Module 22
Standard for Evaluation of Inputs

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This document replaces the BIO-GRO New Zealand Organic Standards, 30 April 2001: Module 3.1

The reasons for change are:

- regular review required under IFOAM accreditation;
- incorporation of notified changes since the 30 April 2001 Standards were published;
- incorporation of other changes required for ongoing compliance with the IFOAM Basic Standards, the NZFSA OOAP, and overseas market regulations;
- organic production systems are continuously evolving.

This document may be altered at any time. It was current at the date in the header of each page of the document. It is recommended that anyone intending to use this document contact BioGro or check the BioGro website www.biogro.co.nz to confirm that this is the current version.

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1 Scope and purpose

This BioGro Standard contains the requirements for BioGro certification of input products for use in BioGro certified organic production systems.

This BioGro Standard specifies the requirements that must be met by:

- applicants seeking BioGro certification for an input product; and
- applicants seeking BioGro approval for an input product

Information on the BioGro Standards can be obtained from other Modules, refer to BioGro website www.biogro.co.nz.

2 Definitions

The BioGro definitions of terms can be found in the BioGro Standards *Module 2: Glossary of Terms*.

3 Standard for evaluation of input products

The BioGro Standards *Appendix B: Permitted and Restricted Materials and Practices* lists generic materials allowed for permitted or restricted use for fertilisation and soil conditioning, pest and disease management, animal health, processing, and other uses in BioGro certified organic production.

Input products comprise a formulation of one or more generic materials, which in some cases also include additives (minor ingredients).

Manufacturers and suppliers of input products may apply to BioGro for BioGro certification of input products. Certification of an input product means that BioGro licensees can use that input product.

Suppliers of BioGro certified input products may claim that “This product is allowed as a permitted (or restricted) input for use in BioGro certified organic production, under the terms and conditions specified by BioGro”, and may apply the BioGro certified input logo

The list of BioGro certified input products is available on the BioGro website.

3.1 Application for certification

Manufacturers and suppliers of input products wanting certification for those products must first apply to BioGro and supply:

a. the full list of all ingredients and additives in the product, and the quantity and percentage composition of each ingredient and additive in the product mix;
b. the source, extraction, and production processes of all ingredients and additives;
c. specification sheets and GMO declarations for all ingredients and additives;
d. the manufacturing processes for the product;
e. packaging and labelling details; and
f. all other information as specified by BioGro.

Application forms are available on the BioGro website and from the BioGro office.

BioGro evaluates the application on receipt of all the information and payment of the application fee. BioGro evaluates the application against:

- the permitted and restricted material lists in BioGro Standards *Appendix B: Permitted and Restricted Materials and Practices*; and
- the IFOAM Norms; and
- all relevant export regulations for organics; and
- the other Modules of the BioGro Standards; and
- the criteria specified in sections 3.2 to 3.5 below.

The use of an input product may be restricted by BioGro to:

a. specific crops or applications;
b. specific regions;
c. specific conditions under which the input product may be used; and/or
d. specific markets.

3.1.1 Notification of changes to the input product

If the formulation, or sources of ingredients and additives, or production of the input product or any of its ingredients is proposed to change in any way, then this must be submitted to BioGro for re-evaluation. Continuing certification is subject to the result of that re-evaluation.

If the formulation, or sources of ingredients and additives, or production of the input product or any of its ingredients is changed in any way without informing BioGro and gaining written approval from BioGro, then certification of the product is cancelled as from the date of that change.

3.1.2 Annual renewal of certification

The supplier must apply to BioGro each year for renewal of certification for the input product(s). Each renewal application will be reviewed against any changes to the relevant Standards or regulations, and alternatives that have become available since the previous evaluation. This process of regular evaluation results in BioGro certified organic systems continuing to promote best practice agro-ecological production systems, and maintaining market access for BioGro certified products.

3.2 Necessity

Each input product and all ingredients of that input product must be necessary. Necessity is considered in the context in which the input product will be used and the role of each ingredient. Information to support the necessity of an input product and all its ingredients may relate to such criteria as yield, product quality, environmental safety, ecological protection, landscape, human and/or animal welfare. The applicant must investigate all alternatives, including those inputs that are already in use in organic production.

3.3 Source of ingredients, extraction, and method of production

3.3.1 Source of ingredients

Ingredients of vegetative or animal origin must be from certified organic sources if available in satisfactory quality and quantity. If not available from certified organic sources then they may be sourced from non-organic sources, providing they meet purity requirements and are non-GMO.

Synthetic ingredients which are allowed under the relevant standards and regulations may be allowed, but only if similar natural ingredients are not available in sufficient quality and quantity.

When there is any choice, ingredients sourced from renewable resources are preferred. The next best choice is ingredients of mineral origin, and the third choice is ingredients that are chemically identical to natural products. There may be ecological, technical or economic arguments to take into consideration in the allowance of chemically synthesised ingredients.

3.3.2 Methods of production

The ingredients of the input product may undergo the following processes:

a. mechanical, e.g. grinding, crushing, sieving;
b. extraction by allowed methods , e.g. with steam;
c. biological, e.g. action of enzymes and/or micro-organisms; and
d. chemical treatment (in exceptional circumstances only, and only if allowed under the relevant standards and regulations).

3.3.3 Collection

The collection of the ingredients must not affect the stability of the natural habitat nor affect the maintenance of any species within the collection area. Regulatory requirements such as resource consents will be taken into consideration as a way of evaluating this requirement.

3.4 Environmental safety

When used according to the manufacturer's instructions the input product must not be unduly harmful to, or have a lasting negative impact on the environment, or give rise to unacceptable pollution of surface or ground water, air or soil. All stages during production, use, and breakdown must be evaluated for environmental effect.

3.4.1 Ingredient characteristics

The following characteristics of all ingredients must be taken into account:

a. Degradability
All ingredients should be degradable by naturally occurring metabolic pathways to natural compounds such as carbon dioxide (CO_2) and water (H_2O) and to their mineral form.

b. Acute toxicity to non-target organisms
Ingredients that have a relatively high acute toxicity for non-target organisms will be classed as restricted inputs.

c. Chemically synthesised products and heavy metals
Ingredients must not contain levels of synthetic products or heavy metals which are harmful, or potentially harmful, to humans (xenobiotic products).

Nature-identical chemically synthesised ingredients may only be approved by BioGro in cases where no naturally occurring substance can be used at economic cost, and where allowed by the relevant standards and regulations.

Mineral ingredients must contain as few heavy metals as practicable and always comply with the BioGro restrictions on heavy metals as set out in *Appendix A: Residue Levels in Certified Products, Water, Soil, and Composts* of the BioGro Standards. Due to the lack of any alternative, and because of the long-standing traditional use in organic agriculture, copper and copper salts are an exception. However, the use of copper in any form in organic production must be seen as temporary and use must be restricted with regard to environmental impact.

3.5 Human health and quality

3.5.1 Human health

Where there are risks to human health during processing, use and degradation of input products then positive measures must be taken to reduce any potential risks and to ensure that inputs comply with relevant health standards.

3.5.2 Product quality

Inputs must not have negative effects on the quality of the certified product, e.g. taste, nutritional value, keeping quality, visual quality.

3.5.3 Ethical aspects and animal welfare

Inputs must not have a negative influence on the natural behaviour or physical functioning of livestock kept at the farm.

3.5.4 Consumer perception

Inputs must not meet resistance or opposition from consumers of organic products. If an input is considered by consumers to be unsafe to the environment or human health then this must be respected. GMOs are expressly prohibited for use in certified production systems. Inputs must not interfere with a general feeling or opinion about what is natural or organic.

3.6 Certification

For an input product to obtain and maintain certification, an annual assessment of the formulation of the product, and an annual onsite audit(s) of manufacture and/or supply of the product is required. The onsite audit(s) will be carried out to verify that the integrity of the input product is maintained during manufacture and supply to certified producers.

3.7 Approval

In some cases an input product can be considered for BioGro written approval following evaluation of the formulation and ingredients, but without an onsite audit of the manufacture and supply.

This will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Written approval will only be issued for a defined period of time, usually less than 1 year, and the BioGro certified input logo can not be used on the labeling of that product.

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