

Social accountability in operations that are certified according to Bio Suisse standards

March 2019

Based on: The Bio Suisse Standards 2019, part V, section 1.3: Social accountability

Background information

Bio Suisse actively advocates social accountability in organic production. This topic has become increasingly important to consumers of organic products, and social accountability has always been a guiding principle of the organic farming sector. The long-term goal is to ensure social accountability on all operations that are certified according to Bio Suisse standards.

Since 2015, Bio Suisse has required a social accountability audit (e.g. from GRASP) as a prerequisite for certification according to Bio Suisse standards for farming operations in Italy, Morocco and Spain that have more than four employees and produce vegetables, fruit or herbs. Mandatory external social accountability certification/ auditing will continue to be introduced gradually and on the basis of risk, and the corresponding lists of countries, products and Bio-Suisse-approved certification/auditing programmes will undergo regular review and revision.

As of 2018, mandatory external social accountability certification/auditing was extended to apply to farming operations in France and Portugal. The purpose is to ensure that farming operations from Southern and Western Europe with similar production conditions are treated equally. Since 2018 Mandatory external social accountability certification/auditing also applies to farming operations that produce such crops in Peru, as well as to all banana producers worldwide.

The reason for the decision to include these products and countries is that the production of vegetables, fruit and herbs is very labour intensive, and the products are exported to Switzerland in great quantities.

Since 2019, hazelnut producers from Turkey have also been subject to external social certification.

The following applies as from 1 January 2019

Farming operations in the following countries that produce the products listed are henceforth subject to social accountability certification/auditing:

List of countries and products

Products	Country
Primary production (including packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation*) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fresh vegetables (excluding seedlings and products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) ■ Fresh fruit (including berries, citrus fruit and table grapes; excluding seedlings and products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) ■ Fresh herbs (excluding products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) 	France, Italy, Morocco, Peru, Portugal, Spain
Primary production (including packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation*) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bananas fresh (excluding products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) 	All countries of origin

Primary production (including packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation) of: ■ Hazelnuts	Turkey
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*Producer groups that have been certified by GlobalG.A.P. are subject to GRASP audits in compliance with GlobalG.A.P. regulations.

Bio Suisse recognizes the following certification and auditing programmes:

List of approved social accountability certification and auditing programmes

Auditing / certification	Comments
BSCI Primary Production	
FairTrade (FLO)	
GlobalG.A.P. GRASP	Only possible with existing GlobalG.A.P. certification. Not accepted for hazelnuts from Turkey.
SA8000	
SEDEX/SMETA	
UTZ	Only for hazelnuts from Turkey

Exceptions

- Operations with less than 5 employees are exempted from this obligation unless worker representation is possible through the group, like with GRASP for GlobalG.A.P. Option 2.
- Operations that already have social accountability certification according to Naturland, Ecovalia or Valore Sociale standards do not need any other kind of social accountability auditing.
- Operations that are not or cannot be GlobalG.A.P. certified can apply for a derogation.
- Hazelnuts from Turkey: Bio Suisse can grant temporary derogations for social accountability standards that do not fully meet ILO norms.

Confirmation by means of a Bio Suisse 'Social Accountability' self-declaration form

Operations that have employees, that do not fall under the external social accountability certification/auditing obligation (as per section 1.3.8.1), and that have 20 or more employees must fill out and sign a self-declaration form (checklist) supplied by Bio Suisse.

Operations which meet one of the following criteria and which possess a valid document (certificate/audit report) need not fill out the Bio Suisse 'Social Accountability' self-declaration form:

- BSCI Primary Production
- Ecocert Fair Trade
- Fair for Life (IMO)
- Fair Trade (FLO)
- FLO CERT (smallholder)
- For Life (IMO)
- GlobalG.A.P. GRASP
- IBD Fair Trade
- Naturland
- Rapunzel Hand in Hand
- SA8000
- SEDEX/SMETA
- Soil Association Ethical Trade
- Union Fair Choice

Contact details

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