

DRAFT

Terms of Reference

Working Group for Cooperation on Organic Labeling and Trade for Asia

Background

In May 2010, participants at the GOMA Workshop on Harmonization and Equivalence for Organic Agriculture in Asia agreed to create a Working Group to develop a framework for cooperation on Organic Labeling and Trade for Asia¹. The cooperation will focus on opportunities to facilitate trade and reduce or avoid barriers to organic trade within Asia. The voluntary Working Group, drawn from the region, consists of individuals from private and public sectors working in their personal capacity.

Aims of the Working Group

The purpose of the Working Group is to develop a comprehensive framework for cooperation in the Region on organic labeling and trade. Ideally, the framework could be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding among the participating countries. The framework will take into consideration opportunities for harmonization, equivalency and other forms of cooperation. More specifically the Working Group will:

- (i) Develop a regional organic standard through a public-private consultative process. This Asian Organic Standard, with a scope of production, processing and labeling, will be based on core international norms and regional minimum requirements. The objective of the standard is to have a set of baseline, objectives-based, regionally applicable standards for the purpose of assessing equivalence. The standard may also be adopted or adapted by countries in the Region who wish to use it as a national standard. The Working Group will consider recommendations of a related Task Force on technical, protocol and funding requirements for development of an Asian Regional Organic Standard.
- (ii) Encourage recognition of equally credible organic systems, and initiate multi-lateral and/or bilateral discussions on equivalency of standards and conformity assessment systems using EquiTool and IROCB.
- (iii) Identify opportunities and promote further cooperation among accreditation and certification bodies. Certification bodies (CBs) have recommended that sub-contracting and re-certification be recognized as good practices for CB-to-CB collaboration.

Composition of the Working Group

¹ The terms "Asia" and "the Region" refer in this context to the geopolitical scope of East, SouthEast and South Asia

The Working Group, will ideally consist of:

- one individual from government and one from the private sector from each of the following countries/provinces, which currently regulate a system of organic standards and conformity assessment: China, Japan, S. Korea, Philippines, Taiwan Province of China, Indonesia, Thailand, India.
- one individual, from either the private or government sectors, from those countries who do not currently regulate the system of organic standard and conformity assessment, including the following countries: Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bhutan, Sri Lanka.

Term of the Working Group

The term of the Working Group is expected to extend from December, 2010 through February, 2012.

Support of the Working Group

Financial and technical support for the Working Group will be provided by the Global Organic Market Access project to the extent allowed by its own resources. Main support will include funding of meetings and technical studies, and administrative support.