

## 1.0. ORGANIC PRODUCT CERTIFICATION SCHEME OF SLSI

SLSI being the national standards body in Sri Lanka took the first initiative in year 2008 to introduce a certification scheme to certify organic agriculture production ventures with the main objective of enhancing market competitiveness of certified organic products and giving a third party assurance to the consumers regarding the organic integrity of the certified products.

The certification scheme was initially administered under the Systems Certification Division of SLSI as Organic Agriculture Production and Processing System Certification. In 2021, the scheme was further streamlined as the Organic Product Certification Scheme under the Product Certification Division, with due consideration given to developing the scheme in accordance with ISO 17065 and executing the certification scheme using internationally recognized certification and verification procedures.

The Organic Product Certification Scheme is open to the producers, processors, manufacturers and handlers of organic products who can assure and demonstrate the capacity to comply with the standard requirements. During the certification process, agreed-upon production practices are verified through on-site assessments and evaluations by competent and impartial auditors, technical experts, and staff employed, while maintaining confidentiality in all respects.

## 2.0. STANDARD

The certification is offered based on the requirements laid down in SLS 1324: 2018; Sri Lanka Standard Specification for Requirements for Organic Agriculture Production and Processing. [hereinafter referred to as the "standard" in this document]. The standard is available for purchase from the Documentation and Information Division of SLSI.

## 3.0. SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Certification is offered for the following product categories:

- Category 1**            Unprocessed agricultural crop, livestock, aquaculture and apiculture products, excluding tobacco and any other material restricted by government law.
- Category 2**            Processed agricultural crop, livestock, aquaculture and apiculture products intended for human consumption containing one or more ingredient (s) derived from above.

## 4.0. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

Each applicant seeking certification shall accomplish the general certification requirements given below.

- 4.1. The applicant shall be a legal entity [an individual, partnership, association, or any other legal entity] and shall have direct control over the production and processing activities.
- 4.2. The applicant shall have a thorough understanding of the principals of organic agriculture and the requirements of the Organic Agriculture Production and Processing standard
- 4.3. The applicant shall assure and demonstrate the capacity to comply with the requirements of the standards and shall conduct a self-assessment against the certification criteria before application.
- 4.4. The applicant shall prepare, implement, and update the organic management plan to comply with the general requirements of the standard.
- 4.5. The applicant shall respect the conversion period applicable to the scope of production, unless it is decided to reduce or extend it by SLSI.
- 4.6. The end products shall be marketed under a registered brand name and the labels shall comply with the standard and regulatory requirements.

## 5.0. OPERATIONAL CATEGORY

In order to address the certification requirements for different management practices, the following operational categories have been determined and specific certification requirements are defined under each operational category. Applicants shall meet these specific requirements under each category as applicable.

### 5.1. Individual Operation

#### 5.1.1. Individual producer with single production unit

- a. The applicant must be the owner of the production unit that he directly controls or possess the legal authority.

#### 5.1.2. Individual Producer with multiple production units [two or more production units]

- a. The applicant shall own or have legal rights to manage the all production units under his direct control.
- b. The applicant shall implement separate Organic Management Plans for each farm or address the site-specific conditions of each farm separately in a common Organic Management Plan.
- c. Traceability records shall be maintained for each production unit separately.

#### 5.1.3. Individual producer with out-growers

- a. Applicant or out-growers shall own or have legal rights to manage the production units.
- b. Traceability records shall be maintained for each production unit separately.
- c. A legal agreement shall exist between the applicant and each out-grower which includes organic production practices.
- d. All out growers shall aware about the requirements of the standard.
- e. Applicant is responsible for the compliance of out growers with the standard requirements.
- f. Traceability records shall be maintained for each farm separately.

### 5.2. Group Operation

- a. A legally registered association, cooperative, or any organized group of producers, managed through a formally established group administration.
- b. The group members shall produce similar products under a common Organic Management Plan and market the products through a common marketing channel. Organic management plan shall address the details of members, common production practices, site specific practices and traceability systems related to each farm.
- c. Each and every member of the group should understand the requirements of the standard. Thus, sufficient training and awareness must be provided to the group members by the group administration.
- d. An internal control system (ICS) shall be established in order to ensure that the production and processing practices of group members meet the requirements of the Organic agriculture production and processing standard.
- e. Each group member shall undergo at least one internal audit annually by trained internal auditors and records shall be maintained.
- f. Group administration shall have a legal agreement with each member and established policies and procedures for new member registration and for imposing sanctions to group members in case of violation of critical standard requirements.

### 5.3. Processing/Handling Operation

- a. Operations related to the handling and or/processing of certified organic products and/or produce are included in this category.
- b. Valid organic certificate shall be available for all ingredients used in processed products, except for those additives and processing aids allowed in Organic Agriculture Production and Processing standard.
- c. Processing facility shall be maintained adopting Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)
- d. Organic management plan shall address the processing practices including traceability system to identify each lot of purchase of organic ingredients.

## 6.0. CRITICAL REQUIREMENTS

Following clauses of SLS 1324: 2018 are identified as critical requirements for granting and maintaining Organic Product Certification. Failing to comply with any of the critical requirements relevant to the scope of certification will result in immediate suspension or cancellation of certification.

CL. No	SLS 1324 Clause	SUB CL. No	Requirement
4	General requirements	4.13	Gene technology, nano technology, ionizing radiation or mutation breeding shall not be used in organic production and processing.
		4.12	Areas in conversion as well as areas converted to organic production shall not rely upon changing or switching back and forth between organic and conventional production methods
		4.14	Application of synthetic substances shall be avoided throughout the whole chain of production, handling, processing, storing, transporting and marketing
		4.15	The operator of an enterprise shall prepare an organic management plan in accordance with this Standard
5	Production requirements	5.1.5	Clearing or destruction of natural forests or high conservation value areas for any reason shall be strictly prohibited.
		5.9.8	The use of genetically modified seeds, transgenic plants or planting materials shall be strictly prohibited. The applicant shall sign a declaration to this effect at the time of inspection.
		5.8.20	The removal of soil from the farm shall be prohibited. Incidental removal of soil when harvesting crops shall be permitted
		5.13.2	The applicant seeking certification of wild crops from reserve forest areas shall have obtained the necessary permission in writing from state authorities.
		5.17.1	Landless livestock systems and/or complete confinement of animal systems (e.g. Battery-type, single pen) shall be prohibited.
		5.24.1	Mandatory biosecurity and quarantine procedures should be well implemented to prevent introduction of disease into the farm and/or to control its spread within the farm.
		5.25.6	Poultry shall be fed daily. A "skip-a-day" feeding regime for breeding birds shall be prohibited.
		5.25.12	The diet shall be offered to the animals in a form allowing them to execute their natural feeding behavior. Forced feeding shall be prohibited.
		5.26.6	Prophylactic use of any synthetic allopathic veterinary drug shall be prohibited.
		5.26.10	The use of the following substances shall be prohibited: a. All steroids and other synthetic growth promoters or enhancers; b. Substances of synthetic origin for production stimulation or suppression of natural growth; and c. Hormones for heat and parturition induction, and heat synchronization.
		5.30.9	Fertilizers and pesticides shall be prohibited unless they appear in Appendix A and B.
		5.30.15	Polyploid and genetically engineered aquatic species shall be prohibited
5.30.26	Synthetic chemical tranquillisers shall not be used.		
6	Handling, Processing, storage and Transport requirements	6.1.2	The same ingredient in a single product shall not be derived from both organic and conventional origins.
		6.2.5	The final product or any of its ingredients and any food additives or processing aids, shall not have been subject to gene technology or nano technology or irradiation.
7	Safeguarding Organic Integrity	7.9	Prohibited inputs shall not be kept in the organic farm. Organic and chemical inputs storage areas shall be clearly separated.
		7.15	The use of polychloride based products shall be prohibited.
9	Social Justice	9.1	The Certification Body shall not certify production that is based on cases of clear social injustice or that involve any violations of basic human rights.
		9.2	Children under the age of 14 shall not be employed
		9.5	Operators shall not violate indigenous land rights.

## 7.0. CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

### 7.1. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

- 7.1.1. Application brochure with undermentioned documents are available at the Product Certification Division of SLSI, No. 17, Victoria Place, Elvitigala Mawatha, Colombo 08 and SLSI web site [www.slsi.lk](http://www.slsi.lk).
- i. Application form (FM-OPC-01)
  - ii. Pre certification questionnaire (FM-OPC-02)
  - iii. Certification Rules and Procedures (RP-OPC-03)
  - iv. Current fee structure (RP-OPC-04)
  - v. Terms and conditions for maintaining Organic Product Certification (RP-OPC-02)
- 7.1.2. The organization shall apply to SLSI on the prescribed application form (FM-OPC-01) and pre-certification questionnaire (FM-OPC-02) and, at a minimum, submit the following documents and supporting information to demonstrate the conformity of the organic production system to certification criteria.
- a. Legal status of the applicant (eg. company registration);
  - b. Land ownership, land use agreements, if any
  - c. Organic Management Plan
  - d. Map of the farm area in consistent scale including field numbers, field boundaries, roads, buffer zones, biodiversity recreation area, permanent buildings, neighboring land use etc.
  - e. Map of the collection area (for wild harvest products)
  - f. Details of group members (for group applicants)
  - g. GMP, Food safety Management or other applicable certificates, if any
  - h. Material application history, land use history, and contaminant analysis reports, if any
  - i. Copy of labels (Labels should comply to food labelling and advertising regulation)
  - j. Duly signed terms and conditions for maintaining Organic Product certification (RP-OPC-02);
- 7.1.3. Duly completed application shall be addressed to the Director General, Sri Lanka Standards Institution, No. 17, Victoria Place; Elvitigala Mawatha Colombo 08 with the application processing fee.
- 7.1.4. Application processing fee is non-refundable.

### 7.2. PROCESSING OF APPLICATION

- 7.2.1. The application accompanying the relevant documents will be received and registered by the Product Certification Division of SLSI and will be reviewed for completeness and applicability.
- 7.2.2. After scrutiny of application for its completeness in all respects, a unique customer reference number shall be allocated to the applicant company, which shall be used for correspondence with the applicant in future. SLSI may request for additional information / clarification(s), if necessary.
- 7.2.3. On the basis of the documents and information provided by the organization, if the SLSI is of the opinion that an audit cannot result in certification, the applicant company will be informed in writing.
- 7.2.4. All information is considered strictly confidential.

### 7.3. APPOINTMENT OF A PROJECT OFFICER

- 7.3.1. A Project Officer on behalf of SLSI is appointed to deal with the application and the project file being maintained thereafter.

#### **7.4. REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS**

- 7.4.1. Project officer will evaluate the documents and verify for the compliance in accordance with certification criteria and communicate it to the applicant. If there are deficiencies, applicant shall amend the documents as requested and submit them to SLSI.
- 7.4.2. If the applicant does not respond to SLSI with corrections for the inadequacies before 6 months, the application become invalid and the company shall apply afresh.

#### **7.5. PRE-CERTIFICATION AUDIT**

- 7.5.1. On notification of the inadequacies noted during the document review are rectified, the pre-certification audit is arranged.
- 7.5.2. The audit will be conducted by a competent audit team nominated by SLSI at the applicable production sites. The inspection is conducted within a mutually agreed time frame with the applicant.
- 7.5.3. Pre- certification audit has the following objectives,
- a. Verify the information provided by the applicant including the applicable sites, products and processes and evaluate the site-specific conditions.
  - b. Verify the scope of certification
  - c. Assess the current status with respect to the organic production system and clients understanding regarding the standard requirements of Organic Agriculture Production.
  - d. Verify status of the internal audits, Internal Control System of group applicants and the management reviews
  - e. Identification of risk areas and if there is a possibility of contamination, sample collection for contaminant analysis.
- 7.5.4. Discrepancies found in the pre- certification audit will be reported to the applicant for further improvements.
- 7.5.5. Applicant shall communicate actions taken to overcome deficiencies within a reasonable time period but not exceeding six months. If the applicant does not respect the time period, the application will not be further processed and the applicant will be notified.

#### **7.6. CERTIFICATION AUDIT**

- 7.6.1. Certification audit will be arranged if the deficiencies of pre-certification audit are rectified informed by the applicant in writing.
- 7.6.2. The audit is conducted on mutually agreed date(s) between the applicant and the SLSI. Date of the audit should be at least two weeks from the pre certification inspection subject to maximum period of six months.
- 7.6.3. Certification audit is conducted by an independent and competent audit team appointed by SLSI. Technical experts are assigned based on the scope sector when necessary. SLSI may also nominate one of its officers or trainee auditor(s) to participate in the audit as an observer to convey his /her observations as an auditor-in-training, whenever necessary.
- 7.6.4. Number of man days of the audit will be decided based on the number of sites and type of operations to be audited. Audit plan will be communicated with the applicant well in advance.
- 7.6.5. The applicant shall ensure the relevant information for the compliance of the organic production system with the standard requirements is available during the certification audit, and the applicant shall grant permission to auditors to access all production and handling areas, including non-organic production sites.
- 7.6.6. Following activities are taken place during the certification audit.
- a. Opening meeting with the key staff of the organization.
  - b. Review of the documentation of the organic production system including Organic Management Plan, traceability records etc.
  - c. Verify the actions taken for the deficiencies found during the pre-certification inspection
  - d. Review the list of material applied

- e. Assessment of production, processing and handling practices by visiting to organic and non-organic production sites, processing and storage areas and collect information regarding the compliance to the standard and relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.
- f. Conduct a witness audit to assesses the effectiveness of internal control system of group applicants
- g. Identification of risks areas and collection of samples for contaminant analysis if any potential risks are identified.
- h. Taking decision on reduction or extension of conversion period
- i. Closing meeting and report the audit findings to the applicant.

7.6.7. Audit findings are categorized as major non-conformities, minor non-conformities and observations.

**Major Non- Conformity** - A situation where the applicant fails to comply with a critical requirement addressed in Clause 6 above shall be raised as a major non-conformity

**Minor Non Conformity** - failure to meet part of a critical requirement or comply with a non-critical requirement addressed in the certification criteria shall be raised as a minor non conformity.

**Observation** - Any finding in critical or non-critical requirements, which may be substantiated by evidence but needs the client's attention for conformity, shall be reported as an observation.

7.6.8. Applicant shall take corrective actions for the major non-conformities raised against critical requirements & minor non-conformities raised against non-critical requirements within two months of the audit conducted, unless otherwise extended with the agreement of SLSI which is not exceeding 06 months or delayed until one year, a follow up audit will be conducted.

7.6.9. Corrective action plan shall be submitted for the minor non-conformities which needs more than three months to take corrective actions. Audit team shall review the corrective action report with the documentary evidences submitted and if it is satisfactory, non-compliances are cleared.

7.6.10. If further verification is required depending on the performance of the applicant, follow up audits may be arranged.

7.6.11. When there are significant non-conformance(s) identified during the certification audit, the progress is monitored closely and SLSI may arrange for a follow up audit for the closure of the nonconformance(s).

## 7.7. TESTING FOR CONTAMINANTS

7.7.1. When it is suspected to contaminate the agricultural produce or product with prohibited substances, SLSI may decide to draw soil, water, any particular input, pre-harvest or post-harvest samples for the analysis of contaminants. The organization shall bear the cost of such an analysis.

## 7.8. CERTIFICATION DECISION

7.8.1. Certification decision is taken based on all relevant information gathered during the processing of the application, pre certification and certification audits, test results (if any), and additional applicable information received from the company and the subsequent audits.

7.8.2. If the certification requirements are fulfilled, a decision is taken to grant the certificate subjected to three years certification cycle.

7.8.3. All decisions taken by SLSI regarding grant of certification shall be open to appeal by the company in consistent with the appeal procedure of SLSI.

## 7.9. ISSUANCE OF ORGANIC PRODUCT CERTIFICATE

7.9.1. If the certification decision results in granting certification, the applicant is granted a certificate which is valid for one-year period and the validity is extended for subsequent years of the certification cycle after evaluating the performance of the organization in maintaining organic production system.

- 7.9.2. On grant of certification, the client will be issued with a certificate of conformity and scheduled to the certificate of conformity (FM-OPC-31) signed by Director General of SLSI, with the endorsed copy of Terms and conditions for maintaining Organic Product Certificate. The applicant shall pay the annual registration fee as per the fee structure.

#### **7.10. VALIDITY OF THE CERTIFICATE**

- 7.10.1. The certificate is valid for 12 months from the date of issue.
- 7.10.2. During the validity of certification, the company must continuously comply with the requirements of the certification criteria and "Terms and Conditions for maintaining certification" (RP-OPC-02).

#### **7.11. SURVEILLANCE AUDITS**

- 7.11.1. SLSI shall conduct annual surveillance of all certified companies. Surveillance is aimed at examining whether the certified company is maintaining all the requirements of the certification criteria.
- 7.11.2. SLSI shall inform the certified company at least three months before the due date of certification for conducting the surveillance visit. Certified company shall submit the updated Organic Management Plan including any changes of the Organic Production System.
- 7.11.3. The company during the validity of certification may request to enhance the scope of certification for which they should apply two months before the conduct of surveillance. A scope extension request at the time of audit will not be considered. If an Organization requests scope extension independent of surveillance visit, SLSI will arrange a separate audit.
- 7.11.4. Surveillance audit programmes shall at least include,
- a. Review of actions taken on non-conformities identified during the previous audit.
  - b. Review of internal audit programmes and management reviews
  - c. Treatment of complaints
  - d. Review of changes of organic production system
  - e. Use of certification mark
- 7.11.5. The formalities involved with the surveillance audit are similar to the certification audit. The non-conformances, if any, shall have to be closed within two months of the audit. Based on the surveillance audit report a decision is taken on continuation of certification or otherwise.
- 7.11.6. If a decision is taken on continuing of certification, certified Organization pay the annual registration fee as per the free structure and obtain the updated certificate for the prospective year.

#### **7.12. RECERTIFICATION**

- 7.12.1. Certificate is renewed after the completion of three years' certification cycle. The Organization shall apply for renewal of certification, by submitting an application in the prescribed Application forms FM-OPC-01 and FM-OPC-02 along with updated information.
- 7.12.2. The Organization may request for extension of scope of certification, which should explicitly be mentioned in the application form.
- 7.12.3. The request for renewal should be submitted at least 4 months before the expiry of the validity of certification. If the Organization does not apply for renewal of certification, one month before the expiry of certification, it shall be presumed that the Organization is no longer interested in certification and the certification status shall expire on the validity date mentioned in the certificate. In such a case, the Organization shall have to apply afresh and the continuity of the certificate shall be disturbed. The procedure for processing of renewal application is similar to that of initial application.
- 7.12.4. If the results of recertification audit are positive and all non-conformances are closed before the expiry of the certificate, the certificate is renewed by another three years without any discontinuity.

7.12.5. The maximum duration that should be allowed for an Organization to take corrective action shall be two months, unless otherwise agreed upon, whichever should be before the expiry of certification. A new certificate is issued on renewal; however, the certificate number shall remain the same.

#### **7.13. EXTENSION OR REDUCTION OF SCOPE**

7.13.1. The Organization during the validity of certification may enhance or reduce the scope of certification. On submission of a new application form, SLSI shall evaluate the Organization for extension of scope during surveillance / recertification or by organizing a supplementary / special visit. This request shall be made to the SLSI before two months from the surveillance or recertification.

#### **7.14. SPECIAL AUDITS**

7.14.1. SLSI may also conduct supplementary / special visit at any time during the validity of certification, if:

- a. the SLSI certification criteria has been changed.
- b. changes have been reported to SLSI affecting the Organization's operations.
- c. the certificate / certification logo is misused.
- d. a complaint has been received and the facts have to be verified.

#### **7.15. CHANGES IN CERTIFICATION CRITERIA**

7.15.1. If there is a change in the certification criteria, SLSI shall inform the Organization of this in writing indicating the transition period, which shall be not more than 6 months. On receipt of the aforesaid information, the Organization must confirm to SLSI, its willingness to modify its system in accordance with the changes.

7.15.2. On confirmation from the Organization, SLSI may conduct a supplementary / special visit to evaluate the implementation of the same.

#### **7.16. CHANGES AFFECTING ORGANIZATION'S OPERATION**

7.16.1. In the event of the Organization informing SLSI about any changes in the information affecting the organization's activities and operations, such as changes in legal or commercial ownership or organizational status, organizational structure, main policies and procedures, resources and sites, a scope of certification or other similar change, SLSI may organize a supplementary/ special visit for significant changes or review at the next audit.

7.16.2. In case of changes in key managerial/ technical personnel, unless a special visit is organized, SLSI shall call over responsible personnel to the SLSI, interview them and then communicate with them in writing regarding their acceptability for respective work.

7.16.3. In the event of transfer of certification, when the legal status or the ownership of the certified Organization /product changes, the Organization shall communicate this with relevant documentary evidence. The final decision is communicated to the Organization along with an amended certificate.

#### **7.17. CONFIDENTIALITY**

7.17.1. SLSI shall strictly maintain the confidentiality of the information gathered regarding the companies from their various documents like manuals, procedures, work instructions, internal reports etc. and any other related information that might have been given to SLSI, during the process of evaluation for grant of certification.

7.17.2. SLSI shall impose the same obligation of maintaining secrecy on those, whom they entrust the tasks of a confidential nature, as described above.

#### **7.18. FEES**

7.18.1. The fees payable by the applicant shall be determined by the SLSI and be revised from time to time. The current fee structure is enclosed in the application brochure separately.



### 7.19. USE OF CERTIFICATION LOGO

- 7.19.1. When the certification is granted, the certificate holder is permitted to use the word "Organic" on certified products as per the marking and/or labelling requirements of the standard and use the national organic logo by adhering to the "Export Developments of Organic Products Regulations 2014 under the export development act, no. 40 of 1979.
- 7.19.2. The organic product certification mark shall only be used in respect of the scope for which certification has been awarded, as specified on the Certificate of conformity and/or the Schedule to the Certificate.

### 7.20. ADVERSE DECISIONS

- 7.20.1. SLSI may take an adverse decision on certification if the Organization at any time during the validity of certification does not fulfill the SLSI Certification Criteria and /or violates the "Terms and conditions of maintaining certification" (RP-OPC-02) or does not fulfill the obligations otherwise.
- 7.20.2. The conditions of taking adverse decisions, like a reduction in scope of certification, suspension and cancellation are described in respective Procedures of SLSI.
- 7.20.3. In case of adverse decisions like suspension and cancellation, the organization shall discontinue the use the word 'Organic' by any means and use of National Organic Logo on products or in advertising. The suspension and cancellation status shall also be publicized.
- 7.20.4. In case the Organization's certification has been cancelled by SLSI, it is disqualified to participate in the certification programme for a period of at least one year. The Organization may apply afresh by giving valid justification for earlier withdrawal and paying all fees & expenses, as applicable at that time.

### 7.21. SUSPENSION

- 7.21.1. Certification shall be suspended under the following circumstances.
- a. When the certificate holder fails to comply with critical requirements of the Organic Agriculture Production and Processing Standard as identified in this manual.
  - b. If surveillance audit indicates a total breakdown of the Organic Production System
  - c. Improper use of certification, certification document, Organic Product Certification logo and if it is not rectified to the satisfaction of the SLSI within an agreed period.
  - d. Any other contravention of the rules and regulation of the scheme.
- 7.21.2. The certificate holder shall be informed the suspension in writing under registered cover. The suspension will remain in effect until the certificate holder implements effective corrective actions and verified by SLSI.
- 7.21.3. The certification is cancelled and the certification documents is withdrawn if the stipulated conditions of suspension are not rectified within the specified period of time. In the case of suspension, the client shall refrain from further promotion of its certification.

### 7.22. CANCELLATION

- 7.22.1. SLSI shall cancel the certification, withdraw the certification document and cancel any agreement for the use of Organic Product certification mark under following circumstances.
- a. If the suspension is not lifted within the specified period of time.
  - b. A surveillance audit confirms the presence of major non conformities and actions have not been taken effectively within two months' period.
  - c. If the certification rules are changed and the Organization either will not or cannot ensure conformance to new requirements.

- d. If the Organization ceases to supply the product stated in the certificate for a period exceeding six months.
- e. When the certificate holder fails to meet the financial obligations to SLSI.
- f. Failure to comply with other requirements stipulated by the certifying authority under this scheme.

7.22.2. The cancellation shall be notified to the Organization by a registered letter.

#### **7.23. REDUCTION OF SCOPE**

7.23.1. SLSI shall reduce the scope of certification to exclude the parts not meeting the certification requirements, when the client has persistently or seriously failed to meet the certification requirements for those parts of the scope of certification.

#### **7.24. TERMINATION OF CERTIFICATION**

7.24.1. The Organization at any time during the validity of certification may discontinue their certification, voluntarily by making a written request to SLSI.

7.24.2. If the Organization decides to regain the certification status, after it has sought voluntary withdrawal it is treated as a new application for certification and has to pay all fees for application & certification audit, as applicable at the time.

#### **7.25. APPEALS**

7.25.1. All decisions taken by SLSI regarding grant / continuation / renewal/ reduction/ suspension/ cancellation of certification shall be open to appeal by the Organization, and such appeals shall be addressed to the Chairman of the appeal committee of SLSI.

7.25.2. All such appeals will be processed under the SLSI appeal procedure.

#### **7.26. COMPLAINTS**

7.26.1. The complaints with regard to audits and certification process, decisions taken there of or any activity related to the operations of SLSI or executed by any staff member or auditor on behalf of SLSI are entertained by the SLSI.

7.26.2. Complaints if any shall be sent to the Director General of SLSI in writing with proper authenticity of the informant. All such complaints or disputes arisen thereof are handled as per the procedures adopted by the SLSI.

7.26.3. Where necessary, the SLSI may conduct extraordinary audit to clarify the issues pertaining to the complaint.

#### **7.27. PUBLICITY**

7.27.1. The information with regard to certification process and concurrent changes in the process as well as in the operations of SLSI, certified companies and their contact addresses and scope of certification are published in the SLSI web site.

7.27.2. In addition, withdrawal of certification, suspension of certification and termination of certification are also posted in the SLSI website and /or newspapers.

#### **7.28. MISUSE OF CERTIFICATION LOGO AND WORD 'ORGANIC'**

7.28.1. An organization awarded a certification shall not display, advertise or otherwise use the word 'Organic' and 'National Organic Logo' and the certification documents after, a lapse of certification, suspension, or cancellation.

#### **7.29. CHANGES TO THE CERTIFICATION RULES AND PROCEDURES**

7.29.1. SLSI may at any time amend the policies and procedures related to grant of certification, maintaining certification, surveillance, renewal of certification and the adverse decisions thereof.

7.29.2. SLSI shall inform the companies regarding such amendments indicating the transition period which shall be at least 6 months.