



**JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME  
CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING**

**Fortieth Session**

**Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 15 - 18 May 2012**

**PROPOSED DRAFT REVISION OF THE GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, LABELLING  
AND MARKETING OF ORGANICALLY PRODUCED FOODS (GL 32-1999)  
(TO INCLUDE AQUACULTURE ANIMALS AND SEAWEED)**

**At Step 3**

Prepared by the European Union

Governments and international organizations in Observer status with the Codex Alimentarius Commission wishing to submit comments on the proposal are invited to do so **no later than 11 April 2012** to:

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with a copy to the

Secretariat, Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy, Fax No + 39.06.5705.4593; E-mail: [codex@fao.org](mailto:codex@fao.org)

**A) General changes in Foreword, Section 1 and Section 2:**

- Foreword, Paragraph 6, last phrase: Add "and aquatic" after "soil".
- Section 1.1 – Scope: Reference to aquaculture animals and seaweed to be added (note that not all seaweeds are plants), either by inserting in 1.1 a) following livestock products: "aquaculture animals and seaweed" and in 1.1. b) following livestock products: " and aquaculture animal and seaweed products" .Via a footnote reference should be made to FAO work on the separate and broader issue of sustainable aquaculture, of which note should be taken (<http://www.fao.org/focus/e/fisheries/sustaq.htm>).
- Section 2.1 – Description: add a sentence at the end of the section: "The basis for organic husbandry of aquaculture animals is the harmonious relationship between water, seaweed and aquaculture animals and respect for their characteristic physiological and behavioural needs."
- Section 2.2 – Definitions: clarify that livestock refers to terrestrial animals. Insert the following definitions: "Aquaculture" means the farming of aquatic organisms involving intervention in the rearing process to enhance production and the individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated." (definition of Aquaculture in the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, document agreed by the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture in 2010 and approved by FAO Committee on Fisheries February 2011; "closed recirculation system" means a type of unit which does not connect in any way, including via effluent, to open waters, having a system to treat the effluent water to enable its reuse"; "containment system" means equipment for growing aquaculture animals or seaweed which prevents dispersal of the aquatic organism concerned -examples are, cages (net pens), ponds and tanks, long-line and rafts holding suspended ropes with the organisms attached and net bags on trestle tables; "locally grown aquatic species" means both aquatic organisms which are grown within their natural range and those aquatic organisms which though outside their natural range, have been grown for a minimum of ten years following the completion of two production cycles, without adverse effects on habitats or on native species and "production cycle" means the lifespan of an aquaculture animal or seaweed from the earliest life stage to harvesting.

## **B) Changes in Annex 1**

### **Add a section B.1: Aquaculture animals**

#### **General principles**

1. Aquaculture is an important activity that contributes to the supply of fish and other seafood species in a world where fisheries are highly exploited. Fishery products are important in terms of world trade and the aquaculture component is becoming increasingly important as time goes on.
2. The operation and management of aquaculture animals and seaweed production, whether in containment systems or not, should respect the principles of organic farming. The biodiversity of the aquatic environment and the quality of the surrounding water should be maintained.
3. Aquaculture operators should maintain on an ongoing basis an Organic Management Plan, to guide the operation of the farm, particularly regarding environmental issues, so as to keep the impact on the environment low and set out a monitoring programme to ensure that this aim is achieved each year. The plan should cover nutrient discharge, if applicable, and the repair and surveillance of technical equipment.

#### **Siting**

4. The nature of the production area should have characteristics which allow the production of safe products of high quality without adverse impacts on surrounding natural ecosystems. Production facilities should be located in areas where the risk of contamination is minimized and where sources of pollution are unlikely and can be controlled or mitigated.
5. Water used for aquaculture should be of a quality suitable for the production of food which is safe for human consumption and therefore waste water from domestic or industrial sources should not be used in accordance with the FAO Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification, 2011.
6. The certification body or authority must ensure at the outset that the location of the production unit is suitable by conducting a risk analysis of potential sources of contamination with contaminants or substances unacceptable to organic production systems. Buffer zones within or between farms should be established, where necessary, to separate organic and non-organic production units. Suitable criteria for such separation may be drawn up by competent authorities.

#### **Conversion period**

7. Aquaculture products can be sold as organically produced when these Guidelines have been complied with for at least one year. In cases where the water can be drained and the facility cleaned and disinfected, a shorter period of six months may apply. In the case of non-enclosed marine locations a shorter period of three months may apply. During the conversion period the stock should not be subject to treatments or exposed to products which are not permitted for the production of organic foods.

#### **Origin or stock**

8. It is preferable that locally grown aquatic species be used for organic farming where possible. Following the conversion period if organic aquaculture animals are not available, young non-organic aquaculture stock may be introduced for on-growing provided that the latter two thirds of their production cycle is under organic management and providing the stock is healthy. Breeding stock should come from organic production units, where the parent stock have been under organic management for at least three months prior to breeding. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) must not be used.

#### **Production rules for husbandry and breeding**

9. The production unit should provide sufficient space for the animals' needs in terms of stocking density, in numbers per cubic metre, or per square metre of surface area, as most appropriate for the species concerned. They should be provided with good quality water which is suitable to the requirements of the species with sufficient oxygen and, in the case of filter feeding animals, other nutritional factors for their needs. The temperature and light conditions should be suitable for the species concerned in the particular geographic location of the production unit.
10. Containment systems, when used, including cages (net pens) should be designed, constructed, located and operated to minimize the risk of escapes and other negative environmental impacts and prevent the entry of predatory species.
11. Closed recirculation systems are prohibited except when used as hatcheries or nurseries or for production of species used as organic feed on account of the fact that such systems depend on external inputs and are high in energy consumption. As they have some positive features, such as reduction of waste discharges and prevention of escapes, this prohibition may be reviewed at a future date, as greater

knowledge becomes available on their compatibility with organic production.

12. Breeding should simulate the natural situation as closely as possible, in terms of ambient conditions, using appropriate strains for the type of farming.

Artificial polyploidy, cloning, artificial hybridization and use of single sex strains except where produced by hand-sorting, should be avoided.

13. Competent authorities, or other recognised bodies, shall develop and publicise guide values for maximum densities for the species grown under their authority, which are reflective of the natural behaviour of the species involved and in keeping with good welfare.

14. Competent authorities or other recognised bodies shall also develop and publicise criteria for aquaculture production systems, with particular reference to type of system, water flow, oxygen saturation and effluent elimination and if necessary, following.

### **Nutrition**

15. Where feed is used, aquaculture operations should include procedures for avoiding feed contamination in compliance with national regulations or as determined by internationally agreed standards. The feed should meet the animal's nutritional requirements at the various stages of its development. Plant material used in aquaculture feed must be organically grown and should always meet the requirements of these guidelines. Carnivorous fish should not be fed material from the same species, nor a totally plant-based diet to ensure their physiological needs are met and to ensure good welfare. The aquatic animal based portion of the feed should be made from fish meal and fish oil, or ingredients of fish origin, derived from the following sources:

- organically grown aquatic animals and their trimmings, or
- trimmings of fish caught for human consumption in sustainable fisheries, or
- fish and invertebrates caught in sustainable fisheries.

### **Health and welfare**

16. Disease prevention in organic aquaculture shall be based on guidelines and standards set by the OIE and the principles and practices for health care of livestock (terrestrial animals) in these guidelines, specifically Annex I, paragraphs, 20, 21, 22 and 24 and on the following additional points:

- ensuring that the siting and design of the production unit is optimal and that there is regular cleaning and disinfection of premises where appropriate.
- to control ectoparasites such as sealice, cleaner-fish should be used where possible, rather than parasiticides. Parasite treatments should be limited to twice per year, with the exception of compulsory control schemes.
- the use of allopathic treatments should be limited to two courses of treatment per year, with the exception of vaccines and compulsory eradication schemes.
- If the specified limits are exceeded the aquaculture animals concerned should not be sold as organic.

17. Hormonal treatment should not be used.

### **Transport**

18. Guidelines and standards set by the OIE should be the specific normative basis. The provisions on holding and transport in aquaculture production of the Codex Code of Practice for Fish and Fishery Products (Section 6.3.5 of CAC/RCP 52-2003) should also apply.

Live fish should be transported in suitable tanks with clean water, which meets their physiological needs in terms of temperature and dissolved oxygen. Before use, tanks should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and rinsed. Precautions should be taken to reduce stress during transport, in particular regarding the density.

### **Slaughter**

19. Aquaculture animals should be handled in such a way as to avoid unnecessary stress. Slaughter techniques should render fish immediately unconscious and insensible to pain.

**Add a section B.2: Seaweeds**

20. Harvested seaweed can be sold as organically produced when these Guidelines have been complied with. The criteria for siting of aquaculture animal units in these guidelines should be applied as appropriate to seaweed production units. The criteria for conversion of plant and plant products in these guidelines (Annex I.A, 1-4) should be applied as appropriate to seaweed production units. If a competent authority agrees to a conversion period shorter than 12 months, it should be at least six months.

21. Both farming and collection of seaweed should be carried out in areas which meet the criteria of paragraph 4. An Organic Management Plan should be developed and implemented by all organic seaweed producers to guide the operation of the production unit in keeping the impact on the environment low and setting out monitoring to be done to ensure that this aim is achieved each year.

22. The collection of edible seaweeds and parts thereof, growing naturally in the sea is considered an organic production method provided that the four conditions of Annex 1.A.9 are met.

23. Farming should be carried out in a sustainable manner at all stages from collection of juvenile seaweed to harvesting. The application of supplementary fertiliser to the growing area should be restricted to pond cultivation. Ropes and other equipment used for growing seaweed should be re-used or re-cycled where possible. Removal of bio-fouling organisms should be by physical means.

**C) Changes in Annex 2**

A list of substances for cleaning and disinfection of equipment and facilities to be developed and added to Annex 2, Table 2, of the guidelines.