

## ***Importing organic products into Switzerland***

**Statutory regulations in accordance with the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance (SR 910.18), the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming (SR 910.181) and the FOAG Ordinance on Organic Farming (SR 910.184), and practical advice**

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## 1 Certification of importers of organic products

Any operator importing organic products into Switzerland must be certified by an accredited certification body (SR 910.18, Article 2(5)). An annual on-site inspection is carried out. Definition of an importing operator: The operator that clears the goods through customs is considered the importing operator.

## 2 Imports from the EU

Imports from the EU must be accompanied by a valid certificate from the EU-based supplier (product's producer, or supplier's distributor – see SR 910.184, Annex 1, section on *EU Member States*). A certificate of inspection is not required for imports from the EU to Switzerland. For more information, please visit this link: [International Trade](#)

## 3 Imports from outside the EU

In order to import organic products from outside the EU into Switzerland, the following steps must be observed:

1. Recognition of organic standards by Switzerland (see point 3.1).
2. COI via the TRACES.NT online system (see point 3.2).
3. Registration in TRACES.NT (see point 3.3).

### 3.1 Recognition of organic standards by Switzerland

1. Import from a country on the *List of countries* (SR 910.18, Art. 23): Switzerland recognises the production standards and control systems of these countries as equivalent. These countries are listed in the Annex (*List of countries*) to the FOAG Ordinance on Organic Farming ([SR 910.184, Annex 1](#)).
2. Import from a country not on the *List of countries* (SR 910.18 Art. 23a): The certification body or inspection authority for the products/raw materials in the country of origin (country not on the *List of countries*) is recognised by Switzerland (SR 910.18 Art. 23a). Switzerland automatically recognises the certification bodies and inspection authorities recognised by the EU. Bodies recognised by the EU can be found here: [EUR-Lex - 02021R2325-20240104 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#).

There are bodies that are only recognised by Switzerland, but not by the EU. These are listed here: [SR 910.184, Annex 2](#).

If you wish to purchase a product from a country not listed on the *List of countries* (see point 1) or with a *recognised certification body* (see point 2), please contact the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) or the exporter's certification body. Do the same if you wish to import a product that does not fall under any of the categories listed above (points 1 or 2).

### 3.2 COI via the TRACES.NT online system

Principle: A certificate of inspection is required for each import (SR 910.18, Art. 24).

TRACES.NT (Trade Control and Expert System New Technology) is the EU database used to create certificates of inspection (COI) for imports from outside the EU. Using TRACES.NT has been mandatory since 1 January 2019.

Here you will find the online user manual for creating a COI: [COI \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

#### **Steps for processing a COI in TRACES.NT**

Step	Information	Status in TRACES
1	<p>The importer or exporter, or the exporter's certification body, initiates the COI. The exporter's certification body checks and signs the COI in TRACES.</p> <p>The exporting operator's certification body then issues the certificate of inspection (COI) (SR 910.181, Art. 16b).</p>	Declaration signed by the issuing body
2	<p>As soon as the organic goods arrive in Switzerland, the importer sends an email to <a href="mailto:import@bio-inspecta.ch">import@bio-inspecta.ch</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The email contains the COI number</li> <li>• Confirmation that the goods are in Switzerland</li> <li>• • Transport documents, invoice and, if available, delivery note (if not already stored in TRACES-COI).</li> </ul> <p><u>The corresponding product cannot be marketed or processed until the COI has been cleared.</u></p>	
3	<p>The importer's organic certification body (equivalent to a border control post in Switzerland) must approve each certificate of inspection in the relevant field before the goods can be marketed or processed (SR 910.181, Art. 16d).</p> <p><b>Important:</b> Note that bio.inspecta may only clear the COI <u>once the goods have arrived in Switzerland</u>. See step 2.</p> <p>The importer will receive confirmation by email as soon as the COI has been checked.</p>	To be released as organic for free circulation under customs legislation
4	<p>The importer/first recipient of the goods must complete the first recipient's declaration in TRACES NT in the appropriate field.</p> <p>importer / consignee and the receipt of the goods must be confirmed (SR 910.181, Art. 16d).</p> <p>(For initial recipients other than those listed in Traces, the following document may be used: <a href="https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23_084.pdf">https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23_084.pdf</a>)</p> <p>COI status is now complete.</p>	Signed declaration of the first consignee

**Certificates of inspection for split consignments (Extract COI)**

An Extract COI must be issued if a consignment (from outside the EU = *third country*) is split before customs clearance in Switzerland and the split deliveries are not cleared through customs at the same time (SR 910.181, Art. 16f).

Example: A delivery of oranges from Brazil arrives at a transshipment warehouse in Rotterdam, after which it is called off in three partial deliveries spread over a year, i.e. imported into Switzerland (so customs clearance is required). A certificate of inspection (COI) is required for the total quantity up to the warehouse, and a partial certificate (Extract COI) is required for each delivery. The Extract COI is created in TRACES.NT by the importer named on the COI. All partial deliveries must be imported into Switzerland (= cleared through customs) by this importer.

*Steps for processing an Extract COI in TRACES.NT:*

Step	Information	Status in TRACES
1	Same procedure, but «to be released in batches (Base for Extract)» must be selected.	Declaration signed by the issuing body
2	The competent border inspection post of the importer (i.e. the border inspection post in Switzerland) signs the COI as the (base for extract).  <i>The importer must inform the border control post, enabling them to release a COI as «BASE FOR EXTRACT». Extract COIs can then be created on this basis.</i>	Base for Extract
3	The importer now has the option of initiating an EXTRACT COI.	Transmitted
4	The competent border control post (for imports into Switzerland: bio.inspecta) checks and signs the EXTRACT-COI.	To be released as organic for free circulation under customs legislation
5	The First Consignee carries out the incoming goods inspection and signs the EXTRACT COI.  EXTRACT COI status is now complete.	Consignee declaration signed

If the quantity on the COI has been fully split into consignments and all consignments have been imported, but there is still a theoretical remaining stock in TRACES.NT, the importer must inform the relevant border control post in the «**Base for Extract**» status that the COI is to be locked by requesting that it be marked as «**Depleted**».

### **3.3 Registration in TRACES.NT**

In order to use TRACES.NT, you must first register and then be validated by bio.inspecta.

You can be validated by bio.inspecta once you have registered as a «User» in TRACES.NT and link yourself to your Operator/User.

For information on registration, logging in and account linking, please refer to *Annex 1: TRACES.NT Login/Registration*.

**Note:** It should be noted that all «actors» must be registered and validated in TRACES.NT for COIs to be issued, for example: the exporter, importer, first consignee.

## 4 Exporting organic products from Switzerland

**Statutory regulations in accordance with the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance (SR 910.18), the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming (SR 910.181), and practical advice**

### 4.1 Exports to the EU

The export of organic products is subject to certification just as imports are (SR 910.18, Art. 2(5)).

If you are exporting to the EU, you must pass your valid certificate on to your client, i.e. the importer in the EU. No certificate of inspection is required for exports to the EU. You can request information about the legal basis for this from bio.inspecta (Info Sheet 13\_222).

### 4.2 Exports to countries outside the EU

If an export certificate is required for the destination country, it will be issued by the exporter's certification body. You can find the form 'Request for the issuance of a certificate of inspection' on the following platform under 'Application forms' in the Import - Export section. Link: [bio.inspecta - Order documents](#)

In this form, the applicant (= exporter) answers the questions necessary for the issuance of the export certificate and sends the invoices/delivery notes or any other relevant documents to bio.inspecta. bio.inspecta checks this information and issues the export certificate on the next working day, provided that the information provided by the applicant is sufficient. Otherwise, the applicant will be contacted to clarify any uncertainties. You will be informed as soon as the inspection certificate has been issued.

## 5 Importing organic Bud-quality products

A licence from Bio Suisse is required to import products or raw materials of organic Bud-quality (*Bio Knospe*). You can apply for this licence directly at Bio Suisse: [www.bio-suisse.ch](http://www.bio-suisse.ch)

Bio Suisse must authorise every import of a Bud product. This is done via the [Supply Chain Monitor SCM](#).

In addition to the documents required by the Organic Farming Ordinance, please have the imports authorised by Bio Suisse ready for the annual inspection. To this end, you can generate a list of your imports from the Bio Suisse SCM in Excel format and have it ready for the inspection.

Detailed information on importing Bud products can be found in the Bio Suisse import manual (DE/FR/IT only):  
<https://international.bio-suisse.ch/en/import/downloads-and-links.html>

## 6 Further information

General information from the FOAG on importing organic foods:

### **Organic farming and organic products**

<https://www.blw.admin.ch/en/labelling-organic-products>

### **Ordinance on organic farming** (SR 910.18)

[https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1997/2498\\_2498\\_2498/en](https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1997/2498_2498_2498/en)

### **EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming** (SR 910.181)

[https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1997/2519\\_2519\\_2519/en](https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1997/2519_2519_2519/en)

### **FOAG Ordinance on Organic Farming** (SR 910.184)

<https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2020/954/en>

### **Filling out the bio.inspecta forms**

For assistance, please contact bio.inspecta: +41(0)62 865 63 45

### **Further information on the Organic Farming Ordinance and certificates of inspection**

Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG): Tel. +41 (0)58 462 25 11 / Mail: [bio@blw.admin.ch](mailto:bio@blw.admin.ch)

### Questions on **importing Bud products**

[www.bio-suisse.ch](http://www.bio-suisse.ch) / +41 (0)61 204 66 44

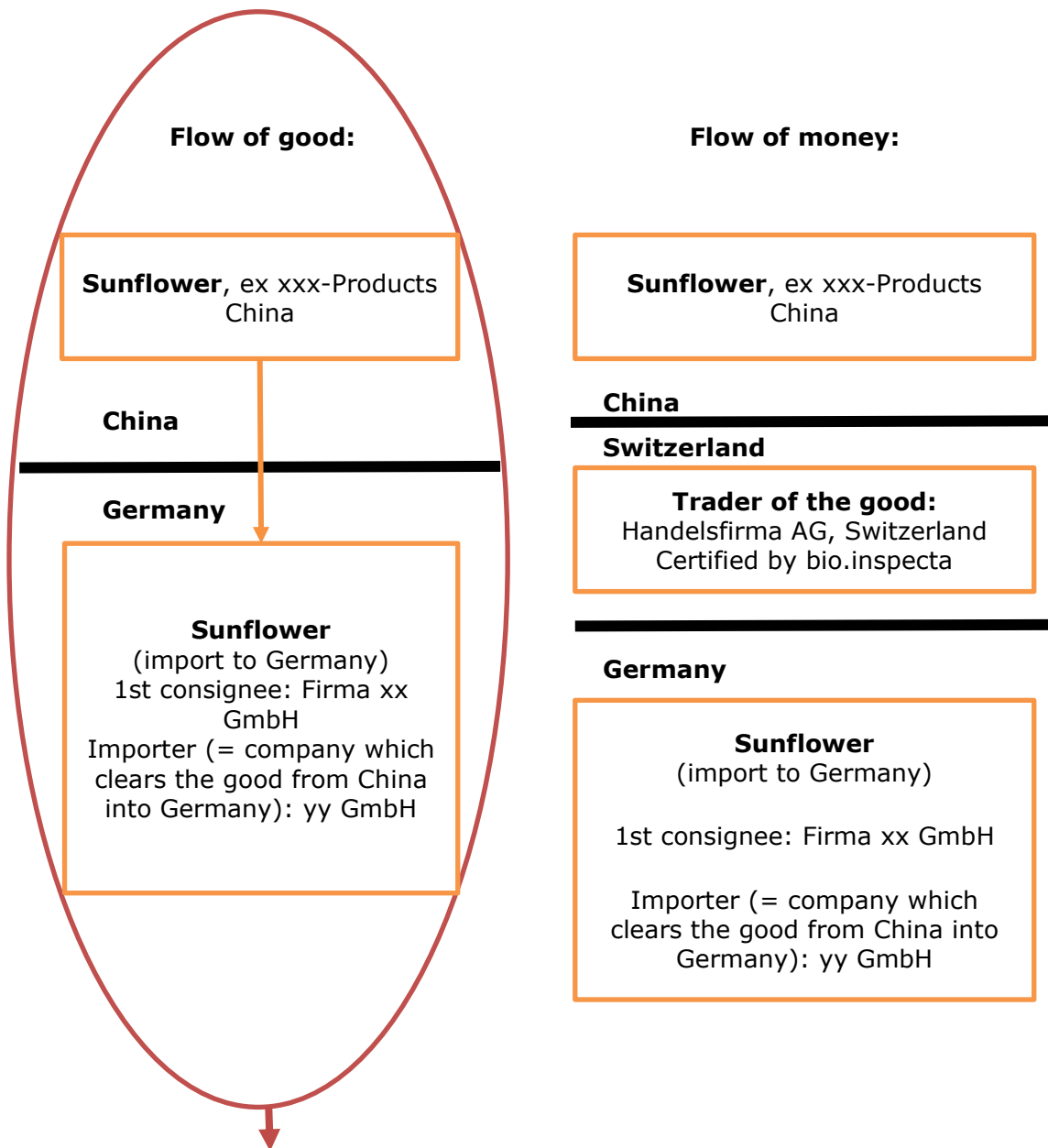
## **Annex 1: Account creation / registration in TRACES.NT**

**1) Link to instructions:** [Getting started](#)

**2) Validation by bio.inspecta**

Once the user and the operator are both registered, the enquiry will be automatically sent to bio.inspecta for processing. No further documents are required. If bio.inspecta has any questions or need for clarification, they will contact you.

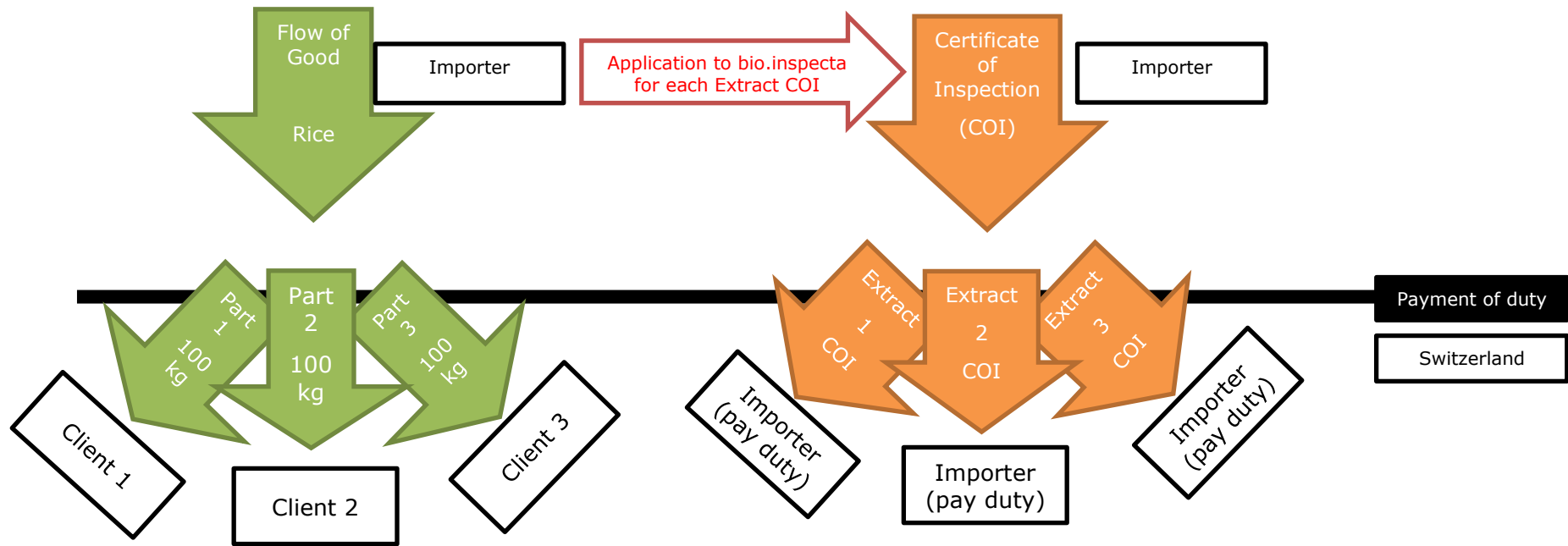
**Annex 2: Overview of COI when importing via a trader**



CERTIFICATE OF INSPECTION FOR IMPORT OF PRODUCTS FROM ORGANIC PRDODUCTION INTO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

As explanation for the difference between the flow of good and the flow of money may be indicated: No. of the invoice from xxx-Products China to Handelsfirma AG, Switzerland and the No. of the invoice from Handelsfirma AG, Switzerland to Firma yy GmbH in Germany.

### Annex 3: Overview of when an EXTRACT COI must be issued



- ➔ The named importer of the «parent COI» must issue the Extract COI.
- ➔ In Switzerland, the Extract COI is checked by the responsible certification body of the importer.

## Annex 4: What is checked during the audit?

The Certificate of Inspection (COI) is verified using invoices, delivery notes, transport documents, etc. A random sample of documents relating to the procurement of goods is checked during the on-site inspection. The following list provides an overview of the documents and processes checked during an inspection at an importer's premises.

### 1. Imports

#### 1.1 Imports from the EU

- List of import activities
- Certificate from the EU-based supplier confirming whether the product is listed
- Customs documents and invoices/delivery notes
- Flow of goods (balance of quantities)
- Transport documents
- No indirect imports from third countries via the EU (without EU customs clearance).

#### 1.2 Imports from third countries (= countries outside the EU)

- List of import activities
- Active verification in Traces
- Approval of certificates of inspection by the certification body
- Conformant incoming goods inspection (For initial recipients other than those listed in Traces, the following document may be used: [https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23\\_084.pdf](https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23_084.pdf))
- Timely submission of certificates of inspection (prior to marketing the goods)
- Conformant procurement of goods
- Transport and customs documents (including relocation, preparation, processing etc., as applicable)
- Flow of goods (balance of quantities)

#### 1.3 Extract COIs

- Extract COIs are available and have been approved by the certification body.
- Customs documents
- Conformant incoming goods inspection Link: [https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23\\_084.pdf](https://www.bio-inspecta.ch/docs/transfer/23_084.pdf)
- Conformant procurement and sales (invoices/delivery notes)
- Flow of goods (balance of quantities)

### 2. Exports

In general, it should be noted that goods initially procured from abroad must indeed be imported into Switzerland (i.e. undergo customs clearance) before they can be exported.

#### ***Exports (third country)***

- List of export activities
- Sale of goods as stated on the export certificate of inspection
- Flow of goods (balance of quantities)
- Transport documents and any orders placed with third parties

## **Annex 5: Basic information on importing organic products into Switzerland**

Three ordinances form the legal basis for the import of organic products into Switzerland:

- The Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labelling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs (Bio-V 910.18), in particular Chapters 4 and 5
- The Ordinance of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs on Organic Farming (WBF Bio-V 910.181), in particular Section 2a.
- The Ordinance of the Federal Office for Agriculture on Organic Farming (BLW Bio-V 910.184)

Imports of organic products into Switzerland, both from EU member states and from third countries, are subject to certification.

Import companies in Switzerland are subject to control by a recognised Swiss certification body and must undergo the control procedure to prove that they comply with the requirements of the organic regulations.

Since 1 January 2021, the FOAG has been responsible for drawing up the list of countries with equivalent organic production and control regulations from which organic products are imported into Switzerland (see Art. 23 Bio-V, list of countries).

These countries, with details of the competent authority, the recognised certification bodies and the product categories concerned, are listed in Annex 1 of the FOAG Organic Regulation.

There are two possible procedures for imports from third countries:

- 1) Imports of products from a country listed in Annex 1 of BLW Bio-V 910.184.
- 2) Imports of products whose producers, processors and exporters have been inspected by a recognised certification body in accordance with Annex II of EU Regulation (EC) 2021/2325 or Annex 2 of the BLW Organic Regulation 910.184.

In accordance with Article 24 of the Bio-V, each consignment of imported products must be accompanied by a certificate of inspection (COI).

The use of the electronic certificate of inspection (E-COI) in the EU's 'Electronic Certification System for Imports of Organic Products' (TRACES) has been mandatory since 1 January 2020. The certificate of inspection must be issued by the control body or authority in the country of origin before the goods leave the country.

Swiss companies must register with TRACES. Importers and first recipients will receive more detailed information on the procedure from their certification bodies.

No control certificate is required for consignments from EU Member States, provided that the imported products have been cleared through customs in the EU Member States.

## Annex 6: COI clearance of third country imports

[Newsletter](#) (in German) published 16.02.2022: The Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) informed the organic certification bodies in Switzerland of changes to the process for COI (Certificates of Inspection) clearance process.

### Background

Organic goods produced in a third country can only be imported into Switzerland (including Liechtenstein) or the EU if the other party's equivalent import legislation is complied with. The EU Commission has now informed the Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) that certificate of inspection (COI) clearances issued by EU member state authorities are not permitted for goods if the importer is not based in the EU.

As trade relations with the EU are based on reciprocity and include identical handling of TRACES, Switzerland also needs to adapt its practice when clearing COIs.

### Amended practice for COI clearance

On 14 February 2022, the certification bodies were informed of the following rules regarding imports of organic products from third countries. These rules came into effect immediately.

- An importer is a natural or legal person domiciled in Switzerland or Liechtenstein who is subject to the control system in accordance with the Organic Farming Ordinance and who declares the consignment for release for free circulation in Switzerland (incl. Liechtenstein) either themselves or via a representative;
- Only COIs for imports from non-EU countries (third countries) that are physically destined for Switzerland may be cleared in TRACES. This means that a COI can only be cleared if an operator based in Switzerland or Liechtenstein is specified in Box 12 of the COI creation screen;
- COIs for first consignees based in Switzerland from EU-based suppliers («importers») may not be cleared. This is because no COI is required for goods that are already in free circulation in the EU. For goods that are not in free circulation in the EU, the importer must be based in Switzerland, as explained above;
- Splitting the goods between recipients in Switzerland and EU member states by means of Extract COIs is no longer permitted.
- If goods are held up at border control points due to the new EU rules that came into force on 1 January 2022, but it can be guaranteed that they will be fully cleared through Swiss customs, certification bodies may issue such parent COIs until further notice.

FOAG will tolerate the clearance of COIs opened before the end of February 2022 that do not meet these requirements until the end of 2022 at the latest\*.

\* *Subject to possible trade restrictions due to the application of the law by Member States.*