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## Bhutan Organic Registration and Certification System

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Organic agriculture is a globally accepted sustainable approach to food production as it entails to have positive ecological impacts while promoting socially and economically sound production systems. Organic movement in Bhutan therefore befits well with an overarching development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Bhutan made a decision to follow a path of transition to organic farming in 2006 with the formulation of the National Framework for Organic Farming in Bhutan.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MOAF) has ever since been pursuing the vision and aspiration to be organic following

an approach of specific selected products in specific regions of the country in a phase wise manner as alternative methods are found to replace conventional farming methods for food and income security reasons.

As the vision of Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) of going fully organic by 2020 was constrained by many factors such as lack of awareness to the farmers, lack of financial support, lack of technical personnel, lack of bio-inputs and so on. With the coming up of National Organic Flagship Programme (NOFP) many improvements have taken places where the NOFP sites were identified and the selected commodities were promoted in the sites identified and accordingly the

inputs for the promotion of organic farming were supplied.

Moreover, the capacity building of the interested farmers and Training of Trainers (ToT) to the relevant stakeholders (Dzongkhag Organic Focal and ARDCs focal) were given. The requirement of the flagship programme in Organic Agriculture (OA) in the 12th FYP is mainly to commercialize the organic production for export and domestic market, and to make organic inputs available in the country at larger scale. Through the commercialization of organic production it can create employment and generate higher income for the youth.

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Bhutan organic registration and certification system is the organic certification system which allows organic operators to market their produce with Bhutan Organic Mark after fulfilling the voluntary Bhutan Organic Standards (BOS). The National Center for Organic Agriculture (NCOA) as an apex body for OA is mandated to develop guidelines, implement policy directives and decisions of the National Organic Board (NOB) and National technical Working Group (NWG) on OA. NCOA facilitate the registration, certification and regulation of organic sector within the purview of Bhutan Organic Guarantee System (BOGS) and Bhutan Organic Standards (BOS). Among others, NCOA coordinate and lead organic research and development program.

All the organic operators (organic farmers/group, organic processor, organic retailer, organic enterprise, exporter and importer) and the third party certification bodies (BAFRA, international and private certification bodies) wishing to go for organic certification in the country has to register first with the NCOA. There are 2 types of certification system i.e. Local Organic

Assurance System (LOAS) certification and Third Party Certification system. The LOAS is the organic certification system which allows organic operators to market their produce with organic mark after fulfilling the voluntary Bhutan Organic Standards and this includes certification conducted by the NCOA and is primarily focused for local domestic market. However, the LOAS certified commodities can also be exported as long as it meets the requirements of the importing country. The monitoring and regulation of LOAS certification is solely conducted by the NCOA as of now and in future the plan is underway to decentralize LOAS at the Dzongkhag level.

On the other hand, the Third Party Certification refers to the certification conducted by independent certification bodies in line with the international organic certification practices. This includes certification conducted by private and international certification bodies and BAFRA/ Bhutan Standard Bureau (BSB) with a focus on both international as well as domestic market.

For facilitating and promoting export and import of the organic

commodities, mutual recognition of standards and certification system between the NCOA and importing countries are already in the pipeline which would really go a long way in promoting the organic industry and trade development in the long run.

Further, to add value and for high recognition of the certified organic commodities, the organic operators may even opt for Brand Bhutan logo in future with the Department of Trade under the Ministry of Economic Affairs after fulfilling their required standard/criteria as it is expected to capture the spirit of the country in the international market and Brand Bhutan logo is being regulated and monitored by the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Taking the advantage of Bhutan's unique agricultural systems and its comparative advantage, branding of organically produced agricultural products under Brand Bhutan is also considered to help boost up-scaling of organic agricultural production program.

### Maintenance of Farm Diary

For any organic operators in the country, maintenance of farm

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diary is a prerequisite where all the details of production system of the individual farm are recorded including the input purchased and used.

### Bhutan Organic Registration and Certification Process

NCOA is mandated with the LOAS organic registration and certification in the country. LOAS registration and certification will enable farmers to gain access to the Bhutan Organic Mark after meeting the BOS. The use of organic mark guarantees that the products are organic certified.

On the other hand, third party certification in the country is mandated to Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) or any other recognized private/international certifying body in compliance with BOS or other international standard. Registration and certification system are very important and compulsory steps to certify any organic produce.

The foremost step in organic certification is registration. Registration is valid for 2 years

to process for certification. LOAS certificate needs to be renewed annually by individual operator and biennially by groups/cooperative. Validity of third party certification by BAFRA is 3 years and BAFRA annually conduct surveillance to ensure fulfillment of BOS.

### Initial and Common Procedure for Both the LOAS and Third Party Certification

- Based on the interest and willingness of the individual to practice organic farming, applicant has to submit application in prescribed form for registration to the geog RNR sector staff.
- The concerned geog RNR staff will review the application form and conduct feasibility study and submit the feasibility report to the Dzongkhag Organic Focal along with the application.
- The Dzongkhag Organic Focal will verify the application along with other relevant documents with support from the concerned sector head and forward the application to the NCOA for registration with information to the ARDC.
- NCOA review the application and approves registration and the organic farmer/operator will be awarded organic registration certificate by the NCOA.

### LOAS Certification Procedure

- For organic certification, NCOA with support from Dzongkhag/ARDCs conduct on-site inspection of farm in accordance with BOS and submit report.
- NCOA review team shall verify field inspection report for compliance of BOS.
- If the production and management comply with BOS, their products will be certified under LOAS with the awarding of certificate with right to use Bhutan Organic Mark.

### Third Party Certification Procedure

- Based on the organic registration certificate issued by the NCOA, applicant has to submit application in prescribed form for registration to BAFRA.
- The concerned official of BAFRA will review the application to assess the readiness of the applicant for organic certification.
- BAFRA Inspector will conduct on farm inspection in accordance with the BOS.
- Review field inspection report for compliance of BOS and certification requirements.
- BAFRA issue license to use certification mark to successful applicant.





# Inspection and LOAS Certification of Organic Farms

NCOA, Yusipang



During the month of January, 2022, the NCOA successfully conducted inspection of eligible registered organic farms despite the pandemic with support from the regional Agriculture and Research Development Centers, the respective Dzongkhag Agriculture Officers, the Organic Focal Officials and Geog Agriculture Extension Officials. As is the procedure, the findings of the inspection team were presented to the LOAS (Local Organic Assurance System) certification committee which tabled and endorsed the certification of a total of 1165.82 acres belonging to 340 H/H under Sarpang, Tashiyangtse, Lhuentse, Mongar and Zhemgang Dzongkhags.

The LOAS certificate grants the operator the right to use the Bhutan Organic Mark on their commodity authenticating the organic status of the commodity which is produced in accordance with the Bhutan Organic Standard (BOS). It also helps prepare the operators for transition to third-party certification and gain access to international niche organic market.







## Leisure

### Grapes: Points of techniques

The origin is both Mediterranean to Middle East and North America. There are two major groups of Grapes: European type and American type. Japanese hybrid is almost mixed with both American and European origin types. Pure European types prefer desert like climate. American varieties can grow under a bit of a humid area. Basically, the persimmon area can also be suitable for grapes.

### Climate and soil requirement

- Area with low rain is preferred
- Need sunny days(3-4 months)
- Resistant to heat (temp.up to 38°C)
- Large temperature difference of day and night is welcome
- Annual average temperature guideline is 10-20 °C
- No foggy during flowering and fruiting season
- Well drained soil with organic matters
- Soil pH 5.5-7.0

## JOKES



A farmer got an idea to make money off his farm in the off-season. He had a huge property where few people drove. He decided he would set up a Christmas light display. At the end of the display, he had a couple of farmhands waiting with donation buckets and sure enough, he raked in several hundred dollars that night. This went on for weeks.

One day, the farmer headed down to gather a few necessary supplies for the display and couldn't help but overhear a couple of the customers talking. "Yeah, it just ain't what it used to be. I mean, don't get me wrong, it were pretty and all when he got it started, but something 'bout it nowadays just ain't fresh." "I know. I wish he'd do something different. Something original. Everybody's got them Christmas lights now."

This incensed the farmer. He raced back to his farm and ripped out everything and then meticulously strung the exact same red and green lights on that fence. "I'll show them. They think they can take me for granted, we'll see how they like this boring mess."

But the visitors were astonished, their phones lit up with dials to their friends and neighbors. Soon enough, the line of cars stretched back miles and miles, longer than it ever had in the heyday of the display. The farmer shook his head while his farmhands stood agape at the traffic. "I don't believe it! How could this be so popular?" the lead farmhand asked the farmer.

"It's simple. Everybody says they want to see something original but what really gets them going is the same old post over and over again."

## Did you know?

*White powder-like thing is seen on grapes. This is called 'bloom' as an indicator of freshness and sweetness. Someone says it is an agriculture chemical thing, but it is not correct. When the bloom appears on grapes skin, the harvest timing is coming soon.*

**Please submit your articles for RNR-Newsletter at**

*communication@moaf.gov.bt*



## The Ministry's week

### Hon'ble Sanam Lyonpo on constituency visit



Hon'ble Sanam Lyonpo completed his four-day Nubi-Tangsibji constituency visit on 12 April 2022. During constituency visit, Lyonpo visited various infrastructure development sites at Nubi and Tangsibji gewogs, mostly farm road, laying of base course and bridge construction sites. Lyonpo also visited and reviewed the proposed Mangdephu- Dhur Tshacu trek route and directed the Local

Government and the Dzongkhag to start the construction at the earliest. Furthermore, Lyonpo made a visit to Trongsa Throm and discussed possibility of expansion of Throm with enhanced facilities. Lyonpo also visited Sherabling clinic of the Nationwide Accelerated Dog Population Management and Rabies Control Program and conveyed his heartfelt appreciations to all officials including Dessups for their hard work and dedication.

### Urban and Peri-Urban Farming continues in Thimphu by raising nursery seedlings

Despite the continuous COVID19 pandemic lockdowns in recent months, the registered members of urban farming were not deterred from gardening efforts. To cope with the losing time, the clients were encouraged to establish nurseries of priority vegetables such as chilli, brinjal



and tomatoes under poly-tunnels and greenhouses.

On April 1, a demonstration was organized by the Department of Agriculture to all the clients on raising nurseries using plug trays filled up with vermicompost. They also learned how to install a plastic greenhouse.

### Hon'ble Sanam Lyonpo in Mongar

On 14 April 2022, Hon'ble Sanam Lyonpo visited a farm operated by a youth at Kalapang under Sailing Gewog. The farm ventures into mix vegetables, mushroom and spawn production in an area of 4.5 acres.

In afternoon, Lyonpo met with 15 households of Jangdung village where they are engaged in early

chilli production in 5 acres. The last site visit of the day was made at Jamcholing Agriculture Land Development Area.

The target for this financial year for Jamcholing ALD is 22.04 areas, of which 8 acres is completed. Around Nu. 0.9 million is allocated for ALD in Jamcholing.



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