

Summary of the Bio Suisse Standards and guidance for conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC production

Information note for operations outside of Switzerland (last updated 02/2024)

<https://international.bio-suisse.ch/en/import-with-bio-suisse/documents-and-downloads.html>

This summary of the Bio Suisse Standards gives operations outside of Switzerland an overview of the requirements for certification according to the Bio Suisse Standards (= BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification). As a prerequisite for the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC certification, a farming, processing or trading operation must already be in possession of valid organic certification according to EU Regulation No. 2018/848 or equivalent legislation.

Process for the conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

For information on the process and schedule, operations outside of Switzerland should contact the BIOSUISSE ORGANIC contact person at their local organic inspection body. As a rule, inspections for both organic and BIOSUISSE ORGANIC must be carried out by the same inspection body.

1. Whole-farm approach [Part V, Art. 4.1.3 \(p. 288\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

The entire agricultural operation must be farmed organically. All crops on a BSO operation must be produced in accordance with the Bio Suisse Standards and inspected accordingly, regardless of the marketing intentions for the crop in question. 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 and persons with a managerial function may not be 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 [Part V, Art. 4.1.1 \(p. 288\)](#)

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 (or equivalent) 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 recognised organic standards 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 [Part V, Art. 4.2.4 \(p. 295\)](#)**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). Farming operations must present proof of need in order to use trace-element fertilisers or more than 150 kg of mineral potassium fertilisers per ha/year. Farming operations using phosphorus in greater amounts than the above-mentioned fertiliser limits must provide soil analyses to prove that there is no accumulation or oversupply of phosphorus.

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 [Part V, Art. 4.2.3 \(p. 293\)](#)**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:

All the requirements must be fulfilled within two years. For initial certification, however, 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

[Part V, Art. 4.2.2 \(p. 292\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

- Generally, propagating material must be of organic origin.
- Undressed, non-organic seeds may be used if the inspection body establishes that no varieties appropriate for organic agriculture are available.
- The use of organic seeds is mandatory for crops that are also cultivated in the country in GMO quality. If organic propagating material is not available for at-risk crops, the seed supplier must provide a GMO-free certificate. The unavailability of organic propagating material must be confirmed by the inspection body.
- Treated propagating material is prohibited.
- With the exception of maize, the use of hybrid grain seed for cereals is prohibited. Non-hybrid grain seed is a priority in rapeseed.
- The use of varieties from cell fusion breeding is prohibited. Exceptions: cauliflower, broccoli, white cabbage, savoy cabbage and chicory.
- Planting stock 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.

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

- Use of dressed seeds
- Use of non-organic seeds 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
 - Non-organic vegetative propagating material for the first growing season
- The requirements concerning hybrid grain seed must be fulfilled within a year.

6. Cultivation of former GMO plots [Part V, Art. 4.2.6 \(p. 296\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

On plots on which genetically modified plants have been grown prior to organic cultivation, neither the same crop nor a crop that can be cross-pollinated with it may be grown for at least two years. The length of the waiting period is determined separately for each crop.

7. Crop protection [Part V, Art. 4.2.7 \(p. 297\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

- Synthetic pyrethroids (incl. in traps), any type of herbicide (incl. vinegar, salt and fatty acids for weed control) and growth regulators are prohibited.
- Provisions for copper:

Cereals, legumes, oilseeds, sugar beet	Not used
Pome fruit	1.5 kg of pure copper per treated ha and year
Berries	2 kg of pure copper per treated ha and year
Stone fruit	3 kg of pure copper per treated ha and year
Other crops (incl. tropical and subtropical crops)	4 kg of pure copper per treated ha and year
Viticulture: 3 kg of pure copper per treated ha of whole-farm viticulture parcels and year, and 4 kg of pure copper per treated ha and year (whereby this quantity may be applied over five years).	

The use of ethephon and calcium carbide is prohibited.

Spinosad: no use in most arable crops and salads. Bee protection must be guaranteed.

Iron phosphate: No use in most arable crops.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements concerning copper and spinosad 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.

8. Soil protection and soil fertility [Part V, Art. 4.2.1 \(p. 290\)](#)

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.
- Permanent crops must have green cover throughout the year. In areas with scarce water resources, green cover can be reduced to a period of at least four months. If spontaneous vegetation is too sparse, a green manure crop must be sown.
- 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 (Exceptions: pineapple, rice, vegetable gardens, protected cultivation).
- 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.

9. Water resources management [Part V, chap. 3.6 \(p. 284\)](#)

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 not possible.

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").

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

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

10. Heating greenhouses [Part II, Art. 2.7.3 \(p. 97\)](#)

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.

11. Clearing and destruction of high conservation value areas [Part V, chap. 3.5 \(p. 283\)](#)

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 [Part V, chap. 4.4 \(p. 299\)](#)

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 [Part V, chap. 3.3 \(p. 280\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

Producers of fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs in France, Italy, Morocco, Peru and Portugal 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 full-time employees are exempted from these requirements. All operations with over 20 employees (part-time and full-time) that have no recognised external social certification or auditing must fill out a Bio Suisse self-declaration form.

Bio Suisse social audits have been introduced around the world in stages since 2023. In 2024, Bio Suisse social audits will be mandatory for operations in Spain and in defined regions of Italy in the year of introduction. No external social audits are accepted for these operations, the only exception being the Naturland social audit.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements must be fulfilled within a year.

14. Storage and processing [Part V, chap. 5.2 \(p. 303\)](#)

Requirements of the Standards

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

Only the following applications are permitted for pest control in storage and processing (application directly on products certified according to Bio Suisse Standards): Physical-mechanical measures, thermal processes, gasing with inert gases such as CO₂, N₂, including pressure disinfestation treatments, low-oxygen atmosphere, diatomaceous earth (silicon dioxide), use of beneficial organisms.

Products for localised pest control using traps and bait, treatments of nooks, fumigation and gasing of empty spaces are listed in an appendix to 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 [Part V, Art. 3.2.1 \(p. 279\)](#)

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.bio-suisse.ch/en/scm.html>.

Conversion to BIOSUISSE ORGANIC:

The requirements take effect from the first BIOSUISSE ORGANIC inspection.

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 foreign operations apply.