

Summary of the Bio Suisse International Standards and guidance for conversion from EU organic to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC production

Information note for international operations (version 01/2021)

This summary of the Bio Suisse Standards gives international producers an overview of the requirements for certification according to the Bio Suisse Standards (= BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification). As a prerequisite for the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification, an operation must already be in possession of a valid organic certification according to EU Regulation No. 834/2007 or equivalent legislations.

Process for the conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

For information on the process and schedule, international operations should contact the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC contact person at their local organic inspection body. In General, inspections for both EU organic and BIOSUISSE ORGANIC must be carried out by the same inspection body.

1. Whole-farm approach

Requirements of the Standards

The entire agricultural operation must be farmed organically. Operations that comprise non-organic livestock or non-organic plots cannot be certified according to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC. The Bio Suisse definition of a farming operation is binding:

- Farmland, buildings, equipment and a workforce constitute a comprehensive whole with a centre of operations.
- An independent, segregated product flow and its own clearly recognisable and distinctive image.
- The operations manager is not responsible for non-organic operations or non-organic sections of the operation.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

- As a prerequisite for BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification, partly converted operations that produce wine, fruit or ornamental plants must submit a conversion plan for the entire farming operation.
- Operations that want to market their plant products as BIOSUISSE ORGANIC must ensure animal husbandry on the same operation is certified according to the EU Organic Farming Ordinance or meets the Bio Suisse minimum requirements within one year.

2. Conversion period

Requirements of the Standards

For newly acquired land, the land parcels will only be recognised if there is valid certification according to EU organic regulations and the newly acquired land has been managed organically for at least 24 months. It is not possible to shorten the conversion period on the basis of the previous management practices.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

A conversion period according to the EU Organic Farming Ordinance can be credited towards the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC conversion period (with the exception of the retrospective certification of land parcels). This means that an EU organic farming operation that has already completed the conversion time in line with the EU Organic Farming Ordinance and has successfully acquired certification will automatically be recognised as BIOSUISSE ORGANIC.

3. Fertiliser use

Requirements of the Standards

The following fertiliser limits per hectare and year must be met:

	kg N _{tot} /ha	kg P ₂ O ₅ /ha
Fodder and vegetable crops, open land	225	80
Field crops (root crops, grains)	180	60
Viticulture, fruit, berries, etc.	100	30

Different limits apply to special crops

Not permitted are peat for soil improvement, highly concentrated chlorinated potassium fertilisers (e.g., potassium chloride) and chemically synthesised chelates (e.g., EDTA). In case more than 150 kg of mineral potassium fertilisers per ha/year, a use of more phosphorus than the above mentioned fertiliser limits or if trace-element fertilisers are used by the agricultural operation, a proof of need must be submitted

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements must be fulfilled within one to two years. BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification is not possible if the fertiliser limits are significantly exceeded.

4. Enhancement of biodiversity

Requirements of the Standards

Areas dedicated to the enhancement of biodiversity must constitute at least 7% of a farming operation's utilised agricultural area. Examples of eligible areas: unfertilised, species-rich fallow land, permanent pastures and meadows, individual native trees suited to the location (each tree counts as 1 are), areas with natural communities of plants that are typical to the region, hedges, copses and riparian trees, ditches, pools, ponds and moorland, ruderal areas and ruins of buildings, dry stone walls, stone mounds and embankments, unpaved paths (with at least one-third cover with vegetation) and species-rich woodland.

Uncultivated strips of at least 6 m width must be maintained around natural bodies of surface water.

At least two further quality measures for the enhancement of biodiversity must be fulfilled.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

For an initial certification, areas dedicated to the enhancement of biodiversity must constitute at least 2% of a farming operation's area.

5. Propagating material (seeds, vegetative propagating material) and planting stock

Requirements of the Standards

- Generally, propagating material must be of organic origin.
- Untreated, non-biological propagating material may be used if the inspection body establishes (inspection report or written declaration) that no organic material is available. Organic seed must be used in grain cultivation (wheat, spelt, einkorn, emmer, kamut, durum, barley, oats, rye, triticale, rice and millet) and for crops that are also cultivated in the country as GMOs.
- Treated propagating material is prohibited.
- The use of hybrid seed for cereals and rapeseed (exception: maize/corn and HOLL rapeseed) is prohibited.
- The use of varieties from cell fusion breeding is prohibited. Exceptions: cauliflower, broccoli, white cabbage, savoy cabbage and chicory.
- Planting stock and vegetative propagating material for annual crops must be certified organic. The substrate used may only contain up to a maximum of 70% peat.
- For the vegetative propagation of strawberries at least the propagation of the young plants must be carried out under certified organic conditions. The use of runners from non-organic mother plants to grow organic young plants is permitted if organic runners are not available.

In the following cases, the crops concerned cannot be certified as BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

- Use of treated propagating material
- Use of non-organic propagating material without a declaration from the inspection body for organic propagating material stating that no organic material is available
- Use of non-organic young plants and onion sets

The requirements concerning hybrid grain seed must be fulfilled within a year.

6. Plant treatment products

Requirements of the Standards

- Synthetic pyrethroids (including in traps), organic herbicides and growth regulators are prohibited.
- With the exception of the following crops, the use of copper-based products is prohibited (maximum permitted application rates of pure copper per treated ha and year):

– Pome fruit	1.5 kg
– Berries	2 kg
– Stone fruit, pineapple, potatoes, ornamental plants, hops	4 kg
– Vegetables and spice plants	4 kg
– Herbs for seed production	4 kg
– Other permanent crops (incl. tropical and subtropical crops)	4 kg
- Viticulture 4 kg (whereby this quantity may be applied over a five-year period). However, the maximum application rate of 6 kg per ha and year may never be exceeded.
- The use of ethephon and calcium carbide is prohibited.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements concerning copper must be fulfilled within a year. Use of synthetic pyrethroids (including in traps), organic herbicides and growth regulators will mean the crop concerned will not be certified.

7. Soil protection

Requirements of the Standards

- At least 20% of the crop rotation must protect or improve the soil or accumulate nutrients (e.g., grain legumes, green manure, leys, etc.).
- Outside of the growing season, at least 50% of the open cropland must have sufficient plant cover.
- For annual arable and field vegetable crops, there must be at least a 12-month rotation break between two main crops of the same species (with the exception of rice, vegetables, pineapple).
- It is not permitted to farm areas threatened by erosion without imposing measures to prevent erosion.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements must be fulfilled within two years.

8. Water resources management

Requirements of the Standards

- Waste water or leachate must not impair the quality of ground or surface water.
- Irrigation water may not impair the quality of harvested products.
- Irrigation must not lead affect soil fertility negatively in the long-term.
- Operations in areas with increased water risks¹ must fulfil additional requirements, e.g., follow a water resources management plan, use efficient irrigation systems that use water sparingly and provide proof of cooperation with relevant stakeholder groups in the area of water management.
- The use of non-renewable water resources is only permitted if credible documentation can be furnished that the abstraction poses no serious ecological or socioeconomic risks.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

Most requirements must be fulfilled within two years. Operations in areas with increased water risks must fill out a Naturland - Bio Suisse water management plan.

9. Heating greenhouses

Requirements of the Standards

Greenhouses for growing vegetables and for producing potted herbs may only be kept frost-free in winter (max. 5 °C). Greenhouses with particularly good insulation may be heated up to 10 °C.

Products from greenhouses with excessive heating will not be certified.

10. Ground cover in permanent crops

Requirements of the Standards

Permanent crops must have green cover throughout the whole year. In areas with scarce water resources, green cover

¹ In accordance with the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas from the World Resources Institute (www.wri.org): Indicator "Water Depletion" categorised as "High" (50–75%) or "Extremely high" (>75%) and desert regions ("arid and low water use").

can be reduced to a period of at least four months. If spontaneous vegetation is too sparse, a green manure crop must be sown.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
The requirements must be fulfilled within two years.

11. Clearing and destruction of high conservation value areas

Requirements of the Standards

Clearing and destroying forests (older than 15 years) and high conservation value areas for agricultural use is prohibited.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
No products grown on areas that were cleared or destroyed after 1994 can receive the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification.

12. Animal husbandry

Requirements of the Standards

To obtain the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification for plant products, operations in the EU must comply with the animal husbandry regulations laid out according to EU organic regulations. In all other countries, animal husbandry must be in line with the Bio Suisse minimum standards.

To obtain the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification for animal products, animal husbandry on the operation must fully comply with the Bio Suisse Standards (with the exception of shrimp, mussels and beekeeping).

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
For BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification of plant products, operations must ensure animal husbandry is certified according to the EU Organic Farming Ordinance and in other countries at least the Bio Suisse minimum requirements on animal husbandry must be met.

13. Social responsibility

Requirements of the Standards

Producers of fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs in France, Italy, Morocco, Peru, Portugal and Spain are obliged to furnish proof of external social certification/auditing. The same applies to producers of bananas (all countries) and hazelnuts (Turkey). Operations with maximum five employees are excepted from these requirements.

All operations with over 20 employees that have no external social certification or auditing must fill out a Bio Suisse self-declaration form.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
The requirements must be fulfilled within a year.

14. Storage and processing

Requirements of the Standards

All storage and processing activities must fully meet the Bio Suisse Standards (Part III of the Standards).

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
The requirements must be fulfilled within a year. For processed products, the specific recipe will be checked and approved by Bio Suisse before the initial BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification.

15. Trade and declaration

Requirements of the Standards

Bio Suisse only approves products transported by land or by sea.

BIOSUISSE ORGANIC products that are destined to be imported to Switzerland must have the phrase "BIOSUISSE ORGANIC" or the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC logo (see below) on containers, delivery notes, invoices, etc. Containers for export must be labelled with the logo. Templates of the logo may be downloaded from the Bio Suisse website.



The "Bud" trademark ("Knospe" in German; trademark of Bio Suisse) is protected by copyright. Neither the trademark nor the "Bud" designation may be used by BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certified operations.

BIOSUISSE ORGANIC products must always be clearly identifiable in the physical flow of goods and in bookkeeping.

All BIOSUISSE ORGANIC exports to Switzerland must be registered in the Bio Suisse Supply Chain Monitor:
<https://international.biosuisse.ch/en/homepage>.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:
The requirements must be implemented as soon as the first BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification is awarded.

In case of doubt, this summary is not binding. The integral German version of the Bio Suisse Standards and the (unpublished) catalogue of sanctions for international operations apply.