



Agricultural
Marketing
Service

Livestock
and Seed
Program

Audit, Review,
and Compliance
Branch

100 Riverside Parkway
Suite 135
Fredericksburg, VA 22406

DATE: April 26, 2011

TO: Accredited USDA ISO Guide 65 Program Clients

FROM: Samantha J. Simon, Accreditation Program Manager

SUBJECT: European Union Organic Regulations

As you are aware, certification bodies that apply for recognition under Article 33(3) of EC No 834/2007 must certify operations to a standard that contains, at a minimum, production rules and control measures. The standard must be a text that is equivalent to the standards and measures within Titles III, IV, and V of EC No 834/2007, as well as with the associated implementing rules laid down in EC No 889/2008. EC No 1235/2008 Article 11(3)(b) requires the technical dossier to include a description of the production standards and control measures applied in third countries, including an assessment of the equivalence of these standards and measures. EC No 1235/2008 Article 11 (3)(c)(iii) requires the technical dossier to also include a copy of the assessment report that demonstrates and confirms the equivalence of the production standards and control measures.

We have discussed with the European Union (EU) Commission who is responsible for conducting the assessment of the standard. While the ARC Branch must assume full responsibility for the assessment carried out, there are two options for who may actually conduct the assessment.

Option 1:

The ARC Branch conducts the detailed assessment. The ARC Branch will use a checklist to verify equivalence of the private standard. Any changes to the private standard must be submitted to the ARC Branch for assessment and verification of equivalence prior to implementation by the certification body. The ARC Branch will charge the certification body for the time it takes to conduct the assessment(s). Under this option, the technical dossier must include a copy of the certification body's private standard, the detailed assessment conducted by the ARC Branch, and the ARC Branch audit report.

Option 2:

The certification body conducts the detailed assessment. While the ARC Branch cannot advise the certification body on how to conduct the assessment, it is important that the certification body develop and implement an assessment tool and maintain records of the initial assessment, as well as assessments of any changes that are made after the initial assessment. The ARC Branch will verify the adequacy of the assessment and confirm that it has been carried out in a proper manner. At that point, the ARC Branch will declare that it takes over full responsibility for the assessment that has been conducted. This information will be included in the ARC Branch audit report. Under this option, the technical dossier must include a copy of the certification body's private standard, the detailed assessment conducted by the certification body, and the ARC Branch audit report.

In addition, at the recommendation of the EU Commission, the ARC Branch has developed a declaration regarding our recognition as an accreditation body. Certification bodies must include this declaration in their technical dossiers submitted to the EU Commission. The declaration is attached.

Attachments:

ARC Branch Declaration as a Recognized Accreditation Body

CC:

Jim Riva, ARC Branch Chief
ARC Branch auditors