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## **Conversion of Production to Organic Farming according to the EC-Regulation 2092/91**

### **1. Definition**

The conversion period in organic farming is the time of transition from conventional to “organic production” according to EC-regulation 2092/91. The conversion period is of greatest importance when land has been managed intensively including the application of mineral fertilizers, pesticides and without fallow periods. A minimum of time is needed during which chemicals in the soil can be reduced, organic matter and soil structure are given a chance to improve and in addition availability and quantity of nutrients (like N through leguminous plants) can be increased. In livestock production the conversion period is characterized by the change of feed from conventional to organic quality, the adaptation of feed rations and the renunciation of any non-conform ingredients. Looking at it from the production point of view, the conversion period starts the day after the last application of a non-conform product and the rules of organic production are being put into practice. The conversion period is determined separately for each field and each group or individual animal. In the formal sense however, the conversion period starts with the day the inspection contract is signed.

### **2. Duration of the conversion period and product labeling**

#### 2.1 Annual crops (including feed production, annex I A, 1)

The conversion period for annual crops is at least two years before sowing of the first organic crop. The period of conversion may commence at the earliest on the date on which the producer has signed the inspection contract with Ecocert.

During the period from the beginning of the conversion period until one year later, products made from this crop may **not** refer to organic farming at all (art. 5.5b) but must be marketed as conventional.

A product may be labeled as “**product under conversion to organic farming**” (art. 5.5c) if harvested at least 12 months after the beginning of the conversion period of this particular field. Additionally the final products must be mono-products. They may not be processed and mixed with other organic or conversion products, e.g. conversion wheat flour or conversion seeds in bread from organic flour (art. 5.5d).

The labeling and advertising of a produce may refer to “**organic farming**”, if a period of at least 24 months has passed from the beginning of the conversion period until the day of seeding (planting) of a crop on a particular field.

#### 2.2 Perennial crops (including pastures, annex I A, 1)

The conversion period for perennial crops is at least three years before the first harvest of the products or, in the case of grassland, at least two years before its exploitation as feeding stuff from organic farming.

The period of conversion shall commence at the earliest on the date on which the producer has signed the inspection contract with Ecocert.

During the period from the beginning of conversion until one year later, products made from this crop may **not** refer to organic farming at all (art. 5.5b) but must be marketed as conventional.

A crop harvested during the conversion period may be declared as “**product under conversion to organic farming**” (art. 5.5c) if harvested at least 12 months after the beginning of the conversion period of this particular field. Additionally the final products must be mono-products. They may not be processed and mixed with other organic or conversion products (e.g. conversion apples in organic cake, art. 5.5d).

The labeling and advertising of a produce may refer to “**organic farming**” if a period of at least 36

months has passed from the beginning of the conversion period until the day of harvest of a product in a particular field or orchard.

### 2.3 Livestock (annex I B, 2)

When a livestock unit is converted to organic production the land related to it for pasture or feed production, must be converted to the requirements mentioned above.

Organic livestock, when seeking certification must be fed with organic (fully converted) feed stuff if sufficiently available. During the conversion period of the land however, the percentage of in-conversion feed in the rations may reach 30% for purchased and 60% for feed from the own operation (annex I B, 4.4).

Conversion periods are defined that apply directly to a conventional animal. Starting either from the beginning of the conversion of a herd, or after the purchase of a new animal into an organic unit the following conversion periods apply (annex I B, 2.2.1):

equidae, bovines for meat production:	12 months, at least 3/4 <sup>th</sup> of the animal's lifetime
pigs	4 months (until August 24, 2003 only)
small ruminants and pigs	6 months
animals for milk production	3 months (until August 24, 2003 only)
animals for milk production	6 months
poultry for meat production	10 days (if purchased before three day old)
poultry for egg production	6 weeks

When starting with organic land and livestock management, a simultaneous conversion of all parts of the unit involved may help to reduce the duration of the conversion period that would otherwise apply. The existing herds and all land involved in the herd management, pastures and feed production will be considered organic 24 months after the beginning of the organic management, provided the herd existed before conversion and the feed is mainly produced in the own operation (annex I B, 2.3). However, where pastures and free-range areas for livestock are concerned a minimum conversion period of six months will always apply.

### **3. Recognition of a previous period as conversion period (annex I 1.2.)**

The inspection body may, if applicable in agreement with the competent authority, recognize a previous period of land management as part of the conversion period. The applicable fields or units must not have been treated with substances not mentioned in the EC-Regulation annex II A and B for a period of at least three years. A satisfactory proof about this must be provided to ECOCERT. Based on those proofs and the details of previous land use it will be determined to which extent previous periods may be recognized as part of the conversion period. Thus, such recognition might lead to full organic status of the first crop after signing the inspection contract or to second year conversion status of such crops.

### **4. Reduction and Extension of the conversion period (annex I 1.3., 1.4 and annex I B, 2.1.2)**

The length of conversion period may be reduced in case of fields which are in conversion already or have already been fully converted to organic and which are treated with a product not listed in Annex II A or B. Pre-requisite is that the treatment was part of a compulsory disease or pest control measure imposed by the competent authority or part of scientific tests approved by the competent authority. The harvest following the treatment may not be sold as organic but as conventional. Only the next year's crop may be marketed as organic provided in the end of the reduced conversion period an insignificant level of residues in the soil and, in the case of perennial crop, in the plant, is shown. This might be verified by residue analysis.

An extension of an already started or completed conversion period may be necessary after a period of intensive farm management, field application of non conform fertilizers or pesticides or use of GMO crops. Extension period will be determined by ECOCERT based on detailed case studies.