

Inspection and Certification System for Organic Foods



August 2023

Standards and Conformity Assessment Policy Office

Food Manufacture Affairs Division

New Business and Food Industry Department

Minister's Secretariat,

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

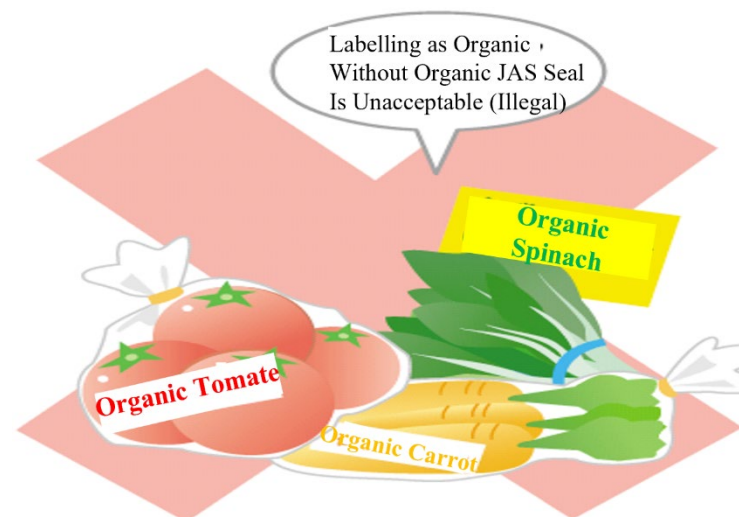
I. Establishment of an Inspection Certification System for Organic Plant Products, Etc.

1. In 1992, labelling guidelines were established because consumers found it difficult to choose the appropriate commodities in a market flooded with misleading labelling, such as those labelled as “organic” or “reduced pesticides”. Ever since then, every effort has been made to assure the appropriateness of labelling, however, there still was a lot of confusion, as the organic plant products were not labelled appropriately or production criteria was not standardized, probably because the guidelines were not mandatory.

2. On the other hand, in 1991, the Codex Alimentarius Commission (The Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Commission) started to lay the groundwork for the development of guidelines for organic foods internationally. In 1999, they adopted the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods.

3. In consideration of these circumstances, in accordance with the Act on JAS (amended in 1999), Japanese Agricultural Standards (JASs) were established for organic plant products and processed foods products thereof, to ensure the appropriate labelling of the products. (JAS for organic livestock products, etc. were also established later on.)

4. Please note that the JASs for organic foods is established in accordance with the Codex Guidelines. Similar organic systems (in accordance with the CODEX guidelines) are also established in other countries such as the US, Europe, Australia, etc.



○ Labeling Regulation

- Organic plant products, organic livestock products, and organic processed foods are designated by Cabinet Order as products for which appropriate name labelling is particularly required, because the general consumers may find it difficult to make the right choice, as there was some confusion over the product labelling.
- Based on this, these products should not be labelled as "organic" or confusingly similar expressions, unless they are affixed with Organic JAS Seals, which prove that the relevant products satisfy the organic JASs. (Enforced on April 1, 2001 for organic plant products and organic processed foods of plant origin, and on July 16, 2020 for organic livestock products, organic processed foods of plant and livestock origin, and organic processed foods of livestock origin.)

II. Inspection and Certification System for Organic Foods

【Structure of the Inspection and Certification System】

1. Accreditation of certification bodies (ACBs)

Upon receipt of the application from the certification bodies, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries shall conduct an examination in accordance with the criteria specified in the Act on JAS, then accredit them as ACBs accordingly.

2. Certification of operators

Upon receipt of the applications for certification from the organic plant product producers, processed food manufacturers, etc., ACBs shall conduct an examination in accordance with the technical criteria of certification, and then certify them accordingly.

For this certification, ACBs shall carry out the document examinations and on-site inspections to check whether:

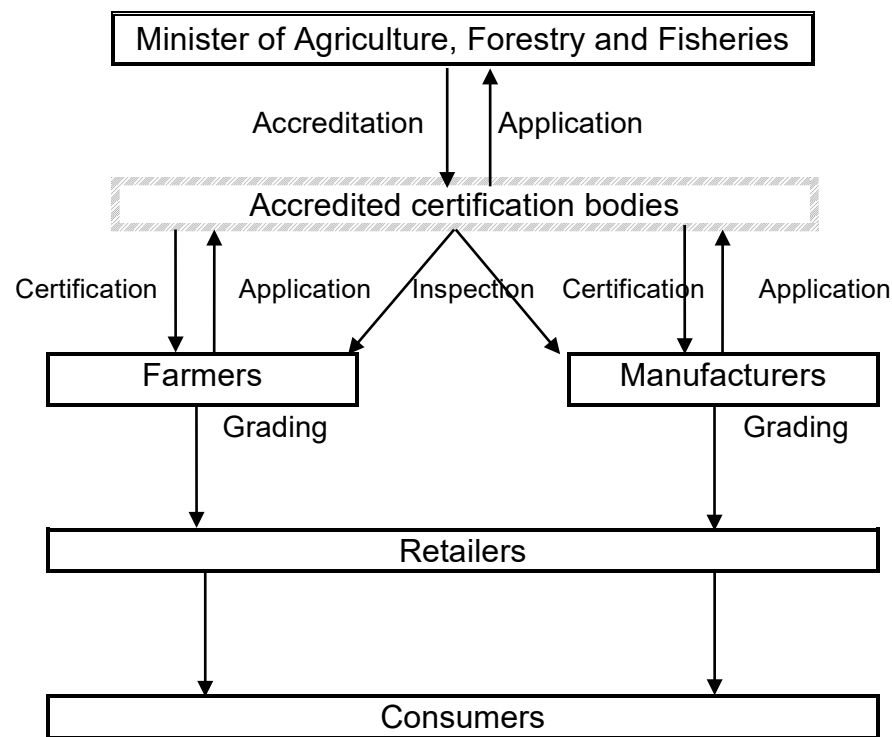
- (i) The fields, processing sites, etc. meet the organic production standards (organic JASs); and
- (ii) They can manage their production and record-keeping properly to ensure that their production is in conformity with the organic JAS.

3. Inspection of certified operators

ACBs inspect their certified farmers or certified manufacturers, etc. at least once a year, to confirm that their production is in conformity with the organic JAS, even after they became certified.

4. Grading by the certified operators

Certified organic plant product farmers and processed food manufacturers shall place their products on the market after grading in accordance with their production/manufacturing process records, etc. and affixing the organic JAS Seals to their products accordingly.



○ Organic JAS Seal (logo)



III. Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) for Organic Foods

1. Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Products of Plant Origin

(1) Background of the JAS establishment

The Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Products of Plant Origin was established in conformity with the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Marketing and Labelling of Organically Produced Foods (which was adopted by the 23rd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 1999), and was announced in January 2000 by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, after deliberation by the Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) Committee.

(2) Content

The Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Products of Plant Origin shall express the principles of the organic products production (see top right), and specify the criteria for the production methods and the labelling requirements.

i. Criteria for the production methods (The key points are shown on the right)

- Fields, cultivation sites, and collection sites
- Seeds or seedlings, etc. used in the fields, and seeds used in cultivation facilities for spawn and sprouts
- Fertilizer management in the fields
- Cultivation management in the fields or cultivation sites
- Pest and disease control in the fields or cultivation sites
- General management and seedling management
- Management for harvesting, transportation, selection, preparation, cleaning, storage, packaging, and other post-harvest processes

ii. Labelling Methods

The standard specifies the labelling methods as shown below: (in Japanese) "organic product of plant origin," "organically grown product of plant origin," "organic XX," etc.

("XX" is the name of the relevant general agricultural product.)

○ Principles for organic product production

Based on the understanding that any use of chemically synthesized fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals should be avoided, in order to sustain and enhance the natural cyclical function of agriculture, organic products of plant origin are to be produced in fields employing a cultivation management method that maximizes the productivity of the agricultural land derived from the nature of the soil (including the productivity derived from agricultural and forestry products in the case of producing mushrooms, and the productivity derived from seeds in the case of producing sprouts), and that reduces the environmental load resulting from agricultural production as much as possible.

○ Criteria for the production methods for organic products (Key points)

- Soil fertility should be maintained by using compost etc. and in principle, chemical fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals should not be used for at least two years before sowing/planting, and while the crops are being cultivated (at least three years for perennial plants before harvest).
- Genetically modified seeds and seedlings should not be used.

2. Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Livestock Products

(1) Background of the JAS establishment

The Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Livestock Products was announced by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in October 2005, after deliberation by the JAS Committee, as the establishment of such standards had been requested by the producers' associations etc., while the international standard for organic livestock products was adopted by the 24th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2001 as well.

(2) Principles of organic livestock products production

Such livestock products are to be produced from livestock or poultry that are raised with due consideration for their physiological and behavioral requirements, based on the understanding that such animal feeds (as produced with the least possible impact on the environment) should be provided, and that the use of veterinary medicinal products should be avoided.

3. Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Processed Foods

(1) Background of the JAS establishment

In 2000, the Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for Organic Processed Foods of Plant Origin was established, together with the establishment of JAS for Organic Products of Plant Origin. In 2005, as the JAS for Organic Livestock Products was additionally established, the JAS for Organic Processed Foods of Plant Origin was revised to include organic processed foods of livestock origin as well.

(2) Principles of organic processed foods production

With a view to preserving the characteristics of the organic products of plant or livestock origin (that are used as raw ingredients) in the process of production or processing, organic processed foods are to be

produced based on the understanding that physical or biological processing methods should be used, and that the use of chemically synthesized additives and chemical agents should be avoided.

○ Criteria for the production methods of organic livestock products

(Key points)

- Organic feed must be the main feed provided.
- Animals should be raised in a stress-free environment, such as outdoor grazing.
- Antibiotics, etc. should not be used for the purpose of preventing diseases.
- Genetic modification technologies should not be used.

Note: JAS for organic feed has also been established separately, with a view to ensuring the organic quality of feed.

○ Criteria for the production methods of organic processed foods

(Key points)

- Any use of chemically synthesized additives and chemical agents should be avoided as much as possible.
- With the exception of water and salt, at least 95% of the raw materials should be organic plant products, organic livestock products, or organic processed foods.
- Such processed foods should be manufactured in well-managed factories, which should be free from any chemical contamination.
- Genetic modification technologies should not be used.

IV. Export and import of organic foods

1. Equivalency of organic certification systems

(1) Depending on the country you export your products to, in cases where the organic certification is required for organic labelling under the destination country's organic system, you need to obtain certification under that country's own certification system in order to label your products as organic.

On the other hand, if two countries are deemed to have equivalent of organic certification systems, the organic certification issued in one country can be treated as equivalent to the one issued ~~that~~ in the other country.

(2) The products within the scope of organic certification systems under the equivalency arrangement, are the organic plant products, organic livestock products, and organic processed foods, which are subject to organic labelling restrictions.

2. Export of organic foods

(1) In cases where the producers etc. of organic plant products, organic livestock products, and organic processed foods have obtained organic JAS certification, it would be possible for them to export such products to the countries that have recognized an organic equivalency arrangement with Japan, without obtaining the destination country's organic certification.

(2) Countries, etc. that have recognized organic equivalency with Japan (as of August 2023):

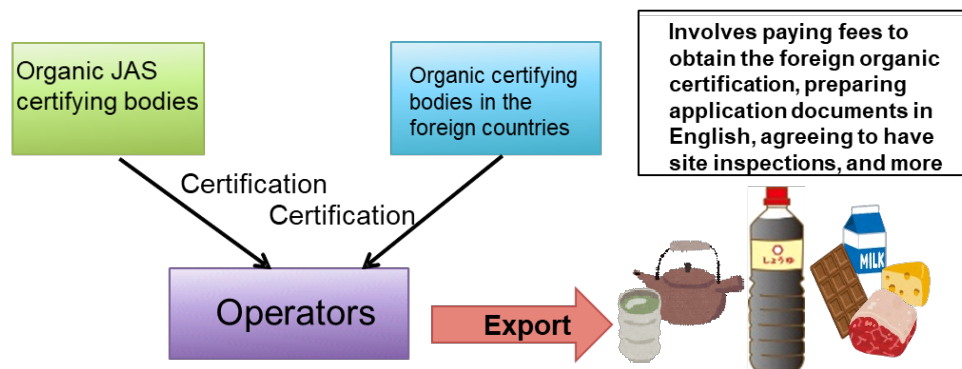
EU (27 countries), UK, US, Switzerland, Canada, Taiwan

Note: In the EU, the UK, and Taiwan, such products are limited to organic plant products and organic processed foods of plant origin. In the EU, the UK, the US, Switzerland, and Taiwan, alcohol beverage is excepted from processed foods. Australia, New Zealand, and some other countries may accept such organic foods

produced under the organic JAS system. (Equivalency recognition is not required.)

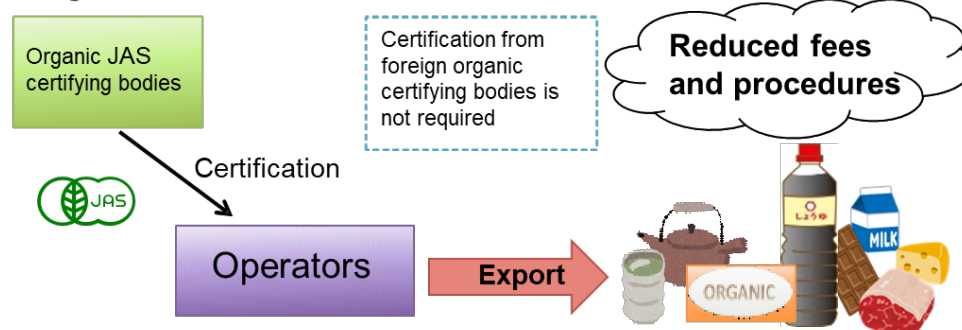
If there is no equivalency

Operators cannot export products as "organic" without obtaining the foreign countries' organic certification.



If there is equivalency

Operators can export products as "organic" based on organic JAS certification alone



3. Import of organic foods

(1) Organic foods can be imported in the following ways:

1) A certified importer in Japan may import, organic products, organic livestock products, and organic processed foods, that were produced/manufactured in organic equivalency countries, and distributes them in the Japanese market after affixing the organic JAS Seals to the products.

(Such certified importers must also provide the original or a copy of the certificate issued by the export countries' governmental bodies, etc., when they are to affix the organic JAS Seals to the products.)

2) Any importers may import such organic foods (that are produced or manufactured and affixed with the organic JAS Seals by the overseas organic JAS certified operators in the export countries), and distributes them in the Japanese market. (As the products are already organic JAS-certified, even non-certified importers can import them.)

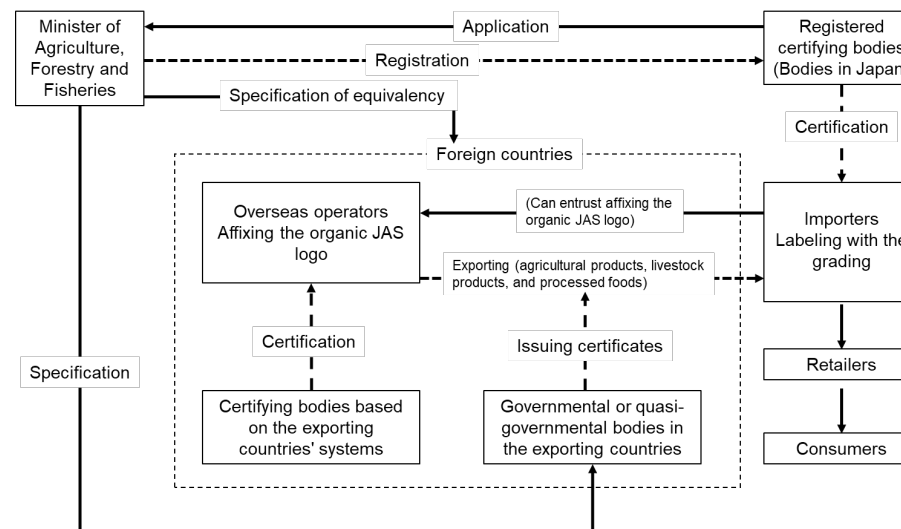
(2) Countries, etc. that have recognized organic equivalency with Japan (as of August 2023):

EU (27 countries), UK, Australia, USA, Switzerland, Argentina, New Zealand, Canada, Taiwan

Note: In the EU, the UK, Argentina, New Zealand, and Taiwan, such products are limited to organic plant products and organic processed foods of plant origin.

In the EU, the UK, the US, Switzerland, and Taiwan, alcohol beverage is excepted from processed foods.

○ In cases where a certified importer in Japan distributes products after affixing the organic JAS Seals to the products



○ In cases where any importers imports organic foods (that are produced/manufactured and affixed with the organic JAS Seals by the overseas organic JAS certified operators), and distributes them in the Japanese market.

