



GROWER GROUP CERTIFICATION NPOP 2024

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5.1. Scope/ Definition of Grower Group (GG)

- GG is an organized group of farmers who produce organic products and/or engage in organic production processes in accordance with the National Standards of Organic Production and NPOP and complies with Chapter 5 of this NPOP.

5.2. Requirement for GG



- i. Must be a registered legal entity in the form of,
 - a. Registered under the Societies Registration Act, or equivalent
 - b. FPO/FPC incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013,
 - c. Co-operative society.
- ii. The producers follow similar production systems.
- iii. Land or unit, of members of the G G should be in geographical proximity and preferably in the same village or adjacent villages of the same district/border districts within a radius of 50 Km.
- iv. Marketing of products as a single entity.

5.2. Requirement for GG... Contd.


v. Group must have a minimum of 25 and maximum of 500 farmers.


vi. Large farmers having 4 ha and above can join the groups but their total area should not exceed 50% of the group's total area. CB will inspect all such farmers directly every year.

vii. Each Group must have an Internal Control System (ICS) for implementing the NPOP requirements

viii. The ICS shall conduct 100% internal inspections of all farmers in the Group twice a year.

ix. The Group and ICS must follow the NPOP Procedures 2024


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Farmer Registration

Mobile*

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Age*

Qualification*

Language Preferred*
☐ English * ☐ Hindi *

Name*

State*

Subdistrict*

Village/Town*

Gender*

Land Holding*


Mode Of SMS*
☐ Text * ☐ Voice *

Sector*

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5.3 Prerequisite for farmers registered in the GG under NPOP.

- i. Each farmer must register with the Ministry of Agriculture's (MoA&FW) centralized portal; then a unique ID will be generated.
- iii. The farmers provide the UID to the ICS of the GG to register.
- iv. The farmers information will be validated from the centralized portal and farmers database of MoA&FW and transferred to NPOP database by an API.
- v. After verification and transfer of farmer information to the "Tracenet", the registration process of the GG is done

5.4 Internal Control System (ICS)



i. ICS is the control system in the GG to ensure the NPOP requirements are met.



ii. ICS and its Manager are responsible for Standard requirements.



iii. ICS Manager should preferably be an existing member of the Group.

5.5 Constitution, Requirements & Duties of ICS of Grower Group (GG)

- **Location:** Office near the GG, verified by the CB before accepting new members.
- **Role:** Ensures GG functions according to NPOP standards.
- **Structure:** Defined organizational chart with clear responsibilities for the ICS team.
- **Staff:** Managed by qualified and experienced personnel with verified credentials.
- **Standards:** Develops local language standards within NPOP framework.
- **Inspection:** Employs trained inspectors (1 per 50-60 farmers) for twice-yearly 100% internal inspections.
- **Record Keeping:** Farmers maintain farm diaries for inspection purposes and show them during inspection.
- **Training:** Provides training on production and GG certification requirements.
- **Information:** Displays key farmer and farm details including geo-location, crops and Unique ID by the Agri. Ministry at the ICS office for transparency.

5.5 Constitution, Requirements & Duties of ICS of GG....

Contd.

- **ICS Manual:** GG develops and maintains the ICS manual outlining policies, procedures (member inclusion/exit, agreements), referencing NPOP Procedures 2024.
- **ICS Manager:** Responsible for NPOP compliance and acts as the main contact, residing within the Grower Group's area.
- **External ICS (Optional):** GG can contract an external service provider for all ICS duties under NPOP, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- **Service Provider Support:** Facilitates ICS operation, farmer training, product marketing, certification, and document management.

5.6 Default by members

- i. If a farmer in a GG default in compliance with requirements, the ICS will remove such farmer from the GG and ensure that the produce of default units does not get mixed with the produce originating from the group. Moreover, the ICS manager must ensure that all the neighboring farmers in the group take requisite contamination control measures.
- ii. The GG and its ICS will follow the NPOP Procedures 2024 and will maintain all the documents as prescribed.

5.7 ICS Personnel

- i. The GG will have designated personnel for its ICS. All ICS personnel must be from within the GG. In the case of external service provider, the internal inspectors should preferably be from within the GG.
- ii. The ICS must have following designated personnel:

5.7.1 Internal Control System Manager (ICS Manager)

- **GG will designate personnel as ICS Manager:**
- Responsible for the functioning and operations of the ICS.
- Ensures compliance with NPOP standards.
- External ICS Manager manages GGs within a 50 km radius.
- **ICS Manager Key Duties:**
 - Develop and implement the GG's ICS. /Organize internal inspections/ Coordinate between field staff, approval staff, and the Certification Body.
 - Define procedures for: Approving new members/ Rating non-conformities (major for prohibited substances, minor for documentation) /Verifying corrective actions/ Imposing sanctions on defaulting members (removal, downgrading).
 - Ensure full implementation of all NPOP requirements.

5.7.2

Internal inspectors

i. The ICS will appoint one internal inspector for every 50 or 60 farmers in the Group. They will inspect 100% of the farmers two times a year.

ii. The inspectors will be trained well on the Standards to perform internal inspections. The ICS will maintain profile of the internal inspectors.

5.7.3 Approval Committee

- A three members Committee will be constituted from within the GG to take the approval decision. The approval committee shall be well versed with organic procedures of ICS, internal standards and NPOP standards.

5.7.4 FIELD OFFICERS

- Field officers will be identified from among the group, one at each production area. The field officer will train the farmers by organizing field work.

5.7.5 Purchase officers

- Purchase officers will be identified who would be responsible for correct purchase of produce from the farmers. The purchase officer is required to be well versed with ICS.

5.7.6 Warehouse manager

- If there are separate warehouses, it may be necessary to have a warehouse manager who would be responsible for handling the produce. He / she shall be well versed with the procedures of ICS for proper implementation.

5.7.7 Accounts/ record keeper

- A person shall be identified from among the group to maintain the accounts and records of the ICS.

5.8 Public information.... 1

- i. The ICS will ensure disclosure of updated list of the farmers under its GG, including:
 - a. Name of farmers in full, with father's/ husband's name,
 - b. Addresses with pin code
 - c. Crop grown and/or product details, as applicable,
 - d. Details of farm holdings with their location
 - e. Organic status,
 - f. Other details and information as may be specified from time to time, etc.

5.8 Public information.... 2

- ii. Such information will be updated from time to time at regular intervals and will be published at the ICS office.
- iii. The information should be readily accessible to the various Government Agencies (Central/State/Local) for the effective implementation of their schemes related to organic production and for the purpose of verification etc.
- iv. APEDA-NPOP Secretariat may seek such information from time to time based on regulatory requirements for ensuring transparency and credibility of the organic certification system.

5.9 Internal Standards

The internal standards will be prepared in local language by the ICS manager under the framework of NPOP standards. If the farmers are illiterate, the internal standards shall contain illustrations in the text for better understanding. The internal standards would contain:-

- i. Definition of production unit
- ii. How to deal with part conversion
- iii. Conversion period
- iv. Maintenance of buffer zone
- v. Farm production norms for the entire production unit (e.g. seeds, nutrient management, pest management, soil management, approved inputs, prevention of drifts, livestock husbandry management)
- vi. Harvest and post-harvest procedures

5.10 Conflict of Interest

The ICS personnel should not have any conflict of interest that might affect the credibility of the organic certification processes. All potential conflicts of interest shall be declared in a written statement to the ICS. In such cases, the ICS will ensure effective resolution of the same.

5.11 Certification

- i. Certification will be granted by the Certification Body to the Grower Group as per NPOP.
- ii. CB ensures that the location and address on the scope certificate of the GG and ICS are actual.

5.12 Trade

- i. GG will market the produce as a single entity.
 - ii. The ICS will procure the entire organic produce of the members of the GG.
- If quantity is excess, the ICS will arrange market linkage for that quantity.

5.13 Yield Estimates

The ICS will estimate individual farmer's yield for each crop. This will be done during harvesting, and the estimate should be counter-checked during external inspection by the Certification Body.

5.14 Procurement Process

The ICS must verify the organic status, compliance details, product reconciliation etc before procurement. The ICS must maintain purchase record and issue a signed purchase receipt to the farmer. The procured products /bags should be labelled as organic or in conversion as per the status.

5.15 Storage and Handling

- i. The purchase/warehouse manager shall check the documents to ensure that the compliance with the NPOP standards. The following are the minimum requirement that shall be followed during storage and handling:
 - a. Identification of the organic product at all stages of product flow during transition.
 - b. Segregation of organic products from in-conversion products.
 - c. Fumigation of containers, irradiation/ionization, etc. are prohibited.
 - d. The location in the warehouse during storage must be labelled as 'organic' or 'in-conversion'.

5.16 Training of ICS Personnel

- i. The ICS shall ensure that each internal inspector is trained annually by an external person/agency well versed in the NPOP requirements and organic processes.
- ii. The date of the training, course content, list of participants and photographs will be documented.

5.17 Training of Farmers

- The ICS manager will organize regular trainings for the farmers in the group:-
 - i. Each farmer needs to receive at least one initial advisory visit and training on organic farming and group certification requirements.
 - ii. Besides, farmers should receive one regular training annually from central and state agencies responsible for promotion of organic farming.
 - iii. The date of training, course content and list of participants with photographs, videos to be documented.
 - iv. The training session should be in simple and local language. Training videos and pictorial graphics should also be used for better understanding.



5.18 External inspections by Certification Bodies

- i. The Certification Bodies shall undertake inspections of the ICS after ensuring that 100% internal inspections by the ICS have been undertaken at least twice in a calendar year/scope cycle for all the registered members of the GG
- ii. The Certification Body will inspect some of the farms for the evaluation of the GG for efficient internal control system for compliance with the NPOP Standards.
- iii. The Certification Body shall inspect farms of 4 Hectare and above separately in addition to the sample of farms having the area of less than 4 Hectare.

5.18.1 Sampling Plan

- i. The sampling plan for inspection shall be based on the following factors to be considered for risk assessment:
 - a. Size of land holding
 - b. Number of the members in the group
 - c. Degree of similarity between the production system and crop system
 - d. Co-mingling
 - e. Contamination
 - f. Parallel production
 - g. Split production
 - h. Local hazards
 - i. Change in the production plan
 - j. Joining of new members in the group
 - k. Past certification history and sanctions

5.18.2 Risk Assessment..... 1

- (i) A minimum sample size of the members in the GG shall be inspected by the Certification Body.
- (ii) The Certification Body shall establish criteria for assessment of risk under high, medium and low categories.
- (iii) Based on the risk assessment made by the Certification Body prior to the inspection visit, the number of sample inspections shall be planned.

5.18.2 Risk Assessment..... 2

(iv) The sample size shall be determined as below:

a. High risk: $2 \times \text{square root of number of farmers}$

b. Medium risk: $1.5 \times \text{square root of number of farmers}$

c. Low risk: square root of number of farmers (min 20 farmers)

(v) A min of 20 farmers shall be inspected during external inspections.

(vi) The sampling plan should be such that all the farmers are covered in the external inspection in due course and the same farmer is not repeated except in case of verification/suspicious of noncompliance is there.

(vii) The risk assessed by the Certification Body shall be documented.

5.18.3 External Inspection

- **Inspection Scope:** CB inspects based on NPOP requirements (Chapters 3 & 4) and specific guidelines.
- **Non-Compliance Rectification:** GG has a maximum of 30 days to address any issues found.
- **Sanctions:** CB will impose sanctions on the GG based on the severity of non-conformities.
- **Group Responsibility:** Serious non-compliances found in a sample affect the entire GG.
- **Certificate Cancellation:** Failure to comply with NPOP impacting organic integrity leads to immediate cancellation of the Transaction Certificate.
- **Transparency:** Sanctioned GGs will be listed on the CB's website.

5.18.4. Non-compliance by members of GG and sanctions imposed by ICS.

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