logo highlighted in the organic regulations published in the Extraordinary Gazette Notification No 1870/71 dated 11.07.2014 would also be incorporated in this certification.

The certification charge for this standard is comparatively low, and more farmers could be encouraged to obtain this certification. The establishment and promotion of the Sri Lanka Organic Standard is a timely requirement in the country. Empowering the farmers/processors by assisting them to obtain the organic certification as per SLS 1324:2018 will facilitate Sri Lankan agro industries to move into organic agriculture, obtain high value for their products, and also provide adequate supply to the export market.

The EDB has implemented an assistance program under the EDB budget 2020 to assist Sri Lankan farmers/processors to obtain organic certification as per the Sri Lanka Organic Standard SLS 1324:2018. Under this program, 25 farmers/processors cultivating processing paddy, coconut, cashew, vegetables, and spices have been selected to obtain assistance for organic certification as per the SLS 1324:2018. Inspections audits have been conducted by the certification body and samples have been drawn from the sites and sent to the accredited

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laboratories to get analytical test reports. Three virtual training programs were conducted covering the topics of Induction of SLS Standard (SLS 1324), Organic Certification process, Organic Agricultural Techniques, and Organic Management Plan to upgrade the participants' Knowledge in collaboration with the SLSI, DOA and the Certification body. Also, NOCU has requested the National Fertilizer Secretariat to make arrangements to provide organic fertilizer subsidy to the selected farmers/processors. 

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