



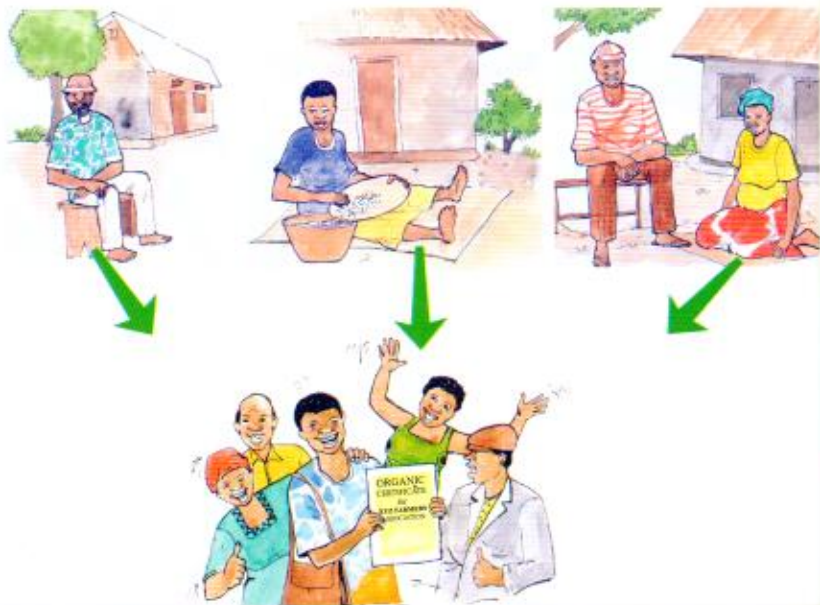
HOW DO WE GET CERTIFIED AS
A GROUP



1

What do I need to know about group certification?

Small holder farmers can be certified as a group according to a given organic standard. This happens when the group does what the standard requires and is confirmed by the certification body.



Why is it important?

- To organise enough quantities of good quality for the market
- To organise cheaper sources of inputs like seeds
- To organise cheaper services for members like training
- To keep the cost of organic inspection and certification low

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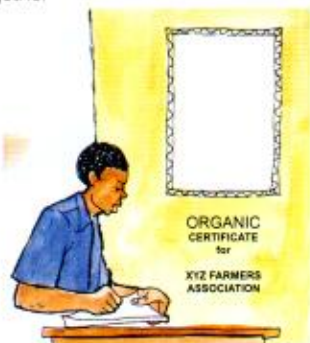
Which groups of farmers can be certified?



Groups involved in selling their products together



Groups with active members that monitor each other



Groups that are registered according to local laws

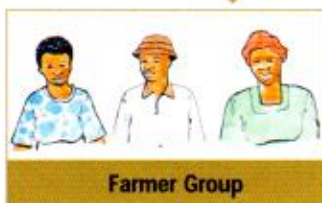


Groups with similar farming activities

Groups can be certified by a third party (organised under an Internal Control System, ICS) or approved under a Participatory Guarantee System, PGS. More information on how a PGS works can be obtained from your National Organic Agriculture Movement, NOAM.

3 How does Internal Control System (ICS) Work?

Members of a group should have similar farming activities and work together to ensure that a given organic standard is fulfilled.



Farmer Group

- A group of farmers with similar farming activities can seek and take responsibility for organic certification. However, an export company, can also organise farmers into a group and take responsibility for organic certification



Group leaders

- The group elect their own leaders to assist in running group activities. These may include checking farming activities of members and selling products on behalf of the group.

Depending on how well the ICS is organised, the certification body will recommend what the group needs to do in order to get certified.

4 What does the ICS need for certification?

A working ICS should have the following:



Internal Organic Standards:

The group should summarize the organic standard according to their farming practices.

The summary of the internal organic standard should be made known to members.



Registration and contracts:

All members of the group should be identified, registered and must sign agreements with the group.



Internal control (Inspection):

All group members should be internally inspected by a representative of the ICS (internal inspector). The strength of an ICS depends on how well the internal inspections of members are done.

In addition:

- The group should have a way to accept or reject members in relation to the internal organic standards.
- The ICS should check all things that can affect the certification of the group and find ways to prevent them.
- All records of the group including area and farm maps should be kept well.

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How do we get certified under an ICS?

To get certified under ICS, a group may need the following steps;

In the First Year;



Step 1: Read the standard and general information from the NOAM.



Step 2: Make inquiries from the available certification bodies (CBs). Contact the CBs for information on standards, application form, certification costs, and procedures.



Step 3: Select the suitable CB. Fill in and submit the application, negotiate the certification costs, procedures and fee payment. Sign the contract of inspection and certification with the CB.



Step 4: Inspection of the farms. Agree with the CB when the inspector will come to check farm activities and records of members and the group. At least one farmer should always follow and assist the inspector.



Step 5: Discuss the inspection report with the inspector. Read the report carefully and check for any errors and misunderstandings.

Step 6: Respond to all comments from the inspector. Check and fulfil all conditions needed for your certification.



Step 7: Certification decision. The CB will finally inform the group the results of the inspection and the certification decision.

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How do we maintain our certification?

The group and selected members will be inspected every year by the CB. The group should ensure that all the certification conditions communicated by the CB are fulfilled.

Therefore, you should;



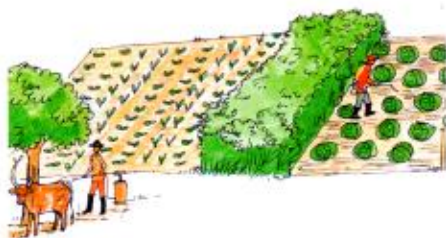
Make the changes asked for when the standards are changed



Keep all records up-to-date



Train members to improve their knowledge on organic farming practices and standards.



Protect the organic farms from non-organic materials

These are basic guidelines on how a group of farmers can be certified.
For more information contact the following addresses;



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