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		<b>RWANDASTANDARDS BOARD</b>	
<b>NATIONAL CERTIFICATION DIVISION</b>			
<b>TITLE:</b>		<b>INDENTIFICATION No.</b>	
<b>RSB ORGANIC CERTIFICATION SCHEME</b>		<b>QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OFFICER</b>	
<b>NCD/CAS/01</b>			
<b>AUTHORIZATION:</b> <b>THIS SCHEME IS ISSUED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF:</b>			
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<b>DOCUMENT CONTROL:</b>			
<b>CONTROLLED</b>		<b>WATER MARKED</b>	

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organic production is a holistic production management system, which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including bio-diversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It seeks to minimize the use of external inputs, avoiding the use of synthetic drugs, fertilizers and pesticides and aims at optimising the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil life, plants, animals and people.

The expansion of the organic market is mainly driven by consumers' concerns over food safety and environmentally friendly production. Certification reassures consumers' confidence in the organic quality of agricultural processes. Certification therefore plays an important role in domestic and international organic trade since it enables organic producers to access export and local markets, and to obtain premium prices while improving farming practices. It is also a way to protect consumers, producers and traders against the misleading use of labels for organic products as well as promoting social justice. Furthermore, it ensures transparency and acknowledges product conformity to organic regulations.

## 2. SCOPE

Rwanda Standards Board as the scheme owner has developed organic certification scheme based on ISO/IEC 17067 implemented/managed through National Certification Division as a Certification Body (CB). The scheme is composed by the requirements of RS EAS 456 and further requirements laid down in this Organic Scheme. The scheme applies to individual farmers and grower groups including Internal Control System (ICS).

The RSB Organic Certification Scheme is based on the International Standard ISO/IEC 17065, Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services (hereinafter referred to as "ISO 17065"). This document is written for all persons interested in organic certification and in an organic certification. This document describes the framework for certification. Detailed procedures for ISO/IEC 17065 are developed by RSB.

Certification procedures make it possible to track the flow from primary production through the entire food chain right to the final consumer.

This certification Scheme contains main requirements for the competence, consistent operation and impartiality. Operators that label their products and hold a certificate of compliance meet the specific requirements. This certification Scheme defines the necessary conformity assessment procedures and methods.

Furthermore, RSB has developed detailed procedure for the whole certification according to ISO/IEC 17065.

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## **2.1. Overview of the structure and relevant documents of the RSB Organic Certification Scheme**

RSB Organic Certification Scheme is defined in the following documents

- RSB Organic Certification Scheme - NCD/CAS/01
- RSB Use of Mark – NCD/POL/04

## **2.2. Requirements for different scopes are defined in the following documents**

RS EAS 456:2019 lays down the general requirements for organic production and Specific (scopes) requirements for all operators.

The respective checklists (Checklist for Beekeeping [PCU/FAT/05](#); Checklist for Processing, handling & labelling [PCU/FAT/06](#); Checklist for Group Certification [PCU/FAT/07](#); Checklist for Organic Crop Production [PCU/FAT/09](#); Checklist of Farm visit of a group Member [PCU/FAT/10](#)) including the one on Social Justice [PCU/FAT/08](#) (which is crosscutting to all scopes). All checklists contain compliance criteria for each scope.

Furthermore, specific requirements are laid down for producer groups (See Specific requirements for Grower Groups NCD/GID/05). Grower groups-ICS need to apply as well to one or more of the receptive scopes above.

Furthermore, there are several other internal documents to be in line with ISO/IEC 17065.

## **3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

All applicable terms and definitions are contained in ISO/IEC 17065, ISO/IEC 17000 or the RSB document Guide on Terms, Definitions and Acronyms NCD/GID/10 in the latest available version.

### **3.1. Normative and obligatory documents**

The following normative documents are relevant for all applications and certificate holders, depending on the applied scope:

- NCD/CAS/01 – RSB Organic Certification Scheme
- RS EAS 465:2019 Organic production standard: Principles and Requirements
- Specific requirements for all operators (NCD/GID/06)
- Requirements for Grower Groups (NCD/GID/05)
- RSB Checklists: for crop production, for beekeeping, for processing and handling, social justice and for grower groups (ICS).

*Note: Guidelines e.g for producers to comply with the requirements are not included as normative.*

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#### 4. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME

##### 4.1. Development, Operation and Parties involved in the organic certification scheme

Currently Product Certification Unit (PCU) has got two schemes which are S-Mark Certification and Made in Rwanda Logo. Due to farmers demand, mainly those in farming activities, RSB develops Organic certification scheme, that latter is under PCU System. Therefore, the approved East African Organic Production Standard EAS 456 standard was adopted by Rwanda through RSB, and developed a whole conformity assessment scheme to achieve an ISO 17065 accreditation. That should give organic products credibility when consumers them.

The surveillance part of this scheme involves periodically taking samples on a risk based of the product from the point of production and/or processing and subjecting them to determination activities to check that items produced subsequent to the initial attestation fulfil the specified requirements. The surveillance includes periodic assessment of the production and processing process. This scheme does not provide any indication of the impact the distribution channel plays on conformity. When serious nonconformities are found, the opportunity may exist to resolve them before widespread market distribution occurs.

The purpose of this certification scheme to assist operators and consumers to differentiate products in the market place and make informed purchasing decisions. Certification reassures consumers' confidence in the organic quality of agricultural processes.

The scheme was developed in order to achieve health, and safety and facilitate fair trade.

The East African standard EAS 456 was developed involving stakeholders. East African Standards are developed through Technical Committees (TCs) of which RSB is part. The composition at large is made of representative of key stakeholders including government, academia, consumer groups, private sector and other interested parties. Draft East African Standards are circulated by the National Standards Bodies in the Partner States to the stakeholders through National Mirror Committees. The comments received are discussed and incorporated before finalization of standards, in accordance with the principles and procedures for development of East African Standards. The draft standard is circulated for comments through public review. The final draft standard is sent to WTO for international comments. To have a certification scheme in accordance with ISO 17067; RSB developed further requirements which are laid down in this document.

The information of the organic scheme is publicly available on RSB Website and provided upon request. The scheme is regularly reviewed as detailed in Clause 4 of this document. The certification service will be provided to individual and organizations that seek the organic certification.

The organic certification scheme will be based on rules, procedures, and management, by Product Certification System.

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The scheme owner is Rwanda Standard Board. RSB takes responsibility for the rules, procedures, management and the integrity of the scheme

The scheme owner is Rwanda Standard Board. Legal requirements in Rwanda for organic certification do not exist.

RSB ensures the objectives, the content and the integrity of the organic scheme through its effective quality management system.

RSB will maintain the organic scheme and provide guidance when required.

Organic scheme will be managed as per the operational structure and management of RSB as described in RSB organizational structure

Through the competence management RSB ensures that organic scheme is developed by persons competent in both technical and conformity assessment aspects.

RSB ensures the protection of confidentiality of information provided by the parties involved in the scheme by implementing its policy to Safeguard Confidentiality NCD/POL/02.

Additionally, whoever accesses confidential information has to commit to adherence to confidentiality requirements by signing the confidentiality agreement NCD/CAG/01, and adhering to article 73 of LAW N° 86/2013 of 11/09/2013 establishing the General Statutes for Public Service and with the Presidential Order N° 45/01 of 30/06/2015 establishing the code of professional ethics for public servants, in its article 17 addressing professional secrecy.

RSB has documented, evaluates, and manages the risks/liabilities arising from its activities as documented in Risk Monitoring Log NCD/FAT/08.

RSB contracts insurance companies to cover liabilities arising from the range of its activities.

RSB has the financial stability and resources required for it to fulfil its role in the operation of the organic scheme.

Organic scheme content is documented and will be detailed in different documents including policy, guidelines, procedures.

## **4.2. Framework of the scheme**

### **4.2.1. General**

RSB has established and is implementing an organic certification scheme based on the guideline of ISO/IEC 17067 and on ISO/IEC 17065 requirements in connection with the EAS 456 and this document.

### **4.2.2. Scope**

RSB Organic Certification Scheme covers three scopes:

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- plant production,
  - bee-keeping,
  - processing and handling
- for individual operators or grower groups.

Country of application is Rwanda. In case that RSB receives applications from outside Rwanda, RSB will verify the possibility to apply the certification scheme also outside of Rwanda.

#### 4.2.3. Scheme type

To achieve health, and safety and facilitate fair trade, Scheme type 3 as per ISO/IEC 17067 is selected. Organic certification activities are undertaken as per the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

Risk based sampling will be done periodically by taking samples from the point of production or processing.

#### 4.2.4. Acceptance of conformity assessment results

In the event where operator(s) has obtained the results of determination activities, such as testing, prior to making an application for certification, and those results may be from a source other than NQTL results may be considered as valid provided that the issuing entity is accredited.

#### 4.2.5. Outsourcing of the conformity assessment activities

RSB does not outsource inspection activities. In the event RSB does not cover a certain scope NQTL, then the testing scope can be outsourced from an accredited laboratory.

#### 4.2.6. Licensing and control of the mark

Use of certification documents is controlled as per certification agreement NCD/CEC/05 and a policy on use of mark NCD/POL/04.

During the period of suspension, the operator is prohibited from using the license/certificate or any other type of document that is in any way linked to the RS EAS 456:2019 standard.

A cancellation of a contract results in the total prohibition of the use of the license/certificate or any other type of document that is in any way linked to the RS EAS 456:2019 standard.

#### 4.2.7. Non-conforming products

Any products which do not conform to product requirements/specifications is considered as non-conforming, the operator will be required to withdraw the product from the market.

RSB acknowledges the receipt of complaints of non-conforming product and if determined necessary, the certified operator in question may be subject to conduct root cause analysis and come up with effective corrective actions. RSB will be responsible for communicating to the complainant the final results. The process is described in procedure for handling complaints and appeals NCD/PRO/06.

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#### **4.2.8. Reporting to the scheme owner**

The operator is required to notify without delay any changes in product and/ or process that would otherwise compromise the integrity of the issued certificate. In case RSB sends notifications, the operator is obliged to communicate back in time. Notification on both side is managed under certification agreement NCD/CEC/05.

#### **4.2.9. Subcontracting of the operation of the scheme**

RSB as scheme owner does not subcontracts all or part of the operation of the scheme to another party. In the even RSB subcontracts testing due to accredited scope limitation both parties sign a legally binding contract defining the duties and responsibilities.

#### **4.2.10. Marketing**

RSB does marketing through media, awareness campaign, exhibitions, RSB website, social media platforms, branded items, brochures, banners, pull-ups. Operator s are allowed to use certification marks on marketing purpose as stipulated in the certification agreement NCD/CEC/05.

#### **4.2.11. Fraudulent claim of certification**

Upon suspension, revocation or cancellation of certification, the certification mark or any other indication of the certification shall be removed from the entire production run affected by the adverse action. This includes any uses of the certificate logo, marks and claims on packaging, promotional materials, packaging and labels not yet in use. It will be described in the certification agreement.

### **5. MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE SCHEME**

#### **5.1. Review of the RSB Organic Certification Scheme**

RSB as scheme owner conducts reviews annually to conform the scheme validity through management reviews taking into account feedback from stakeholders and come up with improvement actions. The review will also verify if scheme requirements are being applied in a consistent manner as per Procedure on Management Review NCD/PRO/03.

#### **5.2. Changes in Specified Requirements**

RS EAS 456 Standard is reviewed after every five years as was determined by East African Standard Committee. RSB as scheme owner participates in the standard review through East African Standard Technical Committees, and wherever there is a need for standard changes, East African Standard Committee notifies National Bureaux member states. Any of EAS member states may request for standard review, when there a need. Once a new version of the standard is released, changes are managed as per policy on transition NCD/POL/06. Other normative documents ISO/IEC 17067 and other technical regulations are monitored through nation enquiry point. RSB as scheme owner monitors changes in regulations.

RSB has developed for the RS EAS 456 requirements compliance criteria and has set up specific requirements for all operators and grower groups. These requirements are periodically reviewed. Review of requirements and compliance criteria are carried out at least every five years. However, the necessary changes can be also done earlier.

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### **5.3. Other Changes to the Scheme**

Changes to the Organic Certification Scheme, procedures and management of the scheme are managed according work instruction for change management NCD/WIS/08 which ensures that changes to processes and other aspects of the management systems are planned, designed and managed in a systematic manner applying risk-based thinking to minimize potential consequences and maintain the integrity of the organic scheme, and uphold the scheme's ability to continually provide conforming products and services during the change.

### **5.4. Scheme Documentation**

RSB developed hierarchical documents from level 1 to level 4. Authorized and relevant documents are availed to the staff. A plan for reviews and update is established. Developed documents will be mainly in English but where applicable other official languages could be used.

The Quality Management System Officer (QMSO) has the overall responsibilities for ensuring that documents remain adequate for their intended purpose, whereas NCD Manager is responsible for all aspects of archived controlled documents. The instruction or procedure need to be in line with the requirements of 17065, 8. Management system requirements.

## **6. CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

The following functions according to ISO/IEC 17000:2020, Annex A are implemented:

- i) Selection, is through planning and preparation activities,
- ii) Determination of characteristics is through inspection and sampling based on risk assessment,
- iii) Review is the verification of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of selection and determination activities, and the results of these activities, with regard to fulfilment of specified requirements,
- iv) Decision on certification, is taken on granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, withdrawing certification,
- v) Attestation/licensing issuance of a statement of conformity, and surveillance on the operator site.
- vi) Surveillance

For ISO/IEC 17065 Selection and Determination is defined as evaluation. In this document the general framework of this process is defined for operators to understand the requirements and the process which is used for a certification. Selection and Determination is here described under Evaluation. The whole process is described in detail in the organic certification procedure NCD/PRO/11 of RSB.

Farming organically means respecting the principles, rules and requirements of organic farming according to RSB Organic Certification Scheme and the developed compliance criteria.

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## **6.1. General**

For the evaluation and certification of the operator, RSB applies the normative documents of the RSB Organic Certification Scheme in the current valid version, including the definitions and glossary contained therein.

If explanations regarding the normative documents are necessary, RSB will develop these and make them available to the operator.

### **6.1.1. Announced inspections**

Announced inspections is conducted for planned initial, surveillance and re-certification inspections. In case there is a modification to the scope of certification, the inspection is also announced prior conducting the inspection.

## **6.2. Risk based approach for inspection type and frequency**

### **6.2.1. Unannounced inspections**

Unannounced or short notice visits depends on critical factors such as: to investigate complaints or in response to changes of the management system, changes to production process, product specifications or as follow up to suspension.

May or may not inform the operator in advance the conditions under which these short notice inspections will be conducted.

### **6.2.2. Additional inspections**

At least 5% of all operators are visited additional on a risk-based selection. Preferable these inspections are carried out unannounced.

### **6.2.3. Risk assessment to select operators for additional inspections and for sampling for pesticides**

Each operator is classified to a risk categorization. The main risk factors:

- i) complaints or investigations against the operation;
- ii) results of previous noncompliance or adverse actions;
- iii) split or parallel production;
- iv) the quantity of products concerned;
- v) the risk for exchange of products;
- vi) complexity of operation.

Risk assessment for each operator and group of operators is described in procedure (NCD/PRO/12) and carried out using respective forms: Risk Assessment criteria for the additional Inspections\_\_ Operator NCD/FOM/08 and Risk Assessment Form for the additional inspections \_\_ ICS NCD/FOM/07.

#### **6.2.3.1. Risk based approach for sampling for pesticides**

Controls are conducted using random samples taken on a risk-oriented basis; where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, product samples or soil or plant samples are also taken and residue analyses carried out.

RSB takes and analyses samples for detecting the use of non-authorised products and substances for organic production, for checking production techniques not in compliance with

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the organic production rules or for detecting possible contamination by non-authorised products and substances for organic production. Sampling is risk oriented.

RSB carries out sampling on at least 5 % of the number of operators. The sampling will depend on the situation and inspector will take one or more samples (single or composed) from one or many farms/farmers. The risk of an operator is identified with the same document as for additional inspection (see above).

The selection of the operators where samples have to be taken is based on risk assessment including the likelihood of non-compliance, taking into account all stages of production preparation and distribution.

RSB takes and analyse samples in each case where there is suspicion of use of non-authorised products and substances techniques for organic production, unless RSB considers that sufficient evidence is available without sampling. The following risks can be considered:

- i) Non-permitted products (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers) used on the farm or on neighbouring farm;
- ii) Crop with high risk to attract diseases, which are not easy to treat with biological measures;
- iii) If there is a Scheme that subsidize or freely distribute pesticides or fertilizers;
- iv) Common use of non-permitted products (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers), in the region;
- v) The bags in which products are stored are not codified with the producer number;
- vi) The bags in which products are stored are not clean and not free of residues of non-permitted products;
- vii) No clear evidence that the farmers' organization storehouse only buys certified products from the farmers;
- viii) There is clear evidence that there is possibility of mixing non-certified and certified goods during storage, transport or export;
- ix) Parallel production and undeclared parallel production;

RSB ensures that the laboratories comply with the following:

- i) they are accredited laboratories that meet the applicable requirements of ISO standard ISO/IEC 17025 on General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories;
- ii) their accreditation bodies are signatory of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement;
- iii) they have sufficient capacity for analysis and testing of critical parameters and they can ensure that samples are always tested with relevant methods included in the scope of their accreditation;
- iv) The accredited scope covers the tested parameters.

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### 6.2.3.2. Risk based approach for grower group to define the number of farmers to be selected

Minimum number of farms to be inspected by RSB			
Number of group members = n	Normal risk factor 1	Medium risk factor 1.2	High risk factor 1.4
Minimum	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
n	Square root of n	1.2 square root of n	1.4 square root of n

In case RSB finds the internal control system to seriously lack reliability and effectiveness, RSB increases the number of farms subject to their annual inspection to at least three times the square root of the number of farms in the group.

Risk Assessment criteria for the minimum number of farms inspected by RSB (NCD/FORM/09).

For the purpose of evaluating the set-up, functioning and maintaining of the ICS of a group of operators, RSB, determines at least the following:

- the documented procedures of the ICS that have been put in place comply with the RSB established Specific requirements for Grower Groups - Internal Control System, NCD/GID/05;
- the list of members of the group of operators with the required information for each member is continuously updated and aligned with the scope of the certificate;
- all members of the group of operators comply with the criteria set out in RSB established Specific requirements for all operators NCD/GID/06 throughout their participation in the group of operators;
- the number, training and competence of ICS inspectors are proportionate and adequate and ICS inspectors are without conflicts of interest;
- the internal inspections of all members of the group of operators and their activities and production units or premises including purchase and collection centers have been carried out at least annually and are documented;
- new members or new production units and new activities of existing members, including new purchase and collection centers, have been accepted only after they have been approved by the ICS manager on the basis of the internal inspection report according to the ICS documented procedures that have been put in place;
- the ICS manager takes appropriate measures in case of non-compliance, including their follow up, according to the ICS documented procedures that have been put in place;
- the ICS manager's notifications to RSB, are appropriate and sufficient;
- the internal traceability for all products and members of the group of operators is ensured by estimating quantities and by cross-checking the yields of each member of the group of operators;
- the members of the group of operators receive adequate training on the ICS procedures and the requirements set by RSB.

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### 6.3. Evaluation plan

RSB develops individual evaluation plans for each operator for the initial evaluation, the surveillance in the first and second year after a positive certification decision and a recertification in the third year before the certification expires.

#### 6.3.1. Duration of an evaluation

RSB has considered the following aspects while determining the inspection time to accomplish a complete and effective inspection:

- to determine the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the relevant indicators of the RSB Organic Standard
- complexity of the operator including whether single or group certification
- regulatory context;
- any outsourcing of any activities included in the scope especially if the operator is processing
- the results of any prior inspections such as non-conformities, or sanctions
- size and number of sites, their geographical locations and terrain;
- the risks associated with the products, processes, or activities of the operator.
- whether inspection is combined, joint or integrated.

Note: inspection time does not include travel time

The calculated time is documented in the inspection plan and is compared with the time used during inspection to improve the calculation of inspection time.

RSB carries out at least once a year a physical inspection of all operators and more frequently, if necessary (such as complaint follow up) for certified operators. Physical inspections are undertaken at the high-risk stage (such as time for fertilizers application or period that may lead to infestation hence pest control activity) prior to certification of the organic operation.

#### 6.3.2. Evaluation timing

The applications for organic Certification are submitted at the beginning of the implementation of organic farming, actual inspection is carried out after the lapse of one year, unless there is enough evidence for retroactive conversion period (Brief information on crop production, organic management plan for crop production, field history declaration, and proof for previous management). Inspections are carried out when there are agriculture activities (For example: during planting, harvesting, processing). Accordingly, producers and processors must specify precisely in the application forms what areas and facilities are used in organic production.

Inspection times are flexible based on seasonality and on a risk-oriented basis depending on nature of crops, new entrance, new fields, transition (under conventional) and locations. Suspicion of noncompliance or any other reason.

Main activities of the operator are inspected at the time of visit. For different years a different focus can be chosen e.g: first year harvest time, second year: critical time for spaying a specific crop which is usually prior to harvest etc. The activities observed are recorded on the checklist.

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### 6.3.3. Communication of evaluation plan

Based on the information provided RSB establishes an inspection plan. The dates of the certification activities, including the preparation of the inspection, are agreed with the operator in advance. RSB asks the operator before the start of the evaluation to confirm the availability of relevant staff.

At least three weeks before the start of the on-site, the operator shall have provided all relevant information to RSB.

At the latest one week before the start of the evaluation activities, RSB must submit the inspection plan to the operator. The inspection plan must contain at least the following or refer to it:

- i) objectives of the evaluation;
- ii) criteria of the evaluation;
- iii) scope of evaluation, including identification of activities and processes to be evaluated;
- iv) evaluation personnel assigned;
- v) dates on which the activities are to be carried out;
- vi) the location where on-site activities will be conducted;
- vii) the expected duration of the activities
- viii) relevant employees of the operator and the times during the on-site visit at which they must be available.

### 6.4. Personnel for evaluation activities

Criteria for qualification, training and approval of personnel are defined in ISO/IEC 17065, chapter 6 and are described in detail in the RSB organic competence criteria PCU/COC/01 as well as several documents for personnel.

### 6.5. Inspection visit

Evaluation is carried out by internal resources. Outsourced resources are only used for operators where samples are taken for pesticide analysis. In this case ISO 17025 laboratories are used. The products are evaluated against the requirements of the RSB Organic Certification Scheme.

#### 6.5.1. Preparation of the Inspection

During the preparation RSB decides which documents/checklists are used for the operator based on the applied scope. Assigned inspector(s) carries out documents review.

#### 6.5.2. Opening Meeting

The inspecting team leader conducts an opening meeting to discuss the inspection plan. This meeting defines the role of the inspector, communicates the confidentiality of all information, and outlines the planned inspection activities. It also an opportunity to set expectations and answer the applicant's questions.

#### 6.5.3. Collection of information: Determination Methods

During determination, the inspector collects and analyzes the information relevant to the objectives, scope and criteria.

The inspector uses at least the following methods to collect information during the determination:

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- (a) Interviews with relevant employees of the operator (interview);
- (b) Observation of the relevant facilities to inspect operational implementation and control of processes and activities (inspection);
- (c) Review of documents and records (document review).
- (d) Taking risk based samples of soil, leaves and/or final products samples for analysis

#### **6.5.4. Sampling**

##### **6.5.4.1. Samples of documents and products**

###### **6.5.4.1.1. Sample size of documents**

Inspectors will carry out a systematic sampling from a population of documents, the sampling will be adequate for review of records, that give sufficient confidence that the operators' organic system is implemented as described.

The sample should be large enough to reasonably ensure that it represents the majority of the population. This document defines the smallest minimum number of samples. Evaluation personnel select samples based on professional and informed judgements (e.g. to investigate a potential problem), or through statistical sampling methods.

Review of records and accounts in order to verify flow of goods (production/sales reconciliation on farms, input/output reconciliation, and the trace back inspections in processing and handling facilities);

Samples are taken for the following requirements as follows:

###### **6.5.4.1.2. Sample size of mass balance and traceability**

Minimum: one product

Selection: risk oriented

criteria: type of product, volume, high value product, inconsistency records keeping, more than one supplier.

###### **6.5.4.1.3. Sample size of interviews for social audits**

Professional judgement is used to determine the number of personnel sampled to be interviewed for social responsibility.

Minimum: Two (02) per fifty (50) employees

Selection: random

Criteria: not a manager, from different areas, vulnerable group

Interviews shall be carried out without supervisors, managers of the operator.

Checklist for social justices applies to all organizations (e.g processing facility, cooperative) with hired workers.

In case farmers of a cooperative hiring a significant number of workers (more than 10 permanent or temporary workers for more than 30 hours per week and present for 1 month or more during a year).

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#### **6.5.4.1.4. Sample size of farmers in case of group certification**

Minimum: square root multiply by risk factor (Chapter 6.2.3.2). The square root of both farmers and plots will be calculated and compared to avoid sampling imbalance.

#### **6.5.4.1.5. Sample size of plots**

Initial inspection for single operator: all plots (organic/conventional/own consumption)

Initial inspection for group of operator: all plots of the sampled operators but not less than the square roots of total plots.

Surveillance for single operator, risks based a sample can be taken from the farmer (half of all plots for each visit)

Surveillance for group of operators, risks based and half of the square roots plots is to be sampled

### **6.5.5. Evaluation/analysing of Information**

The evaluator must consider whether the information collected is sufficiently objective to be considered as evidence that the requirements of the RSB Organic Standard are met.

Information is objective if it is:

- (a) complete (all the expected content is included in the information)
- (b) correct (the content is consistent with other evidence),
- (c) consistent (the information is consistent within itself and with related information), and
- (d) up-to-date (the content is up to date).
- (e) Relevant to the audit criteria and verifiable

Example: A procedure that covers all relevant topics but is not known or insufficiently known by interviewed and relevant employees cannot be considered as consistent information.

Only information that is objective and can be verified can be accepted as evidence.

If the objectivity and level of verification of the information collected is low, the evaluator must use professional judgment to determine whether the information can be used as evidence.

Furthermore, information must be prepared in a way that it is reviewable due to a reasonable time.

Example: A list of farmers is available with all necessary information. However, it is not possible to sum up the number of farmers and other information in an easy way.

#### **6.5.6. Recognition of other evaluation results**

RSB will only accept and recognize the evaluation results only if the certification body is accredited and the testing results have to be released by an accredited laboratory. RSB seeks for enough information on certification cycle status.

#### **6.5.7. Classification of Non-Conformities**

The inspector prepares during the evaluation the evaluation results to give conclusions to the operator. The inspector applies the classification of non-conformities defined by RSB.

Non conformities are classified as minor, major or critical, when one or more of the following situations apply:

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**The case of non-compliance is minor when:**

1. the precautionary measures are proportionate and appropriate, and the controls that the operator has put in place are efficient;
2. the non-compliance does not affect the integrity of the organic or in-conversion product;
3. the traceability system can locate the affected product(s) in the supply chain and prohibition of placing products on the market with reference to organic production is possible;

**The case of non-compliance is major when:**

1. the precautionary measures are not proportionate and appropriate and the controls that the operator has put in place are not efficient;
2. the non-compliance affects the integrity of the organic or in-conversion product;
3. the operator did not correct in a timely manner a minor non-compliance;
4. the traceability system can locate the affected product(s) in the supply chain and prohibition of placing products on the market with reference to organic production is possible;

**The case of non-compliance is critical when:**

1. the precautionary measures are not proportionate and appropriate and the controls that the operator has put in place are not efficient;
2. the non-compliance affects the integrity of the organic or in-conversion product;
3. the operator fails to correct previous major non-compliances or repeatedly fails to correct other categories of non-compliances;
4. there is no information from the traceability system to locate the affected product(s) in the supply chain and prohibition of placing products on the market with reference to organic production is not possible.

**6.5.8. Documentation of Non-Conformities**

When an inspection, review or investigation of a certified operation by RSB reveals any non-compliance with the applicable RSB Organic Certification Scheme, a written notice of non-compliance will be sent to the certified operator.

Procedure NCD/PRO/11 lays down how to report on the results of inspection and the surveillance activities and monitoring levels, how to use them and how to resolve non-conformities with certification requirements. Therefore, once a certified operator demonstrates that each non-compliance has been resolved, the certified operator shall send to the RSB a written notification of noncompliance resolution.

**6.5.9. Closing meeting**

The exit meeting is held with an authorized representative of the operation. The purpose of the closing meeting, is to present the inspection conclusions, including the recommendation regarding certification. For any nonconformities a corrective action request form is filled in.

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#### 6.5.10. Corrective action process

The evaluation personnel must perform the following additional evaluation tasks in the event of a need for improvement and non-conformities, provided that the customer expresses an interest in continuing the certification process.

The inspection team reviews the corrections, identified causes and corrective actions submitted by the operator to determine if these are acceptable. RSB verifies the effectiveness of any correction and corrective actions taken which could be done on site or by reviewing of the submitted documented evidence.

#### 6.5.11. Non-Conformities and root cause analysis

For each non-conformity the operator shall perform a root cause and determine suitable corrective actions. The root cause and extent analysis and corrective action shall be documented clearly and be submitted timely to the one leading the inspection team. The analysis and description must be received by RSB within two weeks (14 working days) of the evaluation and thus before the certification decision is made.

#### 6.5.12. Effectiveness of corrective actions

The evaluation personnel must review the submitted documentation and determine whether they are appropriate to address and effectively eliminate the nonconformities.

RSB allows the operator three months to comply with the requirements:

Within the same period, the inspector(s) verifies that the operator has complied with the requirements. It is at the discretion of the inspector(s) whether the verification is carried out on-site or can be carried out by document review. RSB retains the submitted evidence of the correction/corrective actions. The operator is informed of the result of the verification.

#### 6.5.13. Documenting the results of the evaluation activities

For the documentation of the evaluation results, the inspector(s) uses and completely fill in the checklist and the CAR format as required. If no nonconformities and no need for improvement were found; RSB sends a report to the operator via E-mail, within three weeks after the inspection.

### 6.6. Application for certification

Farming organically means respecting the principles, rules and requirements of organic farming according to the “RSB Organic Certification Scheme” and the developed compliance criteria.

The operator is required to fill the relevant Organic Preliminary Information (OPI) checklist to ensure availability of all the background information with respect to the operator, so as to enable effective planning and preparation activities. The information shall relate to the Organic operations available at the time of completing the OPI shall be true and accurate. OPI must be completely filled out in order for your Organic certification application to be considered by RSB.

The operator submits general documents, including its name and the address(es) of its physical location(s) (where organic products are produced and stored), significant aspects of its process and operations including seasonality and any relevant legal obligations.

The operator is required to provide RSB with information regarding any previous organic certification and/or other certification scheme currently undertaken or in progress.

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General information concerning the operator, relevant to the scope of organic certification for which the application is made, such as the operator's activities is submitted which includes but not limited to farm history and acreage, farming practice description. Traceability system and mass balance, ecosystem management and social responsibility as detailed in the respective OPIs.

Additional information is required for the Internal Control System (ICS) of grower groups, such as internal control system management. Product Flow, Farmer list including at least, internal inspection and their controls as detailed in the application form (Organic Application Form\_Group Certification PCU/FOM/12).

Other information includes, organizational chart, farm map, list of cultivated product (organic and conventional, erosion and pest management plans, In case of conversion period: last application of prohibited input and a filed history for the last two years, Label of the final product.

The conversion period for land shall be a minimum of one year of management. If land that has been in fallow for at least one year is brought into production, no conversion period shall apply for that land.

Conversion period starts once the application is submitted.

During conversion period, organic production methods need to be used but the resulting product cannot be sold as organic.

For the operator with scope covering processing information concerning all outsourced processes is required and the information on controls in place.

Certification requirements include:

- signing a certification agreement;
- payment of necessary fees;
- signing a licensing agreement for the use of the certification mark on their products;
- providing organic production and processing information.
- the ICS group shall inform RSB of the irregularities and non-conformities found during the internal inspection, as well as the corrective actions implemented.
- inform the RSB of all complaints received by the certified operator s relating to the certified products.
- notify the RSB of any change that may affect the ability of the operator to conform with applicable certification requirements.
- examples of changes may refer to changes in group member, plantation areas, or type of products, etc.

#### **6.7. Application review**

The application review is conducted using the respective applications

#### **6.8. Evaluation**

The RSB Organic certification scheme has a three-year certification cycle, which includes initial evaluation and surveillance in the first and second year after a positive certification decision and recertification in the third year. Additional inspections may be conducted due to complaints or findings requiring follow up.

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The purpose of initial inspection is to evaluate the implementation, including effectiveness, of the operator's organic processes and is carried out on-site. During the initial inspection information and evidence about conformity to all requirements of the RSB Organic Certification Scheme is confirmed. The inspection will evaluate the operator's organic processes' ability and its performance regarding meeting of applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements;

Surveillance activities include on-site inspections, so that RSB can maintain confidence that the certified operator continues to fulfil organic farming requirements between recertification inspections. Surveillance inspections are conducted at least once a calendar year, except in the third year prior to expiration of certification. Surveillance activities can include also additional announced inspections according to the risk of the operator.

Recertification inspections are conducted on-site, for the operator demonstrate commitment to maintain the effectiveness and improvement of the organic farming processes to give the intended output of organic products.

If the operator has non conformities, the recertification can only be recommended on closure of those non-conformities.

Announced inspections are conducted for planned initial, surveillance and re-certification inspections.

However; in case there is a modification to the scope of certification, an announced inspection is conducted.

Unannounced or short notice visits are also conducted depending on critical factors such as: to investigate complaints or in response to changes of the management system, changes to production process, product specifications or as follow up to suspension.

Evaluation includes planning and preparation activities in order to collect necessary information to perform the inspection.

Any additional evaluation or surveillance tasks (e.g. in the event of corrective actions due to improvement or findings) must be charged according to time and effort.

### **6.9. Review**

Once all determination activities have been completed, the results of the evaluation are reviewed to ensure that they provide a suitable, adequate and effective demonstration that the product fulfil the specified requirements and details are described in Organic Certification Procedure NCD/PRO/11.

### **6.10. Certification decision**

A certification decision based on the results of review process. RSB grants organic certification to the applicant upon satisfaction of the criteria for certification or not if compliance has not been demonstrated.

At team of at least three different people are involved in a decision making. The decision is made by a person who has not been involved in the evaluation activities. The review and decision may be made by the same person or group of persons. The persons with the responsibility of decision fulfil the requirements of the scheme.

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The operator is informed with the reasons for the negative decision.

Certification cycle involves initial inspection, surveillance and re-certification. It's taken on granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending, and withdrawing certification.

#### **6.11. Attestation**

Following the decision to grant certification, the attestation is form of organic certification document/s issued to each operator. In addition, the operator may place the scheme's certification mark on the product subject to a licensing agreement. The issued certificate has a validity of three years. The certification documentation complies with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 7.7.1 a) to d).

#### **6.12. Directory of certified products**

Certified operators are found at RSB website in the directory of certified Operators PCU/REG/05. The Directory of Certified operators is updated from the date of the decision and suspended status of the certification is made public on the website.

#### **6.13. Surveillance**

RSB carries out surveillance activities as described in this scheme in the control arrangements to monitor its operator s, on determined periodic time and on a risk-based approach.

The surveillance part of this scheme involves annual physical inspection of the production and product processing.

Additional and/or unannounced inspections including taking samples of the product from the point of production are done whenever necessary.

This scheme (Type III) does not provide any indication of the impact the distribution channel plays on conformity.

RSB reports to the operator the results of surveillances which are used for the purpose of knowing the maintenance level and continual improvement of the system.

When serious nonconformities are found, they must be resolved before distribution occurs or if its already on the market, the product must be recalled. RSB considers and decides upon the appropriate action including suspension for a limited period. Detailed surveillance activities are elaborated in the organic certification procedure NCD/PRO/11

A physical inspection is undertaken, at least once a year, on the organic production, post-harvest, processing, handling, packaging, and storage unit(s). Unannounced visit/inspection is undertaken according to the risk based approach.

In the case of reported frauds, mislabeling and other complaints, RSB conducts necessary investigation including, but not limited to, inspection and document review, depending on the nature of reported case.

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Surveillance activities can close non-conformities or issues raised at the determination stage. Surveillance outcomes can confirm continued conformity. During Surveillance activities non-conformities can be identified.

#### **6.14. Non-conformities and their management**

In the event of non-compliance by the group and/or its operators, measures are taken commensurate with the severity of the non-conformity(ies). Failure of the internal control system to detect and act on non-conformity(ies) invokes sanctions on the group as a whole. In cases where it finds the internal control system to lack reliability and effectiveness, RSB applies sanctions to the group as a whole including in case of serious deficiencies, the withdrawal of the ICS certification.

RSB may apply one or more of the following measures in a proportionate manner to the listed categories of cases of non-compliance:

<b>Category of non-compliance</b>	<b>Measures</b>
1. MINOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Submission by the operator of an action plan within time limit set on the correction of non-compliance.</i></li> </ul>
2. MAJOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If applicable, new conversion period required,</i></li> <li>• <i>Limitation of certificate's scope,</i></li> <li>• <i>Suspension of the certificate</i></li> </ul>
3. CRITICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Prohibition of marketing products which refer to organic production for a given period,</i></li> <li>• <i>If applicable, new conversion period required.</i></li> <li>• <i>Limitation of the certificate's scope</i></li> <li>• <i>Withdrawal of the certificate</i></li> </ul>

## **7. CHANGES AFFECTING CERTIFICATION**

### **7.1. Changes to product requirements**

When standard or another normative document, RSB informs certified operators and applicants of any new requirement, effective date, on which the new requirements of the changed document will come into force and transition period (of any deadlines) within which certified operators must take appropriate action to ensure compliance with new requirements in order to remain certified. RSB verifies the implementation of the new requirements and in line with the deadlines for the implementation of these requirements. This process follows the same steps as during any other annual inspection: Evaluation- Review- Decision and Issuance of the licence (in case of a positive decision).

### **7.2. Changes to other scheme requirements**

RSB (if necessary) informs certified operators and applicants other changes to the scheme requirements including:

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- a) test and examination procedures where these are not contained in the standards or other normative documents that specify the product requirements;
- b) criteria and procedures for assessment of production processes;
- c) conditions for licensing of the certification mark;
- d) qualification criteria and procedures for conformity assessment bodies participating in the scheme (if any).

### **7.3. Changes by client**

Certified operator shall inform RSB about any intended modification to the product, production and process which may affect the conformity of the product. RSB determines whether the announced changes require another initial evaluation or further investigations. In such cases, the client is not permitted to release products under the certificate resulting from such changes until RSB has notified the certified operator accordingly.

In case certified operator wishes to extend the scope of certification, to the same specified requirements as the products for which a certification is already granted, applies to the RSB using application form of relevant scope.

When certified operator wishes to apply the certification to additional types of products, but to different specified requirements, or if certified operator wishes to apply for an extension of the certification to cover an additional facility that is not covered by the earlier certificate, RSB performs evaluation only for those additional parts .h

## **8. TERMINATION, REDUCTION, SUSPENSION OR WITHDRAWAL OF CERTIFICATION**

### **8.1. Suspension**

Situations which lead to a suspension are e.g.: Licensee's wish to withdraw, Violation of an existing standard, non-payment of charges to certification body, failure to meet other provisions of the licensing contract, mandatory conformity with new requirements in relation to revision of a standard.

Reasons for suspension:

- Unsuccessful or correction of the noncompliance is not completed within the prescribed time period, the accidental application of a prohibited substance to only part of an operation's land could result only in the suspension of the affected land for 2 years
- The group (ICS) didn't inform the RSB of the irregularities and non-conformities found, as well as the corrective actions implemented.
- Failure of the ICS to detect and act on non-conformity(ies) may invoke sanctions on the group as a whole.
- Non-payment of charges to certification body,
- Mandatory conformity with new requirements in relation to revision of a standard
- Fraudulent claims of certification including misuse of certification marks
- Not complying with labelling requirements. (Mislabeling)

RSB has the right to suspend a certificate for a period not beyond 6 months if the client violates their contractual obligations towards certification.

More details are described in Procedure on suspending, withdrawing and reducing of scope of certification NCD/PRO/07

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## 8.2. Withdrawal of Certification

Cancellation /revocation of the statement of conformity by the body that issued the statement. Situation which leads to a withdraw are for example: the specified requirements are no longer fulfilled; The client voluntarily requests withdrawal of the statement of conformity; type of conformity assessment activity is no longer performed.

Reasons for withdraw:

- Willful or deliberate sale, labelling or representation of agricultural products as organic in violation of the standard;
- The deliberate application of prohibited substances to land or product, as well as the deliberate use of practices prohibited by the standard;
- Falsification or concealment of records from the RSB or its inspectors;
- Refusal by an operation to provide access to facilities for inspection or access to records;
- Continuing violation of the regulations following a suspension of certification. These violations often will be selling, labelling or representing agricultural products after certification is suspended. Since the operation was previously certified, such violations are considered knowing and willful;
- The systemic failure of an operation evidenced by multiple violations, indicating that an operation's organic practices cannot meet requirements.

Once RSB Suspend or withdraw a certificate, it clearly states:

- The reasons for the suspension or revocation;
- The effective date of such suspension or revocation;
- The impact of a suspension or revocation on future eligibility for certification;
- The right to file an appeal

More details are described in Procedure on suspending, withdrawing and reducing of scope of certification NCD/PRO/07 and certification agreement NCD/CEC/05.

## 8.3. Termination

It involves ending an active certification agreement before it is entirely performed by RSB and certified operator. Termination may occur due to different circumstances for example: certified operator wishes to terminate; RSB determines that the product no longer complies with product certification requirements; failure to fulfil other certification requirements, e.g. non-payment of fees

## 8.4. Reduction of scope

RSB reduces the certified client's scope of certification to exclude the parts not meeting the requirements of certification. The certified client may request for reduction of scope due to changes in the organization.

More details are described in Procedure on suspending, withdrawing and reducing of scope of certification NCD/PRO/07

## 9. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The operator or other involved parties has the right to complain to RSB about aspects of the service provided. The operator may also appeal to RSB against decisions on issuing,

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maintaining, extending, suspending and withdrawal of organic certification. In all of these cases, RSB complaints and appeal process applies as described in ISO/IEC 17065, 7.13. RSB makes the respective procedure publically available on the website.

## 10. MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

RSB establishes a procedure for:

General Management system documentation: Procedure on Document Management NCD/PRO/01; Management review: Procedure on Management Review NCD/PRO/03 - RSB applies this procedures as described in ISO/IEC 17065 Chapter 8.5; Internal Audits: Procedure on Internal Audits NCD/PRO/04: RSB applies this procedures as described in ISO/IEC 17065 Chapter 8.6

## 11. REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17000 Conformity assessment — Vocabulary and general principles;  
ISO/IEC 17067 Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes  
ISO/IEC 17065 Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.

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