

**BRITISH COLUMBIA CERTIFIED ORGANIC  
PRODUCTION OPERATION POLICIES AND  
MANAGEMENT STANDARDS  
VERSION 9**

**BOOK 1**

**Operation Policies and Procedures**

**Annex 2**

**COABC ISO 65 COMPLIANT ACCREDITATION PROGRAM**

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## Introduction

The accreditation procedures and criteria described in Annex 2 are applicable to all certification bodies (CBs) operating in British Columbia that wish to conform to the requirements of the Canada Organic Regime. COABC ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation also provides for compliance with the requirements for the certification of agricultural and food products under of the Organic Production Certification Regulations of British Columbia.

Accreditation under the Canada Organic Regime means that the accredited certification body (CB) becomes accredited by the CFIA under an agreement with the COABC. The COABC Accreditation Board performs the evaluation, makes the decision on accreditation under the BC Certified Organic program, and passes this decision to the CFIA in the form of a recommendation for accreditation under the Canada Organic Regime. The accreditation is valid for five years, and in order to have its accreditation renewed once this period has ended, the CB must reapply and again be granted accreditation by the CFIA, via the COABC Accreditation Board.

### Oversight by BC Ministry of Agriculture

The COABC Accreditation Board has the benefit of a unique relationship with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture. As administrator of the *Organic Agricultural Products Certification Regulation* (under the *Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act*), the COABC is responsible to the government of BC through the BC Ministry of Agriculture. To achieve this government oversight role, the BC Ministry of Agriculture appoints an ex-officio director to the COABC Board of Directors and an ex-officio director to the COABC Accreditation Board.

## Part 1. Accreditation Procedures

### 1. Application for Accreditation

#### 1.1 Application

- 1) A CB applies for British Columbia Certified Organic ISO 65 compliant accreditation by submitting the duly completed application form together with the registration fee (below). The certification body must forward all the required documentation as stipulated in the ISO 65 Compliant Application to the Director of the Accreditation Board.
- 2) A CB requesting accreditation must submit a completed Application Form, accompanied by a non-refundable initial application fee of \$1,000. Applications forms are available from the COABC office.
- 3) The COABC shall acknowledge receipt of the application within 10 working days and shall notify the CFIA about the application.

#### 1.1.1 Fees for Service

- 1) CBs requiring BC Certified Organic ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation may be charged an extra fee for this service. This fee will be used to cover extra costs associated with the audit process. The COABC will determine the fee.
- 2) COABC Accreditation Board will provide auditing services in the most efficient, cost-effective manner possible with consideration to the needs of the applicant, the capabilities and needs of the Program, and sound management practices.

- 3) Auditor assignments will also include considerations such as ensuring uniformity of service, specialised training, personnel staffing issues, and specific program needs. It will be the responsibility of the COABC Accreditation Board to staff audits in the most cost-effective manner possible while ensuring uniform, high-quality service.

## **2. Program Analysis**

### **2.1 Resource Review**

- 1) The Director shall review the Accreditation Board's ability to carry out the assessment of the applicant certification body, in terms of the board's own policy, its competence and the availability of suitable assessors and experts.
- 2) The review shall also include the ability of the accreditation board to carry out the initial assessment in a timely manner.

### **2.2 Review of File**

- 1) The application and accompanying documents will be reviewed to determine if the certification program of the CB complies with the procedures and standards established by the British Columbia Certified Organic Program for ISO 65 compliant accreditation.
- 2) All applicants for ISO 65 compliant accreditation in the BC Certified Organic Program will be audited against the COABC ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation Criteria.

#### **2.2.1 Preliminary review of application**

- 1) Upon receipt of the application, the Director shall determine whether the documentation submitted is sufficiently complete to proceed to the analysis stage. If this documentation is deemed inadequate, the Director shall so inform the applying certification body, specifying the missing documents.

#### **2.2.2 Application analysis**

- 1) The Director, or evaluator assigned by the Director, shall review all documentation and prepare a report identifying any points of non-conformity. The report will be submitted to the Accreditation Board who shall determine whether the accreditation program criteria have been met. The Accreditation Board, shall establish, if applicable, points of non-conformity and write its recommendations within a reasonable period. The Accreditation Board may determine:
  - a) Approval to proceed to the on-site evaluation without conditions
  - b) Approval to proceed to the on-site evaluation with conditions for amending the program to be fulfilled by the time of the visit.
  - c) Refusal to continue the process of accreditation for major non-compliance revealing that the program is unable to monitor organic integrity.

#### **2.2.3 Intention to proceed with Accreditation Analysis**

- 1) Upon completion of the file review, the Director shall inform the CB and the Canadian Organic Office of the Accreditation Board's intention to proceed with the analysis and the assessment.

#### **2.2.4 Corrective Measures and Conditions**

- 1) In the case of a refusal, the Accreditation Board shall inform the CB as to the necessary corrective measures so that it may reapply for accreditation.

### **3. Assessment Process for ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation**

#### **3.1 On-site Audit**

##### **3.1.1 Audit Scheduling**

- 1) The on-site assessment occurs after the document review is satisfactorily completed and when the certification program has been running long enough that a thorough examination is practical. The initial on-site audit assessment shall take place within 1 year from the document review. The CB agrees to submit its program to a meticulous on-site evaluation, of its activities and monitoring procedures. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure the CB manages the program in the manner described by its own documentation.

##### **3.1.2 Assessment Team**

- 1) The Director, shall appoint an assessment team consisting of a lead auditor and, where required, a suitable number of assessors and/or experts for each specific scope. When selecting the assessment team, the Director shall ensure that the expertise brought to each assignment is appropriate. In particular, the team as a whole:
  - a) shall have appropriate knowledge of the specific scope for which accreditation is sought, and;
  - b) shall have understanding sufficient to make a reliable assessment of the competence of the CB to operate within its scope of accreditation.
- 2) The Director shall ensure that team members act in an impartial and non-discriminatory manner. In particular:
  - a) assessment team members shall not have provided consultancy to the CB which might compromise the accreditation process and decision, and;
  - b) in accordance with the provisions of 6.1.4, of ISO/IEC 17011:2004(E) the assessment team members shall inform the Director, prior to the assessment, about any existing, former or envisaged link or competitive position between themselves or their organization and the CB to be assessed.
- 3) The Director shall inform the CB of the names of the members of the assessment team and the organization they belong to, sufficiently in advance to allow the CB to object to the appointment of any particular auditor or expert. In light of the response by the CB, the Director will decide to appoint another auditor or will retain the one initially selected.
- 4) The Director shall clearly define the assignment given to the assessment team and shall ensure the assessment team is provided with the appropriate criteria documents, previous assessment records, and the relevant documents and records of the certification body.

#### **3.2 Evaluation Procedures**

##### **3.2.1 Notification to CB**

- 1) The Director shall ensure that the CB receives the information, documentation, and instructions necessary for the evaluation visit, witness audits and verification audits as well as estimated travel and lodging expenses that could be incurred during that visit.

### 3.2.2 Visit to certification body office

- 1) During their visits to each selected office, auditors must work in an objective manner as they gather any evidence that would allow them evaluate the certification body's ability to meet requirements related to accreditation.
- 2) The auditors shall interview those responsible for the certification program (employees, contractors, volunteers, managers, etc.). The auditors shall ensure in an opening meeting that the purpose of the assessment and the accreditation criteria are clearly defined, and the assessment schedule as well as the scope for the assessment, are confirmed. They must verify that the Quality Manual is being implemented and inspect and verify all points specifically identified by the Accreditation Board in its analysis report. The auditors shall conduct a thorough examination of certification records.
- 3) In the event of an initial accreditation application, the auditor will carry out an in-depth verification of the certification files of all active operators in the ISO compliant program according to the table below.

Number of files to be reviewed for initial accreditation

<b>Number of active operators registered with the CB under COR</b>	<b>Number of files to be reviewed</b>
240 or less	Between 10 and 12 files, 10 of which must be full reviews.
400 or less	Between 12 and 15 files, 10 of which must be full reviews.
1000 or less	Between 15 and 20 files 10 of which must be full reviews
More than 1000	Between 20-25 files 10 of which must be full reviews.

- 4) The auditor shall randomly select the files to be included in the sample, with consideration given to the various categories of operations being carried out by the enterprises registered with the certifying body.
- 5) In addition, and when applicable, a file from an operator in the Low Risk Program shall be reviewed.
- 6) The examination of these records is carried out to determine whether:
  - a) Documentation files are complete (i.e. that questionnaires, forms, production specifications, copies of certificates, decision sheets and other correspondence are present and up to date)
  - b) Inspection reports are present and include enough information to make informed decisions
  - c) Certification decisions are consistent with the information in the inspection report
  - d) In situations where the certification decision was conditional to meeting certain requirements, that follow-up was conducted to ensure compliance with those requirements.
  - e) All instances of non-compliance shall be noted in the auditor's report.

- 7) The assessment team shall verify the competence of the personnel involved with certification activities to provide assurance of the competence of the CB across the scope of accreditation and shall conduct interviews with some of them.
- 8) In addition the assessment team shall visit a production premises to conduct a witness audit, where the auditor will observe a routine inspection to assess the performance of the Verification Officer and the implementation of the CB's inspection procedures.
- 9) The Auditor's visit to the CB office shall include a closing meeting between the auditor and the certification body management. The auditor will provide a written or oral indication of the conformity of the CB (to the accreditation requirements), while the CB will have an opportunity to query the findings and their basis. The team's observations on areas for possible improvement may also be presented to the CB. However, consultancy shall not be provided.

### **3.2.3 Evaluation report**

1. Once the evaluation visit has been completed, the auditor shall write the evaluation report. This evaluation report must include, among others:
  - a) The date of the audit and name of the auditor
  - b) A brief history of the certification program
  - c) An evaluation of the certification program's independence from other activities conducted by the applying body
  - d) A detailed report on the examination of documentation – the numbers and types of files examined, how they were selected, how they compare to the entire program (% of total operations, types of operations, etc.) and what strengths and weaknesses were found.
  - e) The findings of the witness audit
  - f) Any useful comparisons between this and previous evaluation visits
  - g) A summary report on the evaluation visit, including the people met, the enterprises visited and the observations noted. All instances of non-compliance identified must be included in the report
  - h) A summary of the auditor's main conclusions and recommendations
- 2) The auditor must submit a draft report to the CB. The CB is thus invited to make comments on the reports content and verify its accuracy. If any comments are made, the evaluator should include the comments and corrections in the report.
- 3) When completed, the report shall be submitted to the COABC Accreditation Board.
- 4) The accreditation board shall remain responsible for the content of the evaluation report, including nonconformities, even if the lead evaluator is not a permanent staff member of the accreditation board.

### **3.2.4 Accreditation Board Review and Analysis**

- 1) Upon receipt of the evaluation report, the Accreditation Board shall prior to making a recommendation, be satisfied that the information provided in the evaluation report is adequate to decide that the requirements for accreditation have been fulfilled. The Accreditation Board shall review the information in order to point out any instances of non-compliance with the program's accreditation criteria and any divergence between

the certification program's documentation and its current application. This review will point out and explain any differences between the Accreditation Board's recommendation and the evaluation report.

- 2) In light of this analysis, the Accreditation Board shall make its accreditation decision.

### **3.3 Accreditation Decision and Conditions**

#### **3.3.1 Application Status**

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board shall notify the applicant of their organisation's accreditation status in the BC Certified Organic Program as being:
  - a) Accreditation - Grant the accreditation status in cases where the applying CB has established monitoring procedures leading to a certification program that conforms to accreditation criteria;
  - b) Conditional accreditation - in cases of minor non-compliance, issue conditional accreditation along with deadlines for amendments to the certification program. The time allowed for compliance shall never be more than 24 months. Evidence of effective implementation of actions taken shall be provided—the Accreditation Board shall evaluate whether the responses and action taken by the applicant to resolve any non-conformity appear sufficient and effective and shall decide whether a follow-up assessment is required to verify effective implementation of corrective actions.
  - c) Accreditation refusal - Refusal of accreditation where major non-compliance shows the inability of the program to control the integrity of product characteristics. In the case of a refusal, the Accreditation Board shall inform the CB as to the necessary corrective measures so that it may reapply for the accreditation program.
- 2) In cases where evaluation visits deal with a certification program that had been previously accredited by the COABC Accreditation Board, the Accreditation Board shall decide, in accordance with analysis of results of the evaluation report whether to:
  - a) Maintain accreditation status
  - b) Impose upon the accreditation agreement conditions that prescribe a timeframe for amendments to the certification program.
  - c) Withdraw the accreditation status.

#### **3.3.2 Authority for Accreditation Decision**

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board has exclusive responsibility for accreditation decisions in the BC Certified Organic Program.
- 2) The COABC Accreditation Board is the final arbiter of accreditation status, though the applicant may make an appeal of the Accreditation Board ruling according to procedures described in Book 1, section 3.

#### **3.3.3 Written Report**

- 1) The applying CB shall be advised in writing of any decision made by the Accreditation Board.

#### **3.3.4 Report to Canada Organic Office**

- 1) The Accreditation Board shall, without undue delay, recommend to the CFIA the status of the applicant body:
  - a) Accreditation granted or renewed, when all identified non-conformities have been adequately addressed by the applicant.
  - b) Accreditation refused.

2) The Accreditation Board shall send the recommendation in writing and provide evidence for the decision. If requested by the COO, the Accreditation Board will provide a copy of the evaluation report.

3) If the Accreditation Board refuses to recommend the accreditation of an applicant, it will send a notice to the CB by registered mail stating the reason for the decision and advising the applicant of their right to request that the CFIA review the decision within 30 days after receipt of notice.

### **3.4 Accreditation Completion**

#### **3.4.1 Agreement**

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board shall send the CB an accreditation agreement that binds the latter to complying with the conditions submitted and to the timeframe submitted. This agreement shall be renewed annually by means of a supplemental agreement.
- 2) The agreement shall ensure (among other things) that accredited CBs automatically and unconditionally accept the certification decisions made by any other accredited certifier under the COR.

### **3.5 Accreditation Certificates**

- 1) The Accreditation Board shall provide an accreditation certificate to accredited CBs. This certificate shall provide the name and address of the CB as well as the address of the Accreditation Board. The certificate shall also stipulate the scope of accreditation (ISO 65 or Regional).
- 2) The certificate shall state the date of expiry. Provided the accredited CB in is compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program, the certificate will be re-issued annually before the expiration of the previous certificate.
- 3) Upon withdrawal of accreditation, non-renewal, or suspension of the certification program for more than six months, the Accreditation Board will request the surrender of the current accreditation certificate.

#### **3.5.1 Access to Official Marks**

- 1) After a CB is accredited and upon payment of accreditation fees, all of its members located in BC who comply with the British Columbia Certified Organic Program will be permitted to use the phrase: "British Columbia Certified Organic" and program symbol once the "Consent to use Official Marks" forms have been signed. All members except those enrolled in the BCCO Low Risk Program, will be permitted to use the Canadian Logo.

### **3.6 Monitoring and Surveillance**

#### **3.6.1 Annual Report Requirements**

- 1) Accredited CBs shall submit an Annual Report to the COABC Accreditation Board.
- 2) Information included in the annual report submitted to the COABC Accreditation Board shall include:

- a) A complete list of enterprises certified during the period covered by the annual report with the relevant certification program identified.
  - b) A complete list of operations certified to the terms of the US/Canada import/export equivalence arrangement including name, address and phone number of the certified entity, the type of the operation certified.
  - c) Changes in staff or certification committee assignments.
  - d) Details of disciplinary measures and sanctions imposed on enterprises during the period covered.
  - e) Details by operator category, of the number of certificates newly issued, renewed, suspended and withdrawn under each certification program (COR, BCCO Low Risk).
  - f) A list of any changes in standards, procedures, forms and/or internal governing regulations adopted by the body during the period covered.
  - g) A description of all appeals filed relative to certification decisions.
  - h) A copy of the CB's complaints register, i.e. complaints from operators and general public.
  - i) A report (with supporting documents) on measures adopted to meet accreditation conditions.
  - j) Findings from the internal audit and management review output (in years not visiting).
  - k) Brief financial report, including details of application, inspection and certification fees set during the period covered.
  - l) A list of the names of the directors of the Society.
  - m) The name of the director appointed to COABC as well as an alternate representative.
  - n) COABC membership fees in the amounts determined by the membership of the COABC.
- 3) Authorized personnel must sign the certification body's annual report.
- 4) The annual report must be submitted to the Director during the first quarter of every year.

### **3.6.2 Renewal of accreditation**

- 1) Upon receipt of the annual report, the Director shall draw up a report for the accreditation board determining the level of compliance with accreditation conditions, steps taken by the certification program to comply as well as all actions that might change accreditation status.
- 2) Upon receipt of this report, the Accreditation Board may:
- a) Renew the accreditation status for a period of 12 months. The Accreditation Board reserves the right to issue new conditions and timeframes for meeting these conditions.
  - b) Renew the accreditation status subject to a new evaluation visit.
  - c) Suspend accreditation status until a new evaluation is conducted and the Accreditation Board rules on the case.
  - d) Recommend to the CFIA accreditation suspension. The Accreditation Board shall provide to the CFIA a report which specifies the grounds for suspension and required corrective measures.

### **3.6.3 Frequency of On-Site Surveillance Visits**

- 1) The frequency and scheduling of evaluation visits are at the discretion of the Accreditation Board in consultation with the assessment team. Accredited CBs must undergo a full evaluation visit initially, then at least once every five years.

- 2) After initial accreditation an on-site surveillance must take place with twelve months of the initial accreditation date.
- 3) In the years between full evaluation visits, surveillance visits may take place at the discretion of the Accreditation Board, but shall be no later than two years following the date of the most recent on-site visit. These are generally more limited in scope, or as necessary to verify that corrective actions have been taken as required.
- 4) The COABC Accreditation Board may conduct additional assessments as a result of complaints or significant changes that have affected the CBs operations.
- 5) Over the length of the accreditation cycle, for each surveillance visit, the evaluator will examine a number of files, proportional to the number of operators registered with the certifying body concerned, and based on the table below:

Number of files to be reviewed during each surveillance visit

Number of active operators registered with CB under COR	Number of files to be reviewed
240 or less	Between 7 & 10, 6 of which must be full reviews
400 or less	Between 10 & 12, 6 of which must be full reviews
1000 or less	Between 12 & 15, 6 of which must be full reviews
more than 1000	Between 15 & 20, 6 of which must be full reviews

#### 3.6.4 Witness and verification audits

- 1) Over the length of the accreditation cycle witness audits shall be conducted according to the table below.

Number of active operators registered with CB under COR	Total number of witness audits during the accreditation cycle.
240 or less	2 witness audits
400 or less	3 witness audits
1000 or less	4 witness audits
more than 1000	5 witness audits

- 2) Over the length of the accreditation cycle verification audits shall be conducted. The number per cycle is based on the table below.

Number of active operators registered with CB under COR	Total number of verification audits during the accreditation cycle.
1000 or less	2 verification audits
More than 1000	3 verification audits

2.1) The auditor shall choose the operators where the verification and witness audits shall be conducted. In selecting the operator for witness audits, the auditor will take into consideration the CB schedule of on-site inspections.

2.2) The purpose of the verification audit visit is not to re-inspect the enterprise for the purposes of a certification decision, but rather to verify the application of program monitoring procedures and the certification process relative to the management of this specific case.

The auditor shall verify, among other things:

- a) The operator has on hand a copy of the CBs requirements, as well as any requests for corrective measures submitted to the operator by the CB,
- b) That the inspection report adequately describes the production system;
- c) That the inspection was able to adequately identify areas of non-compliance regarding prescribed standards.

### **3.6.5 Reassessment**

1) Reassessment takes place every five years following the requirements of the initial assessment outlined in sections 1 to 3.2

## **3.7 Amendments to Certification Body Program**

### **3.7.1 Report to Accreditation Board**

1) Any changes to the certification program of an accredited CB must be submitted in writing to the COABC Accreditation Board for review at least 60 days before the proposed effective date of the changes. Requests for amendments must include a clear description of the proposed changes. Substantive changes may require additional document and onsite compliance audits as determined by the COABC Accreditation Board of Directors.

### **3.7.2 Extending accreditation**

- 1) The accreditation board shall, in response to an application for an extension or reduction of scope of an accreditation already granted, undertake the necessary activities to determine whether or not the extension may be granted. The CB must state the objectives and the reasons associated with this request.
- 2) When applying for an extension of its scope of accreditation, the CB must also supply documents relative to the monitoring measures intended to be implemented as to support this extension.

## **3.8 Disciplinary Measures**

### **3.8.1 Complaints**

- 1) If an investigation, because of a complaint or other information results in a decision to apply disciplinary measures to an accredited body, the Accreditation Board may, at its discretion, impose the following disciplinary measures:
  - a) issue a warning letter
  - b) Impose new conditions and demand specific corrective measures.
  - c) Require that a monitoring procedure be carried out within the next 12 months.

- d) Suspend accreditation until a new evaluation of monitoring procedures is conducted.
- e) Suspend accreditation and recommend to CFIA accreditation suspension.
- f) Impose any other disciplinary measure.

### **3.8.2 Legal Action and Penalties**

- 1) Whenever a major misdemeanour or fraud occurs, the Director shall supply the COABC Board of Directors with any pertinent information or documentation. Following a study of the case, the COABC Board of Directors shall make recommendations to the COABC Accreditation Board in order carry out effective proceedings.

### **3.8.3 Withdrawal of Accreditation**

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board may withdraw accreditation of a CB for any of the following reasons:
  - a) Failure to maintain system in compliance with referenced standards and approved procedures.
  - b) Failure of suspended programs to meet conditions for reinstatement within required timeframes.
- 2) When accreditation in the BC Certified Organic Program is withdrawn, the Accreditation Board shall also recommend to the CFIA accreditation cancellation.
- 3) CBs that have had their accreditation suspended or withdrawn will have their names and program information removed from all official lists of accredited programs.

### **3.8.4 Surrender of certificates**

- 1) Withdrawal of accreditation will result in cancellation and recall of the applicant's certificate of compliance. Applicants must surrender certificates of compliance or file a written appeal within 10 working days of written request of the COABC Accreditation Board of Directors.
- 2) If certificates are cancelled, applicants must immediately discontinue use, reference to, or distribution of materials that refer to BC Certified Organic Accreditation. Applicants must effectively recall or arrange for discontinuation of distribution all point-of-purchase materials referencing or implying conformity assessment by COABC within 10 working days of written notification by the COABC Accreditation Board.
- 3) If applicants fail to surrender certificates or discontinue use of marks of conformity as required by this instruction, the COABC may take whatever steps necessary to inform the public of the discontinued eligibility of the applicant to reference BC Certified Organic accreditation and the reasons for certificate withdrawal.
- 4) Further misuse of the BC Certified Organic Program will result in prosecutions under the provisions of the *Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act*.

## **4. Accredited Program Profile and Public Information**

### **4.1 Public Profile**

- 1) Once an accreditation status has been established, the Board shall draw up a descriptive profile of the accredited certification body.

- 2) In order to maintain adequate transparency, the Board shall ensure that information be included in its databank, and be available for public consultation. For each certified enterprise, these elements include the following:
  - a) name and address of manager, as well as facilities (if multiple)
  - b) certified products for each enterprise
  - c) name of the certifier
  - d) date of entry within certification program
  - e) Date of first certification.

#### **4.1.1 Records on Accredited Certification Bodies**

- 1) The accreditation board shall maintain records on CBs to demonstrate that requirements for accreditation, including competence, have been effectively fulfilled.
- 2) The accreditation board shall keep the records on CBs secure in accordance with its procedures for records and document control.
- 3) Records on CBs shall include:
  - a) Clearly defined scope of accreditation
  - b) relevant correspondence,
  - c) assessment records and reports,
  - d) records of committee deliberations, if applicable, and accreditation decisions,
  - e) copies of the CB's quality manual and relevant associated documents,
  - f) copies of accreditation certificates, and
  - g) a contract to fulfil the requirements for accreditation and other obligations of the CB.
- 4) The COABC Accreditation Board shall provide annually (by December 31<sup>st</sup>) to the CFIA an updated list of all accredited CBs including information concerning their corporate entity, name and business addresses and a list of the CB's countries of operation.

#### **4.1.2 Public Disclosure**

- 1) Conformity assessment and accreditation services are designed to provide confidence in the ability of the CB to provide credible product certification services. All quality manuals submitted by applicants and maintained by the COABC Accreditation Board secretary are available for public inspection and are subject to complete disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Any portion of the program documentation that the applicant considers proprietary must be identified to the COABC Accreditation Board at the time the information is submitted along with written justification why said documents should not be released to or reviewed by the public. If, upon review of the information, the Board agrees that the identified information is indeed proprietary and that protecting the information from public review will not hinder public confidence in the system, the Director will make appropriate provisions to protect the information from disclosure to the extent possible under existing Federal/Provincial laws.

## **Part 2. Accreditation Criteria**

### **For Certification Bodies Operating within the COABC ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation Program**

(Note this document is an compilation of the requirements of ISO 65, the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Guide for ISO 65, the Canada Organic Office Operating Manual and the rules specific to the COABC Accreditation Program)

## **5. Scope**

### **5.1 General Requirements**

- a) This document specifies general requirements that a third-party organic certification program shall meet if it is to be accredited under the British Columbia Certified Organic ISO 65 Compliant Accreditation Program.
- b) This document uses the term "certification body" or "CB" to cover any body managing a product certification system. In organic agri-food production, the term certification system is understood to include certification of the compliance to production standards relative to organic production systems.
- c) The word "product" is used in its widest sense and includes processes and services; the word "standard" is used to include other normative documents such as specifications or technical regulations.

#### **5.1.1 Fees and Levies**

- 1) Membership fees and certification fees shall be levied in accordance with a schedule described in the certification body's Certification Manual.

#### **5.1.2 Certification Scope and the Chain of Custody**

1. The CB shall not allow the use of its certification mark or issue certificate for any product unless it is assured of the chain of custody of the product.
2. Any entity in the chain of custody that has produced or prepared an organic product shall have been certified. Contracted production shall have been inspected. Where steps in the production chain have been certified by other CBs, all previously certified products or ingredients shall have been certified under the OPR requirements by a CB recognized by the COR, or if for the BC market only, by a CB accredited by COABC.
3. CBs shall conduct a risk assessment to determine the necessity for, or frequency of, inspection of all storage facilities in order to protect organic integrity. Where this risk assessment reveals a need for inspection to protect organic integrity, inspection shall be done.
4. The CB shall require that the party owning the product at the point of transport shall be responsible for maintaining the organic integrity in the transport process, unless transport operations are certified in their own capacity.

### **5.2 References**

- 1) Canada Organic Office Operating Manual Version 13, 2010

- 2) Organic Agricultural Products Certification Regulations (under the authority of the BC Agri-food Choice and Quality Act)
- 3) SOR/2009-176 Organic Products Regulations (under the authority of the Canadian Agricultural Products Act)
- 4) ISO/IEC Guide 65: 1996 General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems
- 5) IAF GD 5: 2006 Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC guide 65: 1996

### **5.3 Definitions**

- 1) For the purposes of these criteria, the relevant definitions given in COABC Operation Policies and Procedures Book 1 apply, together with the following definitions:
- 2) Supplier: The party that is responsible for ensuring that products meet and, if applicable, continue to meet, the requirements on which the certification is based.
  - a) Every supplier claiming that the products it markets meet the requirements covering designation "Canada Organic" and "Biologique Canada" and "British Columbia Certified Organic" within the scope of the Organic Products Regulation, and the Organic Products Certification Regulation (BC) must submit an application to certify those products. In this document, the terms "supplier" or "operator" are used interchangeably and refer to a person or company.
  - b) Suppliers of certified products (operators) and approved service providers can be distinguished as follows: certified product suppliers have full control over and are responsible for the production or manufacturing process, the raw materials supplying and the sale of certified products. Service providers only carry out a particular activity (packaging, transportation, slaughtering, etc.) within the production or manufacturing chain, according to specifications provided by the supplier (operator), who maintains legal ownership over the product throughout the entire process.

## **6. Certification Bodies (CBs)**

### **6.1 General Provisions**

#### **6.1.1 Access to Program**

- 1) The policies and procedures under which the CB operates and their administration shall be non-discriminatory and shall be administered in a non-discriminatory manner. Procedures shall not be used to impede or inhibit access by applicants, other than as provided for in the Accreditation criteria of the organic program. Speeding up or delaying the processing of some applications are considered hidden discrimination.
- 2) The CB shall make its services accessible to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation. There shall not be undue financial or other conditions. Access shall not be conditional upon the size of the supplier or membership of any association or group, nor shall certification be conditional upon the number of certificates already issued.

#### **6.1.2 Clarity of Scope**

- 1) The criteria against which the products of a supplier are evaluated shall be those outlined in British Columbia Certified Organic Production Operation Policies and Management Standards and CAN/CGSB CAN 32.310 & CAN/CGSB 32.311 (current versions). If interpretation is required as to the application of these normative documents for a specific certification program, it shall be formulated by relevant and

impartial committees or persons possessing the necessary technical competence, and published by the certification body.

- 2) The documents pertaining to product conformity requirements shall be understandable by the supplier, the certification body, and all interested parties.
- 3) When a subjective judgment is required to determine compliance, the CB shall document explanatory information, assuring consistent and uniform application of the requirements and certification decisions.
- 4) The CB shall confine its requirements, evaluation and decision on certification to those matters specifically related to the scope of the certification being considered and do so in consideration that it shall not supply or design products of the type it certifies.

## **6.2 Structural Requirements for Certification Bodies**

### **6.2.1 Documented Structure**

- 1) The CB shall have a documented and effective structure and organization that foster confidence in its certifications. In particular, the CB shall:
  - a) be impartial – when the CB identifies and assigns responsibilities and tasks to members of its staff, it must ensure that impartiality is not in jeopardy;
  - b) take full responsibility for all activities operated or subcontracted out and maintain its responsibility for decision relating to its granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing certification;
  - c) not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing certification to a separate legal entity;
  - d) Identify the management (committee, group or person) which shall have overall responsibility for:
    - i. Execution of inspection, controls, evaluation and certification as defined in these Criteria;
    - ii. Formulation of policy matters relating to the operation of the certification body;
    - iii. Decisions on certification;
    - iv. Supervision of the implementation of its policies;
    - v. Supervision of the finances of the body;
    - vi. Delegation of authority to committees or individuals as required to undertake defined activities on its behalf;
    - vii. Application of technical basis for granting certification.
  - e) Have documents which demonstrate the CB's status as a legal entity and its right to use the commercial name(s) under which it does business;
  - f) Have a documented structure which safeguards impartiality including provisions to ensure the impartiality of the operations of the CB; this structure shall enable the participation of all parties significantly concerned, in the development of policies and principles regarding the content and functioning of the certification system;
  - g) Ensure that each decision on certification is taken by a person(s) different from those who carried out the evaluation. Furthermore, program administrators shall not act as verification officers or make decisions pertaining to certification;
  - h) Have rights and responsibilities relevant to its certification activities that are specified or referred to within an agreement that binds the suppliers and the certifier;
  - i) Have adequate arrangements to cover liabilities arising from its operations and/or activities;

- j) Have the financial stability and resources required for the effective management of a certification system. Financial stability shall include provisions to cover liabilities in situations where there is a significant risk of being sued.
- k) Employ a sufficient number of personnel having the necessary education, training, technical knowledge and experience for performing certification functions relating to the type, range and volume of work performed, under a responsible senior executive, and, in particular:
  - i. Personnel, including contracted verification officers, shall be assigned to inspection and certification work that is appropriate to their skills;
  - ii. The CB shall require all persons involved in the certification process to sign a contract or other document by which they commit themselves to the rules and procedures of the certification body;
  - iii. Personnel shall have job descriptions describing their duties and responsibilities;
  - iv. The use of volunteer personnel is acceptable as long as they are not responsible for carrying out administrative functions at the very core of the CB's operations – in no case shall inspection activities be carried out by volunteer personnel;
  - v. In accordance with Article 6.5 c) of the Codex guidelines relative to production, processing, labelling and the marketing of organic food, the "j" requirements are extended to the administrative and technical equipment available to personnel, which must be both adequate and reliable.
- l) Have a quality system giving confidence in its ability to operate a certification system for products;
- m) Have policies and procedures that distinguish between product certification and any other activities in which the CB is engaged;
- n) Together with its senior executive and staff, be free from any commercial, financial and other pressures which might influence the results of the certification process;
- o) Have formal rules and structures for the appointment and operation of any committees which are involved in the certification process; such committees shall be free from any commercial, financial and other pressures that might influence decisions; a structure where members are chosen to provide a balance of interests where no single interest predominates will be deemed to satisfy this provision, and:
  - i. Where decisions are delegated to individual certification officers, the CB shall have supervision mechanisms that enable the Governing Board or the certification committee to exercise control over and responsibility for such decisions;
  - ii. Where decisions are taken by a committee comprising among others representatives from one or more clients, the operational procedures should insure the representatives do not have significant influence on decision making e.g. by a distribution of voting rights (IAF Guide for ISO 65).
- p) Ensure that activities of related bodies do not affect the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of its certifications, and it shall not:
  - i. supply or design products of the type it certifies.
  - ii. give advice or provide consultancy services to the applicant as to methods of dealing with matters which are barriers to the certification requested. Specific advice given to the applicant should be limited to explanations of the standards or certification requirements. This information shall not be offered for additional fees and shall not prescribe solutions.

- iii. provide any other products or services which could compromise the confidentiality, objectivity or impartiality of its certification process and decisions.
- q) Have policies and procedures for the resolution of complaints, appeals and disputes received from suppliers or other parties about the handling of certification or any other related matters.
- 2) CB procedures must allow, among others things, the implementation of an impartial appeal authority to deal with appeals from suppliers against decisions made by the CB. This authority shall not be the same as the one that made the decision for which an appeal is being filed.

### **6.3 Certification Operations**

#### **6.3.1 Conformance to Standards**

- 1) The CB shall take all steps necessary to evaluate conformance with the COABC Organic Management Standard (CAN/CGSB CAN 32.310 & CAN/CGSB 32.311).
- 2) Should the CB use its own (or someone else's) standard, that standard shall be assessed as compliant to the COABC Organic Management Standard (CAN/CGSB CAN 32.310 & CAN/CGSB 32.311).
- 3) Should the certification apply standards that are beyond the scope of the COABC Organic Management Standards or Canada Organic Regime, such standards shall be documented and provided to clients. The CB shall not have undocumented or hidden standards.
- 4) In conducting its certification operations, the CB shall specify, as appropriate, the requirements for the suitability and competence of the body(ies) or person(s) carrying out testing, inspection and certification to ensure these functions are managed in a manner which provides confidence in the results.

#### **6.3.2 Subcontracting**

- 1) When a CB decides to subcontract work related to certification (e.g. testing or inspection) to an external body or person, a properly documented agreement covering the arrangements including confidentiality and conflict of interest shall be drawn up. This should include the requirement to comply with all relevant aspects of these criteria.
- 2) The CB may issue certificates based on certification transfers, through the approval of certification decisions made by another CB, insofar as that organization has been approved by a recognized accreditation body in the Canada Organic Regime.
- 3) The CB shall:
  - a) Take full responsibility for any subcontracted work and maintain its responsibility for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing certification, including when the body uses work done by another CB to which it is linked through an agreement, in order to guarantee its own certification;

- b) Ensure that the subcontracted body or person is competent and complies with the applicable provisions of these criteria and other standards and requirements relevant to testing, inspection or other technical activities, and is not involved either directly or through the person's employer with the design or production of the product in such a way that impartiality would be compromised.
  - i. Verification Officers shall be members in good standing of the International Organic Inspectors Association. This requirement ensures that VOs have relevant professional training or experience in compliance with the Quality Management System requirements. The CB shall ensure minimal qualifications include training with respect to the Canada Organic Regime.
  - ii. The verification officer must have signed a formal agreement to refuse any work that would create a conflict-of-interest situation with the enterprise that is applying for certification, either because of a family link, or because of a business relationship with the applicant during the twelve months preceding its application to the certification body.

### **6.3.3 Sub-Contracted Production and Processing for Certified Operations**

- 1) The CB shall have policies and procedures for regulating subcontracted production or processing, where the subcontractor is not required to be certified in their own right. The policy shall prescribe the circumstances where the subcontractor is not certified.
- 2) This shall preclude the sub-contractor from marketing certified products themselves and require the manufacturing process, the raw materials supply, and the sales to be under the control of the licensee. This shall normally mean that the sub-contractor does not take title of the product.
- 3) The CB shall require that the certified licensee shall be held fully responsible for the sub-contracted production and be subject to sanctions in the event on non-compliance of the subcontracted parties.
- 4) The CB shall require that there be a contract between the licensee and the sub-contractor that includes clauses regarding compliance to the standards, obligation to provide information and access to the certification body.
- 5) The CB shall ensure that each sub-contracted operator has the current version of the applicable standards and a general description of the certification

### **6.3.4 Consulting and Advising**

- 1) CBs shall not provide consultant services to operators.
- 2) Specific advice given by Verification Officers shall be limited to explanations of the standards or certification requirements--this information shall not be offered for additional fees and shall not prescribe solutions.
- 3) CBs may provide general information (training, newsletters, seminars, advice concerning regulatory requirements etc.) for additional fees, provided this service shall be offered to all operators in a non-discriminatory manner.

- 4) CBs may provide a list of certification consultants (not employed by the CB) as service to their members.

## **6.4 Quality System**

### **6.4.1 Management Responsibilities**

- 1) The management of the CB having executive responsibility for quality shall define and document its policy for quality and its objectives for, and commitment to, quality. The management shall ensure that this policy is understood, implemented, and maintained at all levels of the organization.
- 2) The CB shall operate an effective quality system in accordance with the relevant elements of these criteria and appropriate for the type, range and volume of work performed. This quality system shall be documented and the documentation shall be available for use by the CB staff. The CB shall ensure effective implementation of the documented quality system, procedures, and instructions. The CB shall designate a person having direct access to its highest executive level who, irrespective of other responsibilities, shall have defined authority for:
  - a) ensuring that a quality system is established, implemented and maintained in accordance with these criteria, and
  - b) reporting on the performance of the quality system to the body's management for review and as a basis for improvement of the quality system.

### **6.4.2 Quality Manual**

The quality system shall be documented in a quality manual and associated quality procedures, and the manual shall contain or refer to at least the following:

- 1) a quality policy statement;
- 2) a brief description of the legal status of the CB, including the names of its owners and, if different, names of the persons who control it (board of directors or any other entity created for this purposes);
- 3) the names, qualifications, experience and terms of reference of the senior executive and other certification personnel, both internal and external (excluding personnel from subcontractors);
- 4) an organization chart showing lines of authority, responsibility and allocation of functions stemming from the senior executive;
- 5) a description of the organization of the CB, including details of the management (committee, group or person) identified in 6.4.2.3), its constitution, terms of reference and rules of procedure – the whole presented under the form of a functional chart;
- 6) the policy and procedures for conducting management reviews;
- 7) administrative procedures including document control;
- 8) the operational and functional duties and services pertaining to quality so that the extent and limits of each person's responsibility are known to all concerned;
- 9) the procedure for the recruitment, selection and training of CB personnel and monitoring of their performance;

- 10) a list of its approved subcontractors and the procedures for assessing, recording and monitoring their competence which may include provision for the periodic witnessing of activities undertaken by VOs;
- 11) its procedures for handling nonconformities in the CB's management system and for assuring the effectiveness of any corrective and preventive actions taken;
- 12) the procedures for evaluating products implementing the certification process, including:
  - a) the conditions for issue, retention and withdrawal of certification documents, in particular when a product certification is not renewed, with regard to audit and evaluation procedures;
  - b) controls over the use and application of documents employed in the certification of products;
  - c) More specifically, these procedures shall include rules to be applied for inspection, and in particular:
    - i. verification officer selection;
    - ii. grounds on which an applicant might refuse this choice;
    - iii. terms defining the verification mandate;
    - iv. minimal requirements for the verification procedure;
    - v. frequency and estimated duration of verification, taking into account the intensity of the production system, the production type, the company's size, the results of the previous verification, complaints received, parallel production;
    - vi. minimum requirements for any audit trail, in relation to traceability;
    - vii. sampling requirements (when applicable);
    - viii. deadlines for presentation of verification report.
  - d) the policy and procedure for dealing with appeals, complaints and disputes;
  - e) Its procedures for conducting internal audits, based on the provisions of ISO10011-1.

## **6.5 Conditions and Procedures for Awarding Certification**

### **6.5.1 Specific Conditions and Procedures**

- 1) The CB shall specify the conditions for granting, maintaining and extending certification and the conditions under which certification may be suspended or withdrawn, partially or in total.
- 2) The CB shall have procedures to:
  - a) grant, maintain, withdraw and, if applicable, suspend certification, and;
    - i. In the case of suspension, the CB shall require, at the date of notification of the suspension, and during all the following period, that the supplier makes no misleading claims as to the status of certification, and ceases to use the certification mark on the products covered by the suspension. If relevant, the CB may require in addition that no certified product is put up for sale and that potentially non conforming existing product be subject to a corrective action, including product recall and label correction.
  - b) extend or reduce the scope of certification;
  - c) re-evaluate, in the event of changes significantly affecting the product's design or specification, or changes in the standards to which compliance of the product is

certified, or changes in the ownership, structure or management of the supplier, if relevant, or in the case of any other information indicating that the product may no longer comply with the requirements of the certification system.

## **6.6 Internal Audits and Management Reviews**

### **6.6.1 Internal Audit**

- 1) The CB shall conduct periodic internal audits covering all procedures in a planned and systematic manner, to verify that the quality system is implemented and is effective. The CB shall ensure that:
  - a) personnel responsible for the area audited are informed of the outcome of the audit;
  - b) corrective action is taken in a timely and appropriate manner; and
  - c) The results of the audit are documented.

### **6.6.2 Management Review**

- 1) The CB's management with executive responsibility shall review its quality system including an analysis of complaints and appeals, and the results of the internal audit and status of corrective actions, at defined intervals which are sufficiently short to ensure its continuing suitability and effectiveness in satisfying the requirements of these criteria and the stated quality policy and objectives. Records of such reviews shall be maintained.

## **6.7 Documentation**

### **6.7.1 Minimum Requirements**

- 1) The CB shall provide (through publications, electronic media or other means), update at regular intervals, and make available on request, the following:
  - a) information about the authority under which the CB operates;
  - b) a documented statement of its product certification system, including its rules and procedures for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending and withdrawing certification;
  - c) information about the evaluation procedures and certification process related to each product certification system;
  - d) a description of the means by which the organization obtains financial support and general information on the fees charged to applicants and to suppliers of certified products;
  - e) a description of the rights and duties of applicants and suppliers of certified products, including requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of the certification body's mark and on the ways of referring to the certification granted;
  - f) information about procedures for handling complaints, appeals and disputes;
  - g) a directory of certified products and their suppliers, identifying for each certified product, which program's standards it meets.
- 2) The CB shall establish and maintain procedures to control all documents and data that relate to its certification functions. These documents shall be reviewed and approved for adequacy by appropriately authorized and competent personnel prior to issuing any documents following initial development or any subsequent amendment or change being made.
- 3) A listing of all appropriate documents with the respective issue and/or amendment status identified shall be maintained.

- 4) The distribution of all such documents shall be controlled to ensure that the appropriate documentation is made available to personnel of the CB or suppliers when they are required to perform any function relating to the CB's activities.

## **6.8 Records**

### **6.8.1 Maintenance and Retention**

- 1) The CB must establish, maintain, and keep up-to-date record systems adapted to its needs, and conforming to regulations in effect. Records should allow determination of what certification/registration procedures have been duly applied, particularly relating to certification applications, inspection reports and any other documents relative to granting, maintaining, extending, suspending, or withdrawing certification.
- 2) Records must be identified, managed, and eliminated to ensure the integrity of information handling and confidentiality.
- 3) The CB must possess policies and procedures for maintaining records over a period compatible with contractual, legal or other obligations. As for record access, the CB must have policies and procedures compatible with confidentiality requirements.
- 4) CBs shall retain records for a minimum of five years and must require operators to retain records for at least five years.

## **6.9 Confidentiality**

### **6.9.1 Proprietary Information**

- 1) The CB shall have adequate arrangements consistent with applicable laws to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification activities at all levels of its organization, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf.
- 2) Except as required by these criteria or by law, information gained in the course of certification activities about a particular product or supplier shall not be disclosed to a third-party without the written consent of the supplier. Where the law requires information to be disclosed to a third-party, the supplier shall be informed of the information provided as permitted by the law.

## **6.10 Standards**

### **6.10.1 CB Obligations**

- 1) The CB must publish the standards dealing with its fields of certification.
- 2) Standards for CBs must conform to the minimum standards prescribed by the BC Certified Organic Program and must include:
  - a) amending and updating procedures;
  - b) Timeframes for putting amendments into place once adopted.
- 3) The standards must cover all production systems within the scope of the certification program.

- 4) The CB must send a copy (or link to a copy) of the standards to an applicant at the time they apply for certification.
- 5) Standards shall be reviewed on an on-going basis according to need and in accordance with established procedures put in place for this purpose. Organisations or individuals responsible for reviewing standards shall possess competency necessary to do so, and their competency must be documented.
- 6) Certified operators and applicants for certification must be advised of amendments to standards without unjustified delay.
- 7) The CB shall allow a period of up to 12 months after the publication date of an amendment to CAN/CGSB-32.310 and CAN/CGSB-32.311 for applicants to come into compliance with any changes to the requirements.
- 8) If at any point during certification activities, interpretation of the standard is required from the Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC), the issue that is the subject of the request will be set aside until a response is received.
- 9) If changes are required by the operator to comply with the interpretation of the SIC, the CB shall not suspend or withdraw any certification it has issued that is affected by this interpretation as long as the operator has made the required changes in a time frame that is no less than the time permitted for any other non-conformance issued by the CB.

## **6.11 Certification Body Personnel**

### **6.11.1 General Requirements**

- 1) The personnel of the CB shall be competent for the functions they perform, including making required technical judgements, framing policies and implementing them.
- 2) Clearly documented instructions shall be available to the personnel describing their duties and responsibilities. These instructions shall be maintained up to date.

### **6.11.2 Qualification Criteria**

- 1) In order to ensure that evaluation and certification are carried out effectively and uniformly, the minimum relevant criteria for the competence of personnel shall be defined by the CB.
- 2) The CB shall require its personnel involved in the certification process to sign a contract or other document by which they commit themselves:
  - a) to comply with the rules defined by the CB, including those relating to confidentiality and independence from commercial and other interest, their employer (if need be), with a supplier or product designer; and
  - b) To declare any prior and/or present association on their own part, or on the part of their employer, with a supplier or designer of products to the evaluation or certification of which they are to be assigned.

- 3) The CB shall ensure that, and document how, any contracted personnel for their own part, and on the part of their employer if any, satisfy all the requirements for personnel outlined in these criteria.

### **6.11.3 Personnel Files**

- 1) Information on the relevant qualifications, training and experience of each member of the personnel involved in the certification process shall be maintained by the certification body. Records of training and experience shall be kept up to date, in particular the following:
  - a) name and address;
  - b) organization affiliation and position held;
  - c) educational qualification and professional status;
  - d) experience and training in each field of the certification body's competence;
  - e) date of most recent updating of records;
  - f) performance appraisal.

## **6.12 Changes in Certification Requirements**

### **6.12.1 Review and Implementation**

- 1) The CB shall give due notice of any changes it intends to make in its requirements for certification. It shall take account of views expressed by interested parties before deciding on the precise form and effective date of the changes. Following decision on, and publication of, the changed requirements, it shall verify that each supplier makes any necessary adjustments within such time as, in the opinion of the CB, is reasonable.
- 2) Requirements pertaining to the granting of certification include:
  - a) standards to which the product must be compliant;
  - b) control plan;
  - c) procedures related to certification granting.
- 3) The CB shall notify the applicant of any changes to the certification requirements within two months after the publication of the amendments.

## **6.13 Appeals, Complaints and Disputes**

### **6.13.1 Certification Body Appeal Process**

- 1) Appeals, complaints and disputes brought before the CB by suppliers or other parties shall be subject to the procedures of the CBdy.

### **6.13.2 Complaint and Appeal Records**

- 1) Each CB shall:
  - a) keep a record of all appeals, complaints and disputes and remedial actions relative to certification;
    - i. appeals related to certification decisions;
    - ii. complaints or objections from operators regarding the certification body's program application;
    - iii. complaints or objections from outside persons or organizations about the certification body's operations.

- b) take appropriate subsequent action;
- c) Document the action taken and its effectiveness.

## 7. Certification Procedures

### 7.1 Information on the Procedure

#### 7.1.1 Information for Applicants

- 1) The CB shall, provide to applicants an up-to-date detailed description of the evaluation and certification procedures, appropriate to each certification scheme, and the documents containing the requirements for certification, the applicants' rights and duties of suppliers which have certified products (including fees to be paid by applicants and suppliers of certified products), and a current version of the Canadian Organic Standard or any other standards to which the applicant wishes to be certified for.
- 2) The CB shall inform the applicant that the initial application for field crops, in ground greenhouse crops and maple products must be received 15 months before the day on which the product is expected to be marketed (OPR Schedule 1).

#### 7.1.2 Contractual Requirements of Applicant Enterprises

- 1) The CB shall require that the applicant:
  - a) always complies with the relevant provisions of the certification program;
  - b) makes all necessary arrangements for the conduct of the evaluation, including provision for examining documentation and access to all areas, records and personnel for the purposes of on-site evaluation and the processing of any complaints directed towards them;
  - c) makes claims regarding certification only in respect of the scope for which certification has been granted;
  - d) does not use its product certification in such a manner as to bring the CB into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its product certification which the CB may consider misleading or unauthorized;
  - e) upon suspension or cancellation of certification, and also in the case of voluntary surrender, discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and returns any certification documents as required by the certification body;
  - f) uses certification only to indicate that products are certified as being in conformity with COABC and Canada standards;
  - g) endeavours to ensure that no certificate or report or any part thereof be used in a misleading manner;
  - h) in making reference to its product certification in communication media, such as documents, brochures, or advertising, complies with the requirements of the certification body;
  - i) does not put up for sale any product for which it has requested certification; and bearing the word organic or its derivatives and the certification body's mark, for as long as it has not been informed of the decision made by the CB stating that the products are certified;
  - j) reveals beforehand to the CB the identity of any other company for which it intends to manufacture products under license, and thus as a result can use the certifier's mark (name and logo) on the label of the products that the other company intends to market under its own brand name even though it does not hold a compliance certificate for those products;
  - k) allows representatives from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture to access during normal working hours,

- documentation and sites used to produce certified products, for the purposes of examination and copying within the framework of accredited certifier evaluation;
- l) pays the corresponding fees requested by the certification organization.

### **7.1.3 Further Information Provided**

- 1) When the desired scope of certification is related to a specific system or type of system operated by the CB, any explanation needed shall be provided to the applicant.
- 2) If requested, additional application information shall be provided to the applicant.

## **7.2 The Certification Application**

### **7.2.1 Application Form**

- 1) The CB shall require completion of an official application form, signed by a duly authorized representative of the applicant, in which or attached to which are the following:
  - a) the scope of the desired certification;
  - b) a statement that the applicant agrees to comply with the requirements for certification and to supply any information needed for evaluation of products to be certified;
- 2) The applicant, as a minimum, shall provide the following information:
  - a) corporate entity, name, address and legal status;
  - b) a description of the products upon which the application is based, and indicating their nature as selected from one of the following:
    - i. tangible products to be certified relative to the certification system and also the standards against which each product must be certified, to the best of the applicant's knowledge;
    - ii. services (intangible products) to be approved, consisting of operations to be carried out by a supplier at the request of a client, within the framework of an activity applied to a tangible product, in order to ensure or to maintain its conformity to prescribed standards;
    - iii. inputs to be approved, consisting of non-edible substances used in the organic production process that will not remain within the processed product;
    - iv. in the case of an agricultural product containing more than one agricultural product, a statement setting out the percentage by weight of each of those products and the percentage by weight of each of them that are organic products;
  - c) production and/or preparation specifications for products to which the application applies;
  - d) maps and site plans
  - e) list of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances).
  - f) evidence that the site(s) where operations take place and from where products mentioned in the application are produced are indeed operated by the applicant, and if not, the names of the other companies involved in the production of the products, along with a description of the business connections linking them and the applicant, and transaction flows between them;

- g) names of CBs to whom prior applications for certification, approval, or evaluation were submitted by the applicant within the previous years, including all details pertaining to processing the application, and the resulting decisions.
- 3) In light of the presented documents, the certifier shall determine whether or not the certification applicant is truly a product supplier, within the meaning provided in these criteria, or if other suppliers must in addition to, or instead of, apply for certification of the products they are marketing and that are included in the application concerned.

## **7.3 Preparation for Evaluation**

### **7.3.1 Review of Application**

- 1) Before proceeding with the evaluation, the CB shall conduct, and maintain records of, a review of the application for certification to ensure that:
- a) the requirements for certification are clearly defined, documented and understood;
  - b) any difference in understanding between the CB and the applicant is resolved;
  - c) the CB has the capability to perform the certification service with respect to the scope of the certification sought and, if applicable, the location of the applicant's operations and any special requirements such as the language used by the applicant; and
  - d) the CB shall send acknowledgement of receipt of the application and proceed with the assessment.

### **7.3.2 Evaluation Activities**

- 1) The CB shall prepare a plan for its evaluation activities to allow for the necessary arrangements to be managed. Evaluation activities include:
- a) an evaluation of the applicant regarding its admissibility to the certification program as a supplier;
  - b) an evaluation of the documentation accompanying the application, including specifications for the production or preparation that the supplier submitted to the certifier, followed by a transmission of relevant remarks to the applicant, within a reasonable deadline;
  - c) Once an examination of the attached documentation confirms that operations carried out by the supplier seem to comply with the certifier's specifications, a VO is assigned. The CB shall ensure that the operator is contacted to arrange the logistics for an inspection of the production site(s) and the supplier's premises.

### **7.3.3 Site Visit Considerations**

- 1) For pre-certification, certification or any service for which approval is requested, the CB must conduct an initial inspection of each production unit, building or site (including vehicles) where production or preparation of agricultural and food products is carried out.
- 2) When the application concerns ingredients approval or the verification of ingredients within a non-certifiable product or even an input approval, the CB may omit the visit if it considers a document evaluation is sufficient for control purposes.
- 3) The timing of the site inspection must be determined according to the following parameters:

- a) In cases of agricultural operations, it must take place during the production season. This period begins as soon as all operations subject to inspection (seeding, tapping, etc.) begin and ends with the packaging or placing in containers for storage of products to be certified;
  - b) The inspection, including document review, shall include non-organic units where there is reason to suspect undeclared parallel production of similar products, and in any situation revealing high risk of cross-contamination;
- 4) Where agricultural producers carry out split production, inspections must allow visual determination of what is being planted in all cultivated fields within the production unit
  - 5) In cases involving preparation, inspections may be carried out any time during the year.
    - a) For separated production (i.e., when both certifiable and non-certifiable products are manufactured at the same facility), the inspection must be carried out a time when the products that are targeted for certification are being processed.
  - 6) Applicant firms whose production system is not yet in operation may be exempted from inspection for as long as their system is not in operation.

#### **7.3.4 Access Required**

- 1) The CB and its designated verification officer must have access to the premises, documents or person in charge for whatever is referenced in the certification application.

#### **7.3.5 Assignment of VOs**

- 1) The CB shall assign verification officers appropriately qualified to perform the tasks for the specific evaluation.
- 2) VOs shall not be assigned if they have been previously involved in, or been employed by a body engaged in, the design, supply, installation or maintenance of such products in a manner and within a time period which could conflict with their impartiality.
- 3) Operators shall have neither the right to choose nor to recommend verification officers. Except for cases of unannounced visits, operators shall have the right to be informed about the identity of the verification officer before the inspection visit. Operators have the right to raise objections based on conflict of interest. The CB shall rule whether the reasons are acceptable.

#### **7.3.6 Documentation for VOs**

- 1) To ensure that a comprehensive and correct evaluation is carried out, the VO shall be provided with the appropriate working documents. They must include, among others:
  - a) production description;
  - b) maps and plans;
  - c) list of inputs (ingredients and agricultural substances);
  - d) a copy of production and/or handling specifications;
  - e) remedial actions required by the certifying body during the previous certification cycle, as well as any corrective measures implemented by the operator concerning these requests.

## 7.4 Evaluation

### 7.4.1 Assess to Standards

- 1) The CB shall evaluate the products of the applicant against the standards covered by the scope defined in the application against all certification criteria.

### 7.4.2 Site Inspection Requirements

- 1) All applications for pre-certification, initial product certification or pertaining to its renewal, approval of services or even inputs must be the subject of evaluation. Regardless of the case, the evaluation must concern a production system that is currently operational (being actively managed).
- 2) The evaluation shall cover all production and processing operations, including packaging and labelling pertaining to the product.
- 3) The systems and facilities upon which a firm relies to produce and/or prepare each product included within its application must be visited by the verification officer from the organization responsible for ensuring that the standards are fully applied, corresponding to the submitted production or preparation specifications.
- 4) The complete application of standards implies an active management of the production system, and not only the non-use of prohibited substances or the use of records of operations by the operator. To this end, the verification officer shall witness the way the operator proceeds at a given point within the production cycle, thus implying that the inspection shall be carried out when grounds, premises, and activities subjected to compliance requirements may be observed.
- 5) Regular inspection must include, among other things:
  - a) a visit to premises, storage units and fields where production operations take place, for a visual examination of all components and production units (e.g. crops/plants, livestock) thus ensuring that they properly correspond to the specifications submitted by the applicant;
  - b) a visit to all locations where preparation operations, including those where processing, packaging and labelling take place, thus allowing verification officers to ensure that they properly correspond to the specifications submitted by the applicant;
  - c) identification and investigation of areas of risk (e.g. potential contamination from neighbouring farm, flooding);
  - d) a review of the record keeping to verify that the organic plan accurately reflects the operation and is in compliance with the Canadian Organic Standard. This includes an examination of records related to production (e.g. inventory, sales, purchases) and to management (e.g., complaints, etc.); as well as appropriate product package and labelling.
  - e) for producers, an estimate of the potential yield for the coming year, as well as an audit of the balance in the quantities produced and sold over the previous period, and including amounts still in inventory during this same period;
  - f) For applicants performing operations related to food preparation (processing and/or packaging), an audit of the input/output balance for acquired commodities, and for the corresponding commodities included in the products sold and on inventory;
  - g) trace back audits applying to certain products taken from the supplier's inventory or from a commercial outlet where its products have been placed for sale;
  - h) verification that changes to the standards and requirements of the CB have been effectively implemented by the operator;
  - i) verification that previously imposed conditions have been fulfilled;

- j) sampling, if necessary;
- k) interviews with supervisory personnel;
- l) a closing meeting at the end of the visit (exit interview) where the findings are summarized and written down, which is intended to inform the operator's management of observations made concerning the compliance with certification requirements, without any corrective action request from the verification officer. This provides the opportunity for the producer/handler to confirm the accuracy of the information collected during the inspection.

6) The inspection must cover the entire agricultural production system being managed by the operator, even if only part of their operations were targeted by the certification application. The land, premises and equipment not included in the certification application must be identified and inspected, and must at a minimum include the following: crop areas or harvesting zones; harvest storage locations; preparation, processing and packaging sites; application dates for phytosanitary products.

#### **7.4.3 Inspection Samples**

- 1) In the event that samples are taken by the verification officer, the verification officer shall provide the operator with a receipt for each sample.

#### **7.4.4 Less than 70% Organic Products**

- 1) Operations using less than 70% of organic ingredients do not require certification, nor do their ingredients require evaluation by a verification officer

### **7.5 Evaluation Report and Notification**

#### **7.5.1 Reporting Procedures**

- 1) The CB shall adopt reporting procedures that suit its needs but, as a minimum, these procedures shall ensure that:
  - a) VOs appointed to evaluate the conformance of the enterprise shall provide the CB with a report of findings as to the conformity with all the certification requirements, and include the following;
    - i. date, time and duration of inspection;
    - ii. names of interviewees;
    - iii. identification of land and premises visited on the production/handling site;
    - iv. types of documentation audits performed (in/out balance sheet, yields/sales, audit trails by batches, etc).
  - b) When the CB has reason to believe, based on a review of the information, that an applicant for certification is not in compliance with the certification requirements, a full report on the outcome of the evaluation shall be issued to the applicant by the CB, within a reasonable length of time, indicating all non compliances that must be eliminated in order to comply with all of the certification requirements, and the extent of further required evaluation or testing. This report, serving as a written notification of non-compliance addressed to the applicant, shall provide among other things:
    - i. the description of each non-compliance;
    - ii. the facts upon which the notification of non-compliance is based;
    - iii. the request for remedial actions for each non-compliance;
    - iv. the date by which the applicant must demonstrate that the non-compliance no longer exists or that remedial actions were taken.

- c) If the applicant can show that remedial action has been taken to meet all the requirements within a specified time limit, the CB shall repeat only the necessary parts of the initial procedure, meaning that it must ensure, based on submitted documentation and if necessary, an on-site inspection, whether or not non-conformities were corrected.

### **7.5.2 Interruption of Certification Process**

- 1) At any point within the certification cycle preceding the certifier's decision, the applicant may request that the processing of its application be stopped. The applicant shall, however, be liable for the costs of services provided up to the time of withdrawal of its application. In such case, the CB shall not issue a decision regarding the products that were the subject of the certification request.

## **7.6 Decision on Certification**

### **7.6.1 Sole Authority for Decision**

- 1) The CB shall not delegate authority for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending or withdrawing certification to an outside person or body.

### **7.6.2 Basis for Decision**

- 1) The decision as to whether or not to certify a product shall be taken by the CB on the basis of the information gathered during the evaluation process and any other relevant information. The person(s) who take(s) the decision shall have a level of knowledge and experience sufficient to evaluate the information obtained.

### **7.6.3 Approval of Certification**

- 1) The decision to certify a product shall be taken if the CB determines that all procedures and activities contained in the production or preparation plan are in compliance with requirements and that the applicant is able to conduct operations in accordance with this plan or after the corrections of minor non-compliances. This acceptance is valid until the results of the next annual evaluation are known and a new decision is made.
- 2) The CB shall issue a written notice of approval of certification to any applicant for whom it accepts to certify the products, specifically with the intention of issuing a license authorizing the operator to use the certifier's certification mark (name/logo) under the conditions as specified in the contract or any other special documents. It shall specify in this notice or in any other appropriate document the limits of the use of its mark.
- 3) Guidance for the use of the mark

a) When the company has obtained a compliance certificate for its products, it may then obtain authorization to make use of the certifier's mark within all methods it uses to market its products.

b) When the company does not hold a certificate but has an exclusive affiliation with the operator it supplies, and the operator holds the compliance certificate for the products being supplied, then the compliance mark should only be used on labels of those products it packages, in an exclusive manner with the supplier and on a site falling under the responsibility of the certificate holder. (see 6.3.3 Subcontracted Production and Processing for Certified Operations).

c) When in a nonexclusive manner a company supplies a client company that has obtained a certificate from the certifier for products being marketed under a private brand, and this supplier already holds for its products a certificate granted by another CB, the client's certifier mark should only be used on labels placed on products prepared and packaged for the client company, on a site falling under the supplier company's responsibility, and as a result of an extension to the license granted to this client by the certifier.

In order to have this license extension granted, the certifier granting it should guarantee its own certification, meaning the CB should ensure that the other CB is included on the list of CBs providing services under the Canada Organic Regime; that the other CB's evaluation and certification procedures cover the products concerned, and that it has access to either the evaluation report produced by the other CB or to the supplier's operations site for inspection purposes.

d) When under its own brand a company distributes products provided by a supplier to whom certification was granted by the CB, the company and the CB may enter into an agreement to allow the use of the certification mark to market these products even though the company itself possesses no certificate for its private brand products. The certifier should require that the company:

- i. inscribe on the packaging of products being resold under a private brand, a reference (code, number, name etc) to the certified product supplier, so that the supplier may be identified by both the competent authority and the certifier concerned;
- ii. maintain a record of all certified products received from the supplier, distributed, and eventually sold under either one or more previously approved labels;
- iii. accept that the certifying body whose name is indicated on product labels, may if necessary, be allowed to verify these records in order to trace the circulation of the products.

e) When the firm does not hold a certificate because its production system is currently inactive and no certified products are available for sale, even though the system that was set up is compliant with standards, the certifier's mark may only be used on an official letter from the CB attesting the compliance of its production system. The letter can then be presented to any prospective client for its products.

4) The CB must notify the COABC Accreditation Board of any approval of certification.

#### **7.6.4 Denial of Certification**

- 1) The CB must issue a written notice of denial of certification to any applicant to whom it refuses certification, either because operations leading to production are still noncompliant with requirements or simply because the applicant did not respond to the notification of non-compliance. This notice must state the reason(s) for denial and the applicant's right to:
  - a) file an appeal of the denial;
  - b) reapply for certification to any accredited CB, including the one who refuses certification.

- 2) If a CB has reason to believe that an applicant for certification has wilfully made a false statement regarding its production system and operations related to the products included in the application, the CB may deny certification, without issuing a notification of non-compliance.

#### **7.6.5 Publication of the Decision**

- 1) The CB must inform the applicant, of any:
- a) notice of non-compliance that would prevent the immediate acceptance of certification;
  - b) decision to refuse certification once review and appeal deadlines have expired.
- 2) Copies of non-compliance notices as well as certification refusal, suspension or withdrawal notices must then be sent to the COABC Accreditation Board.

#### **7.6.6 Certificate**

- 1) The CB shall provide to each supplier offering certified products, formal certification documents such as a letter or a certificate signed by an officer who has been assigned such responsibility and mentioning the name, the address and the phone number of the CB. These formal certification documents shall permit identification of the following:
- a) the name and address of the supplier whose products are the subject of certification;
  - b) the scope of the certification granted, including, as appropriate:
    - i. the products certified, which shall be identified by type or range of products including their specific name and if applicable, the one or more trademarks under which they are being marketed;
    - ii. the product standards or other normative documents concerning the program under which each product or product type is certified;
    - iii. the applicable certification system with the type(s) of operations and subject of the evaluation by the certification body, among the following:
      - crop production;
      - livestock production;
      - grain production;
      - maple syrup production
      - specialized production (honey production, etc);
      - food processing;
      - subsequent packaging (labelling modification following an operation of breaking down or regrouping on products already certified);
      - brokerage
  - c) the date on which the certification was granted.
  - d) the date by which the operator must submit application for subsequent annual inspection (COO requirement)
  - e) and as applicable, an indication of its duration (i.e. 12 months for packaging and labelling certification under the OPR and 12 months for all types of certification under the BCCOP);
  - f) The location of operations covered by the certification (town, province/state, and country).
- 2) Certification documents shall also identify any private labels under which the certified product is to be marketed.

### **7.6.7 Amendment of Certificate**

- 1) In response to an application for amendment to the scope of a certificate already granted, the CB shall decide what, if any, evaluation procedure is appropriate in order to determine whether or not the amendment should be made, and shall act accordingly.

### **7.6.8 Transaction Certificates**

- 1) In addition to the compliance certificate, the certifier may issue, upon request, other documents proving the certification of products and insuring better traceability, e.g. transaction certificates.

### **7.6.9 Certificate or Licence**

- 1) No certificate shall be issued to a company when it has no products for sale that are compliant with the prescribed standards, either because its production system is not yet operational, or because the operator is currently inactive. In these cases, the certificate shall only be issued following an inspection of the system once the firm begins its operations, thus validating the certification decision.
- 2) The certifier may grant a license to these companies while they are waiting to obtain their certificate, thus allowing them to prove to any party concerned that they have the capacity to produce products meeting these standards.

### **7.6.10 Surrender for Non-compliance**

- 1) The certificate is used by the enterprise for marketing purposes. It must be surrendered to the CB if the enterprise no longer meets the certification criteria of the BC Certified Organic Program.

### **7.6.11 Term of Certificate**

- 1) Under the BC Certified Organic Program the term of a certificate is 12 months as indicated in Section 8 of the Organic Products Certification Regulation (BC). Provided a renewal application is received by the CB before the expiration of the previous certificate, and all other policies and standards have been met, the certificate will be renewed.
- 2) If a renewal application is not received, status ends on the expiration date marked on the BCCOP certificate and the enterprise must surrender their certificate.
- 3) Products that remain in inventory after the term of a certificate expires may be marketed under that certificate upon written permission of the certification body. A CB must require appropriate documentation and may require inspection consistent with the requirements for certificates, so long as the product remains in inventory.
- 4) Under the Canada Organic Regime the certificate remains valid until a renewal certificate is issued or the CB revokes it. If a renewal application is not received by the date stipulated on the certificate/the time prescribed in the OPR section 12 (1), the CB shall initiate suspension or cancellation.

### **7.6.12 Yearly Renewal**

- 1) The possession of a certificate is not, by itself, a guarantee of certification. The CB must issue a new certificate in each year.

### **7.6.13 Revocation of Certificate**

- 1) When a CB issues a notice of cancellation or revocation, the certificate is by that act, invalidated. The CB must notify the Accreditation Board when a certificate is cancelled or revoked.

## **7.7 Withdrawal of Certification Status**

### **7.7.1 Voluntary withdrawal:**

- 1) Operators must inform the CB of the withdrawal from the certification program of any production unit or processing facility due to use of a prohibited practice or material. If conditions exist for which the producer, processor or handler anticipates the use of prohibited practices or materials, the CB strongly recommends consultations with the appropriate experts and the CB Certification Committee, close monitoring of the actions and the effects, and detailed documentation.

### **7.7.2 Suspension**

- 1) Procedures for suspension of certification status for non-compliance shall be according to those outlined in 7.5.1b and c of this document and as per section 20 of the Canadian Organic Products Regulation as amended from time to time.

### **7.7.3 Decertification**

- 1) Assigned to operations, which were certified, but no longer meet the CB's production or processing standards and the certificate is revoked. The CB shall cancel the certification if the holder of the certification has not implemented the required corrective measures with the period specific or in cases where the applicant has provided false information (fraud). Cancellation is subject to Section 20 of the Canadian Organic Products Regulation.

## **8. Surveillance**

### **8.1.1 Documented Surveillance Program**

- 1) The CB shall have documented procedures to enable surveillance to be carried out in accordance with these criteria.
- 2) The CB body shall document its surveillance activities, and in particular:
  - a) the controls of requirements stipulated by the CB following the evaluation;
  - b) all inspection visits made to suppliers;
  - c) investigations made to find evidence pertaining to a complaint regarding a supplier.

### **8.1.2 Unannounced Inspections**

- 1) There shall be a procedure covering the use and frequency of unannounced on-site inspections, according to which the certification program must plan, at the beginning of the year, some additional unannounced visits:
  - a) in the case of an annual inspection frequency, the number of unannounced inspections chosen randomly shall be at least 3% of the primary producers and 5% of other operators to which it grants certificates for products under the Canada Organic Regime;
  - b) Unannounced inspections shall be in addition to the scheduled inspections under 8.2.1.

- 2) CBs shall secure the rights to conduct unannounced inspections.
- 3) Unannounced inspections shall normally be without any forewarning. However, CBs may define alternative definitions for particular circumstances where this can be justified. The definition shall address the purpose that the possible forewarning shall not be so extensive as to allow for the operator to correct substantial non-conformities.
- 4) The basis for selection of operators to be subject to unannounced inspections shall be defined and include both random and targeted selection.
- 5) A record of unannounced inspections shall be maintained.

### **8.1.3 Notification of Changes**

- 1) The CB shall require the supplier to inform it about any of the changes to its production, such as intended modification to the product, manufacturing process or, if relevant, its quality system, which could affect the conformity of the product. The CB shall determine whether the announced changes require further investigations. If such is the case, the supplier shall not be allowed to release certified products resulting from such changes until the CB has notified the supplier accordingly.

## **8.2 Certification Renewal**

### **8.2.1 Continuing Product Scrutiny**

- 1) Where the CB authorizes the continuing use of its mark on products of a type which have been evaluated, the CB shall annually evaluate operations resulting in the marked products in order to confirm that they continue to comply with standards.
- 2) To allow the CB to re-evaluate the product concerned, the operator must submit within the periods stipulated by the CB a certification renewal application, pay annual certification fees, and submit all information requested by the CB including a mandatory updated production or preparation system plan.
- 3) The CB shall verify that all requirements for certification are met and shall make a decision either to maintain certification or to initiate suspension and cancellation.
- 4) The CB re-evaluations shall include , at a minimum, the following rules:
  - a) An on-site inspection must be made to each location where each supplier is operating, at least once per calendar year, (except in the case of risk-based inspection frequency as in 8.2.3) to verify compliance with the applicable requirements.
  - b) If an on-site inspection visit must occur on a date beyond a period of twelve months following the inspection from the previous year, this postponement shall not exceed six months, shall be justified and shall be documented.
  - c) When the interval between two regular inspections has exceeded twelve months, the CB must make sure that subsequent inspections restore the parity between the number of calendar years and the number of regular inspections over a given period.

### 8.2.2 Additional Inspections

- 1) The COABC Accreditation Board can request that additional inspections be conducted by the CB with the intention of verifying the compliance of the operations of an operator or of a type of operators with regard to certification requirements.

### 8.2.3 Inspection Frequency Based on Risk Assessment

#### (only applicable for BC Certified Organic Program)

- 1) CBs may alter inspection frequency to a minimum of one inspection in three years according to the following criteria:
  - a) Enterprise must not be importing or exporting organic product in or out of BC
  - b) Enterprise must not practice parallel production
  - c) Enterprise must not have outstanding conditions
  - d) Enterprise must have received a valid organic certificate in all of the previous three years
  - e) The enterprise must be assessed for risk, and receive a low-risk ranking from a certification committee
- 2) No further risk is required if the operator does not qualify based on (a)-(c).
- 3) CBs that allow for reduced inspection requirements must develop a Risk Assessment Program. This program must be documented and it must be provided to all organic operators in the certification program - CBs cannot limit application to the program to classes of producers or methods of production. The COABC Accreditation Board must provide written approval of Risk Assessment Programs before implementation.
- 4) CBs that choose to implement a Risk Assessment Program will comply with the following criteria:
  - a) VOs will be provided with a risk assessment checklist and will verify the risk of non-compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program by the enterprise whether by intent, by neighbouring activity, or by neglect
  - b) Risk assessment checklists will be comprehensive and will include all areas of possible risk including:
    - i. contamination or commingling of organic product
    - ii. contamination of site
    - iii. mislabelling
    - iv. fraud
    - v. Any other major or minor non-compliance with the BC Certified Organic Program
  - c) CBs will provide certification committees with guidelines to enable them to rank enterprises according to risk and to determine which low-risk enterprises qualify for reduced inspection requirements. CBs will ensure that enterprises that do not qualify receive a statement indicating why they do not qualify.
  - d) CBs will keep records of all enterprises enrolled in risk assessment programs and will arrange for yearly random and unannounced inspections of at least 5% of all such enterprises. Such inspections will include a risk analysis.
  - e) The CB may decide to undertake extra inspections of enterprises that are determined to be high-risk

## 9. Use of Licenses, Certificates and Marks of Conformity

### 9.1.1 CB Authorisation

- 1) The CB shall exercise proper control over ownership, use and display of licenses, certificates and marks of conformity.
- 2) Every firm using the certification mark of the CB for products it has ownership of, shall first get authorization from the CB through a license.

### 9.1.2 Withdrawal of Licence

- 1) The license must be withdrawn if the operator :
  - a) ceases doing business with the CB; or
  - b) ceases to supply, as affiliated operator, a customer whose products are certified by the CB; or
  - c) ceases, if it sells private label products without itself owning a certificate, to purchase from suppliers whose products are certified by the CB; or
  - d) cannot demonstrate that it is able to comply with the prescribed standards for operations included in its certification application .

### 9.1.3 Monitoring of Certification Mark

1. The CB shall possess procedures to monitor products being sold on the market using its certification mark and the certification program symbols to detect any improper or fraudulent use of their mark, the BC Certified Organic program symbol and mandatory labelling requirements of section 25 of the OPR.

### 9.1.4 Control of Mark

- 1) The CB shall possess written rules authorizing the use of its mark (including the approval of product labels on which it will be displayed) and is responsible for delivering compliance certificates.
- 2) The CB shall have written procedures allowing it to process cases of abusive use, particularly those involving false statements regarding a product's certification or the incorrect use of its certification marks. The CB must have procedures ensuring that its clients do not allow its certification mark or certification program symbols to be used in any way likely to lead to confusion among consumers.
- 3) Incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of the CB's licenses, certificates or marks, found in advertisements, catalogues, etc., shall be dealt with by suitable action. Such provision could include remedial actions, withdrawal of certification, publication of offence, and if necessary, any other legal action.

## 10. Complaints to Suppliers

### 10.1.1 Complaint Procedures

- 1) The CB shall require the supplier of certified products to:
  - a) keep a record of all complaints made known to the supplier relating to a product's compliance with the requirements of the relevant standard and to make these records available to the CB when requested;
  - b) take appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in products or services that affect compliance with the requirements for certification;
  - c) document the actions taken.