



Imports of organic products - Guidance

1 Introduction

All products to be labelled as „organic products“ or with analogous definitions must meet the minimum requirements laid down in the Swiss Federal Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labelling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs (SR 910.18, abbrev: Organic Farming Ordinance)¹.

Organic Farming Ordinance, Article 2 (5): The labelling shall only be used if compliance with the requirements for production, preparation, import, export, storage and marketing of the products has been certified.

The legal basis for the import of such products is the most recent version of the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance, in particular Articles 22, 23, 23a and 24.

The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) Ordinance on Organic Farming (SR 910.181, abbrev. EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming)² specifies in more detail the requirements of the Organic Farming Ordinance:

- The EAER recognizes the production rules and inspection systems that exist in a number of countries as being equivalent to those operating in Switzerland. These countries, the specifications and the respective product categories are listed in Annex 4 (list of countries) of the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming.
- The EAER recognizes certification bodies and inspection authorities of countries not included in the list of countries, if the certification bodies and inspection authorities can prove that the products in question meet the conditions laid down in Article 22 of the Organic Farming Ordinance along the entire production chain (producers, processors and exporters). These certification bodies and inspection authorities are listed in Annex 4a of the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming together with details of the authorized countries and product categories.

2 Step by step guide

Step 1 Registration and inspection of the importer in Switzerland

Importers in Switzerland must be registered with an approved Swiss certification body³; they undergo an inspection procedure in order to demonstrate their compliance with the conditions laid down in the Swiss Organic Farming Ordinance and the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming.

¹ [Ordinance on Organic Farming and the Labelling of Organically Produced Products and Foodstuffs \(SR 910.18\) of 22 September 1997](#)

² [Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research \(EAER\) Ordinance on Organic Farming \(SR 910.181\) of 22. September 1997](#)

³ [Up-to-date list of Swiss certification bodies](#)

Please contact the certification bodies³ for further information.

Step 2 **Import of products (A) from a country listed in the list of countries or (B) the producers, processors and exporters of which have been certified by a recognized certification body according to the list.**

A **List of countries: import of products from a country recognized by Switzerland for the export of organic produce (Annex 4 of the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming)**

Each consignment of imported products must be accompanied by a certificate of inspection in accordance with Article 24 of the Organic Farming Ordinance (see step 3). No certificate of inspection is required for consignments from EU Member States, provided the imported products have been cleared in a Member State of the EU.

B **List of recognized certification bodies and inspection authorities outside the list of countries: import of products, the producers, processors and exporters of which have been certified by a recognized certification body according to the list (Annex 4a of the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming).**

Each consignment of imported products must be accompanied by a certificate of inspection in accordance with Article 24 of the Organic Farming Ordinance (see step 3).

Import and Marketing of organic wine:

Since 1 January 2013, the production of organic wine has been regulated by the Organic Farming Ordinance. Therefore, with effect from that date, the provisions laid down in the Organic Farming Ordinance, Chapter 4 ("Imported Products") apply for the marketing of imported organic wine.

Stocks of wines produced and labelled before 31 December 2012 in accordance with the Organic Farming Ordinance may continue to be brought on the market until stocks are exhausted.

List of countries (A) and list of recognized certification bodies and inspection authorities (B): please note that organically produced wine is not automatically covered by product categories A (unprocessed plant products) and C (processed agricultural products for use as food). Wine may be imported provided it is not excluded as a product category.

Import and marketing of products produced under the terms of conversion to organic farming

Products from conversion to organic farming may only be imported from individual countries on the list of countries (A) if the conditions listed there are met. No imports of conversion products are possible in accordance with the list of recognized certification bodies and inspection authorities (B).

Step 3 **Certificate of inspection for the import of organic products**

Each consignment must be accompanied by a certificate of inspection (COI). From 1 January 2018, certificates of inspection for imports of organic products into Switzerland have been recorded in the EU system for the electronic certification of imports of organic products (TRACES) (Art. 24 of the Organic Farming Ordinance). Switzerland will accept certificates of inspection both on paper and in electronic form until the end of 2018. From 1 January 2019, however, the use of electronic certificates of inspection (E-COI) will be obligatory.

The certificate of inspection must be drawn up by the inspection body or authority in the country of origin:

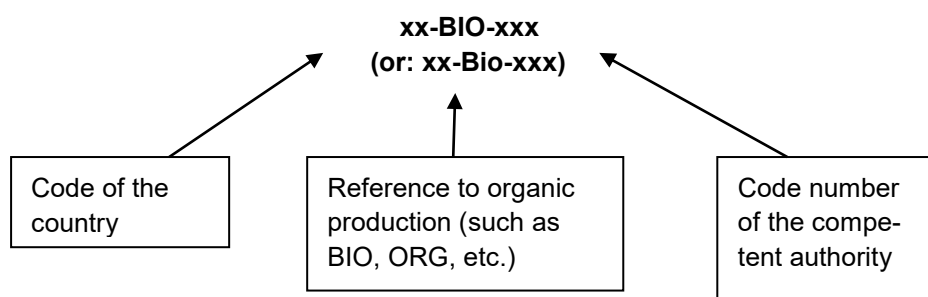
- In the case of imports from countries included in the list of countries (A): by the certification body responsible for the country, included in the list of countries.
- In the case of imports of products, the producers, processors and exporters of which have been certified by a recognized certification body or inspection authority (B) according to the list: the certification body or inspection authority responsible according to the list.

See also the exceptions under step 2, Article 24a of the Organic Farming Ordinance and Chapter 2a of the EAER Ordinance on Organic Farming.

Switzerland uses the same electronic system as the EU. However, the list of countries and the list of recognized certification bodies and inspection authorities outside the list of countries are not yet fully harmonized with the corresponding EU lists. The provisions of the Swiss Ordinance are binding on operators based in Switzerland. Swiss firms must be registered on TRACES. Importers and first consignees can obtain more information about the procedure from their certification bodies. Detailed instructions, videos and notes are available on the TRACES.NT documentation website.⁴

3 Common labelling provisions, in accordance with Organic Farming Ordinance, Article 21c

In order to guarantee a simplified flow of organic products between the EU and Switzerland, the same requirements as in the EU apply for the indication of the code numbers of the certification bodies on organic products.



Links:

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/eu-legislation_en

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/downloads/logo_en

https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/sites/orgfarming/files/docs/body/organic_logo-faq_en.pdf

Implementing rules for third country imports into the EU (Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008):

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1543851255113&uri=CELEX:02008R1235-20180724>

⁴ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cfcas3/tracesnt-webhelp/Content/Home.htm>