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COR

COMPLIANCE

Program Manual

**For the Certification of Operations Located in Canada to
the Canadian Organic Regime (COR)**

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ACRONYMS USED

CFIA: Canadian Food Inspection Agency

COR: Canadian Organic Regime

NOP: National Organic Program

OSP: Organic System Plan

USDA: United States Dept. of Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

CCOF's Canadian Organic Regime (COR) Compliance certification program is for operations located within Canada. These regulations differ from the United States Department of Agriculture National Organic Program (NOP) standards and are required for organic operations or facilities in Canada as of June 30, 2009.

SECTION ONE: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: DO I NEED TO BE CERTIFIED TO THE CCOF COR COMPLIANCE PROGRAM?

A1: If any part of your organic operation produces, handles, processes, packages, or labels organic products within Canada you must be certified to the COR organic standards. Operations that already have a product certified to COR or produce or handle non-food items such as cosmetics, Natural Health Products, and pet food are outside the scope of CFIA's COR authority and do not require COR certification. CCOF can offer NOP certification to operators in Canada that produce these products that are outside the scope of the COR standards.

Q2: HOW MUCH DOES CCOF COR COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION COST?

A2: For certification of operations located in Canada, CCOF will charge a minimum annual certification of Fee Category tier 9 per Certification Fee Schedule, plus all other applicable fees (such as inspection fees, Global Market Access Program fees, late fees, etc.) as described in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual. Where Organic Production Value (OPV) is greater than \$600,000, the annual certification fee described in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual Fee Schedule will apply.

Q3: HOW DO I OBTAIN COR COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION FROM CCOF?

A3: There are three simple steps for attaining COR certification.

Step 1: Complete the COR Application & Organic System Plan (OSP) and submit it directly to CCOF. Operations with production in both the United States and Canada must maintain separate COR certification for Canada and NOP certification for the US.

Step 2: Pay the required fees. CCOF will invoice you when we receive your COR Compliance Application and again each year at the Continuation of Certification, due January 1.

Step 3: Complete an inspection. After the inspection, CCOF will review the inspection and determine compliance.

Q4: WHAT/WHO IS THE CANADIAN ORGANIC REGIME (COR)?

A4: COR is overseen by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and is composed of several constituent parts. Each part plays a role in defining how operators demonstrate compliance and the roles of certifiers, standards setting bodies, and enforcement arms.

- **Regulation establishing the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) Part 13**, published May 30, 2018; came into force on January 15, 2019. For the interpretation of the SFCR Part 13, see sections C.5.6 through C.5.12 of the Canada Organic Regime Operating Manual.
- **Organic Production Systems General Principles and Management Standards (CAN/CGSB-32.310)**. These are the National Standards of Canada which establish the production practices that must be followed by operators.
- **Organic Production Systems Permitted Substances Lists (CAN/CGSB 32.311)**. This list identifies materials that may be used in the production of organic products under COR.
- **Canada Organic Regime Operating Manual Published by the CFIA**. This manual identifies the procedures necessary for entities involved in administering the COR. These include requirements and procedures for certifiers, accreditors, and the CFIA itself. The Operating Manual includes numerous requirements that affect certifiers' accreditation and will result in certification processes or requirements that affect operations seeking certification under COR.

Q5: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CERTIFICATION TO THE CANADIAN ORGANIC REGIME (COR) AND THE US/CANADA ORGANIC EQUIVALENCE?

A5: Operations located in Canada must be certified to the COR standards directly and cannot be certified to the NOP standards unless they handle products outside the scope of COR, such as cosmetics, Natural Health Products, or pet food. Once certified to either the COR or NOP standards, products are eligible to meet the US/Canada equivalence arrangement.

The US/Canada equivalence arrangement, signed on July 1, 2009, establishes the COR and NOP standards as equivalent, with minor critical variances that must be verified by the certifier. Once the critical variances are verified, products certified to the COR standard may be shipped to the US and use the USDA organic seal, and products certified to the NOP can ship product to Canada and use the Canadian organic seal.

CCOF offers verification to the US/Canada equivalence, as well as other Canada equivalence arrangements, through enrollment in our Global Market Access (GMA) program. Fees and program descriptions are outlined in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual and Global Market Access Program Manual.

SECTION TWO: CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The process and requirements for certification to the CCOF COR Compliance program are described in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual. The CCOF Certification Services Program Manual describes all aspects of the certification process, including Application, Application Review¹, Granting of Certification², On-Site Inspection³, Additional (Announced & Unannounced) On-site Inspections, Noncompliance Procedure, Certification Sanctions⁴, Denial of Certification (Applicants)⁵, Suspension and Cancellation of Certification⁶, Appeals⁷ and Complaints⁸.

Areas where the CCOF COR Compliance certification program process differs from that described in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual, including additions, deletions, or modifications, are listed in this manual.

2.1 COMPLAINT LOG⁹

All COR Compliance program clients must keep a record of all complaints received that relate to a product's compliance with CCOF COR Compliance program standards. A record of all complaints must be made available to CCOF when requested. The record must show that appropriate action is taken with respect to each received complaint.

2.2 APPLICATION¹⁰

To request certification to COR Compliance, an operation must complete the CCOF Application and COR Organic System Plan (OSP). The process for application is described per the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual and the forms can be downloaded at www.ccof.org/documents.

CCOF will review the application and OSP, verifying both for completeness. We will determine whether CCOF has the competence and administrative capacity to perform the certification activity.¹¹

All applicants who wish to change certifiers to CCOF must provide written consent for CCOF to receive from the sending certifier or certifiers the following upon application:

- Current certification decisions,
- Any major non-compliances,
- Evidence of corrective actions(s),

¹ ISO/IEC 17065 7.1-7.3.5

² ISO/IEC 17065 7.6

³ ISO/IEC 17065 7.4

⁴ ISO/IEC 17065 7.11 & 7.13

⁵ ISO/IEC 17065 4.4.3

⁶ ISO/IEC 17065 7.11-7.11.6

⁷ ISO/IEC 17065 7.13

⁸ ISO/IEC 17065 7.13

⁹ ISO/IEC 17065 4.1.2.2.c.2 & 4.1.2.2.j

¹⁰ ISO/IEC 17065 7.1-7.3.5

¹¹ COR Operating Manual C.2.1.6

- Copies of transactions certificates or information regarding sales, and/or
- Any denials or suspension/cancellation.

The operation must have a “letter of good standing” from their sending certifier. A signed copy of this letter must be provided to CCOF. For applicants that are granted certification under CCOF’s COR Compliance program that are changing certifiers, CCOF will notify the sending certifier when the operation is certified. The sending certifier will then terminate the certification agreement it has with the operator.¹²

2.3 ON-SITE INSPECTION¹³

The CCOF CS inspector will start the inspection by conducting an introductory meeting with the representatives of the operation.

CCOF reserves the right to make all inspection assignments. CCOF clients may not influence the choice of inspector or contact inspectors directly to solicit inspection assignments. Operators have the right to be informed about the identity of the inspector before the inspection visit and may raise objections based on conflicts of interest or other reasons. The certification body shall rule whether the grounds on which the inspector was refused are accepted.

CCOF ensures inspections are conducted at least once in a 12-month period. For mixed operations (organic and conventional) the inspection shall be conducted when organic product is being run.¹⁴ If this is not possible, CCOF shall record the reasons. There must be no more than two consecutive years without an inspection when organic product is being processed.

CCOF may provide foreign accreditation agencies and/or import authorities with copies of inspection reports when required exclusively for the purpose of gaining import licenses for CCOF clients or their customers. When inspection reports etc. are provided CCOF will notify the client of this occurrence.

2.4 ADDITIONAL ON-SITE PROVISIONS

In addition to other on-site provisions, inspections for COR Compliance certification program clients will take into account the intensity of the production system, production types, company size, previous inspection/review results, complaints, and parallel production.

CCOF will also include identification and investigation of areas of risk, review of records and accounts, productions/sales reconciliation on farms, the performance of input/output reconciliation and trace back audits in processing and handling, and verification that changes have taken place per any changes in COR standards.¹⁵

The inspections for all clients seeking COR compliance certification may include the observation of the entire agricultural production system being managed by the operation, even if only part of the operation is enrolled in the organic certification program. Inspections may include observation of non-organic production and processing operations, including packaging and labeling of non-organic products. This requirement applies where there are organic and non-organic sites managed by the same clients in the same location.¹⁶

Clients must be able to demonstrate during onsite inspections functioning audit trail/record keeping systems that include traceability.

CCOF ensures that all production and processing operations, including packaging and labeling and any subcontracted activities included in their application and/or OSP are inspected. The inspector shall verify whether the standards are being implemented and correspond to the OSP submitted.¹⁷ The inspector also verifies any changes in the standards or changes to CCOF’s policies or procedures (when applicable) have been effectively implemented by the operator.¹⁸

¹² COR Operating Manual C.10

¹³ ISO/IEC 17065 7.4 & COR Operating Manual C.2.2

¹⁴ COR Operating Manual section C.2.2.11

¹⁵ COR Operating Manual C.2.2

¹⁶ COR Operating Manual C.2.2

¹⁷ COR Operating Manual C.2.2.16

¹⁸ COR Operating Manual C.2.5.4

2.5 ADDITIONAL (ANNOUNCED & UNANNOUNCED) ON-SITE INSPECTIONS¹⁹

CCOF reserves the right to conduct additional on-site inspections of both applicants for certification and certified operations to determine compliance with the applicable international organic production and handling regulations. The performance of unannounced inspections will be decided by CCOF based on risk analysis, taking into account factors such as the type of production, the operator's record of compliance and complexity of production, or to ensure corrective actions have been addressed and nonconformities have been resolved.

The CAEQ may require that additional inspections be performed by CCOF for the purpose of determining compliance or equivalence with applicable international organic production and handling regulations. Additional inspections may be announced or unannounced at the discretion of CCOF or as required by the CAEQ or CFIA.²⁰

In addition to the regular inspections, CCOF will conduct unannounced inspections representing 5% of COR clientele (minimum one). CCOF may use any of the following criteria when deciding to assign an unannounced inspection to an operation:

- Possible non-compliant activity
- Potential for drift
- Observation of specific crops or production activities
- Result of a complaint or investigation
- Any logical reason
- Random selection

2.6 ORGANIC CERTIFICATE²¹

The organic certificate for operators in the COR Compliance Program is generated by CCOF. In addition to the requirements for organic certificates as stated in the CCOF Certification Services Program Manual, organic certificates issued to CCOF COR clients also include specifics required by the COR Operating Manual.

Multi-ingredient food commodities are identified on the COR Compliance Program certificate as "Organic" for products containing 95% or higher organic content, or as "70-95% organic content (COR)" as applicable.

2.7 MODIFICATION OF CERTIFICATION²²

CCOF will inform clients, in writing, when they are affected by a change, modification (such as reduction, expansion, or extension), or cancellation or suspension of certification in whole or in part.

2.8 RENEWAL²³

Certified operations are required to renew certification in full on January 1 of each year. Additionally, certified operations must submit their intention to maintain certification in writing no later than the date that is 6 months prior to the end of that period and as appropriate to the nature of the operation.

2.9 TRANSFER CERTIFICATION TO ANOTHER CB²⁴

A CCOF certified client who decides to change their certification to a different certification body (CB) must notify CCOF of their intent to change the CB and shall request a "letter of good standing" to be sent to the new CB. The operation shall maintain their current certification with CCOF until the new certification process is complete and the new CB has issued documents confirming the certification of the operation. The operation shall stop using their CCOF certificate after the new certification process is complete and the operation has received the new certificate. The operation shall not use up existing supplies of labels which identify CCOF on products they produce from the moment the operation receives the new certificate. New labels identifying the new CB must be used at once. The operation may sell certified

¹⁹ COR Operating Manual C.2.6

²⁰ COR Operating Manual C.2.6.6

²¹ COR Operating Manual C.2.4.4

²² ISO/IEC 17065 7.10

²³ COR Operating Manual C.2.5.2

²⁴ COR Operating Manual C.10

prepackaged products labelled with CCOF as the CB as long as these products were packaged before the CB change and an inventory list was provided to both CBs.

2.10 REINSTATEMENT

To reinstate cancelled certification, the operator must submit an application for organic certification to CCOF accompanied by evidence demonstrating correction of each Noncompliance taken to comply with and remain in compliance with the organic regulations and standards. CCOF conducts inspection and review of the operator and the organic system plan. CCOF reinstates certification after the CFIA has been notified and CFIA removes the operator from the CFIA published list of suspended and cancelled organic certifications.

2.11 NONCOMPLIANCE,²⁵ SUSPENSION²⁶ AND CANCELLATION OF CERTIFICATION²⁷

If an operator does not provide the response to a notice of noncompliance within 30 working days, CCOF shall issue a notice of suspension. The operator then has 30 working days to submit a corrective action plan. If the response is adequate, CCOF determines whether to close the noncompliance and lift the suspension. If the response is inadequate, or no response is received, CCOF issues a Notice of Proposed Cancellation, which includes the opportunity to be heard in respect to the cancellation (i.e. right to appeal). If no appeal is received, certification is Cancelled by CCOF.

In the case of suspension and cancellation of certification, the operation has the right to be heard, either orally or in writing. During suspension, clients must cease all claims of the CCOF logo and name. If certification is cancelled, in addition to ceasing all use of the CCOF logo and name, they must destroy or return all certificates, labeling and marketing materials containing reference to CCOF, and are liable for the costs of services provided up to the point of cancellation. If an operation voluntarily withdraws from the CCOF COR Compliance Program, CCOF will issue a Notice of Cancellation of Certification without the Notice of Suspension and/or Notice of Proposed Cancellation.

CCOF reports to CFIA all suspensions and cancellations of certification within 30 days via CCOF's Conformity Verification Body (CAEQ).

CCOF will not grant certification to an operator who has previously cancelled or whose name appears on the CFIA published list of suspended and cancelled organic certifications unless the operator has undergone application, inspection, review, and CCOF has received confirmation from the CFIA that the operator has been removed from the CFIA published list.

2.12 APPEALS²⁸

An applicant for certification may appeal a CCOF CS notice of denial of certification, and a certified operation may appeal a CCOF CS notification of suspension, proposed cancellation, other adverse action or decision. CCOF CS will carry out the appeal pursuant to the following:

- All written communications between parties involved in appeal proceedings must be sent to the recipient's place of business by a delivery service, which provides dated return receipts.
- An appeal must be filed as required in the notification or within 30 days from receipt of the notification, whichever occurs later. All appeals must include a copy of the adverse decision and a statement of the appellant's reasons for believing that the decision was not proper or made in accordance with COR regulations.
- The appeal will be considered "filed" on the date received by CCOF CS. CCOF will send acknowledgement in writing to the appellant that we have received the appeal.
- All appeals shall be reviewed in a timely manner, heard and decided by persons not involved with the decision being appealed.
- The CCOF CS Ad Hoc Appeals Committee shall render a final and non-appealable decision to sustain, deny, suspend or cancel certification. Alternatively, they may sustain or deny an appeal regarding an adverse action. Only persons who were not involved in making the decision being appealed may serve on the Ad Hoc Appeals

²⁵ ISO/IEC 17065 7.11 & COR Operating Manual C.2.8

²⁶ ISO/IEC 17065 7.11 & COR Operating Manual C.2.8

²⁷ ISO/IEC 17065 7.11-7.11.6 & COR Operating Manual C.2.8

²⁸ ISO/IEC 17065 7.13 & COR Operating Manual C.4.2.1

Committee. The number of persons assigned to an appeal must be a minimum of three persons, allowing for a majority vote.

- CCOF shall give formal notice of the outcome and the end of the appeal process to the appellant.
- The operation can submit a complaint to the CCOF conformity verification body (CAEQ) if they are not satisfied with the appeal process.

2.13 COMPLAINTS OR DISPUTES²⁹

CCOF reserves the right to investigate complaints or disputes of noncompliance applicable to the COR Compliance program organic production and handling regulations, and/or complaints against the performance of CCOF as a certification body from operators or outside persons or organizations. CCOF is committed to investigating complaints or disputes that are submitted in writing and that provide evidence that supports the allegation(s). CCOF conducts investigations in a timely manner, confidentially and based only on documented evidence. If a certified party or applicant refuses to cooperate in an investigation, CCOF may deem this sufficient cause for denial or suspension and/or cancellation of certification. A certified party must also maintain records of such complaints per Section 2.1 Complaint Log as described above.

SECTION THREE: COR STANDARDS³⁰

CCOF's COR Compliance program is approved by the Committee on Accreditation for Evaluation of Quality (CAEQ) for providing certification services to those who demonstrate full compliance with the Canadian National Organic Standards (CAN/CGSB-32.310, CAN/CGSB 32.311, and the COR Operating Manual). The full text of the Canadian National Organic Standards may be accessed at any time via <https://www.ccof.org/page/operations-within-canada> or by contacting the CCOF office to request a paper copy. Operations seeking certification as COR compliant are responsible for reviewing the full text of the Canadian National Organic Standards.

The scopes of certification offered by CCOF's COR Compliance program include the preparation and handling of organic products, the packaging and labeling of organic products, and an attestation of compliance for services.

CCOF will notify clients of any amendments to the COR regulations within 2 months after their publication. Operations in CCOF's COR Compliance program will be given up to 12 months from the publication date of amendments to the regulations to demonstrate full compliance with new standards and/or requirements established through amendments to CAN/CGSB 32.310 and/or 32.311.

If at any point during certification activities, interpretation of an applicable regulation is required, it can be sought from the Standards Interpretation Committee, as described in the Canada Organic Regime Operating Manual.

3.1 ORGANIC PRODUCT LABELING REQUIREMENTS

CCOF clients must disclose all labels and brands manufactured under CCOF certification(s), including private labels or other brands not owned by the client. All labels used on packaging must be included in the Organic System Plan and approved by CCOF CS prior to printing. Labels must meet the Canadian organic label requirements, described in the CCOF International Market Labeling Guide at www.ccof.org/canada.

²⁹ ISO/IEC 17065 7.13 & COR Operating Manual C.4.2.2 and C.4.2.3

³⁰ISO/IEC 17065 4.1.2.2, 6.11, 6.2.1, 7.1.2, 7.10 & COR Operating Manual C.5.1, C.5.2, C.5.5



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