

# Annex 2

## Post-Panama meeting working methodology

# Harmonization of the Regional Standards Governing Organic Production in Central America and the Dominican Republic

## Post-Panama meeting working methodology<sup>1</sup>

### General aspects of the methodology

- A “**public consultation process**” will be conducted in each country to gather feedback on the proposed regional standards harmonized by the competent authorities in Panama (May 4-7, 2010), for the purpose of later submitting them the consideration of interested parties in the countries involved and in the countries of trading partners.
- The public consultation process will take place at two levels: at the “**national**” level and at the “**international**” level, conducted through the WTO.
- Once the suggestions derived from the national consultation have been compiled, a “**country-document**” will be prepared and then presented at a “**national workshop**” in each country. Also presented will be the most important aspects of the regional standards, and the initiative that led to their development.
- Once the national workshops have concluded, an “**on-site working meeting**” of the competent authorities will be held in Costa Rica to discuss the importance of incorporating the suggestions contained in the **country-document** in the final version of the standards.
- Once the version of the standards that includes the pertinent suggestions from the **country-document** is available, the international consultation to be conducted through the WTO will begin.
- Given the number and the complexity of the suggestions that may emerge from the international consultation, consideration will be given to the possibility of holding a second on-site meeting, or to having them considered and/or approved in virtual meetings.
- During the meeting in Costa Rica, the competent authorities will define the mechanisms or bodies through which the standards will be officially adopted in the countries.

#### 1. National consultation process:

The national authorities will be responsible for conducting the national consultation process and for obtaining authorization from their superiors to post the standards. To this end,

- i) They will post the standards on their respective websites or on some other site selected for this purpose.
- ii) They will define a specific e-mail address for receiving suggestions on the document.

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology was prepared by the CA of Costa Rica, pursuant to the guidelines approved by the CAs at the on-site meeting held in Panama.

- In the largest selling newspaper in each country, the competent authorities will announce: i) the posting of the regional standards, (ii) the e-mail or mailing address where the standards can be accessed, (iii) the e-mail or mailing address where suggestions may be submitted, and (iv) the closing date of the consultation process.
- In addition, the competent authorities will inform as many stakeholders as possible in the organic agriculture sector of the posting of the standards, attaching a copy of the announcement made in the media. The competent authorities must keep a record of the e-mail addresses and the names of the persons or organizations that received this notification.
- The public consultation process will last 30 calendar days, after which further suggestions on the proposed standards will not be accepted.
- The competent authorities will acknowledge receipt of each suggestion and, for purposes of subsequent notification, keep a record of all suggestions received, taking note of the sender and date of receipt.

### **Reception and processing of suggestions**

- All suggestions received as a result of the national consultation process will be compiled by the competent authorities of each country.
- The competent authorities will analyze the suggestions and discard those which, in their judgment, are inapposite, documenting and justifying each case.
- The competent authorities will prepare a **country-document** containing each of the apposite suggestions, classifying them by chapter, article and/or subparagraph of the standards approved in Panama.
- The competent authorities of each country, at least 15 calendar days before the meeting in Costa Rica, will send the **country-document** to their counterparts and to the advisor and the observers of the process.
- The competent authorities of each country will analyze the **country-document** with their teams for the purpose of adopting national positions to take to the meeting in Costa Rica.

## **2. National workshop**

- The **country-documents** will be shared with the stakeholders in the organic agriculture sector in a national workshop, which will be used to present the most important aspects of the regional standards and the initiative that led to their development.
- The invitations to the national workshops will be sent out over the institutional websites of the competent authorities and via e-mail to as many stakeholders as possible in the organic agriculture sector.

- The competent authorities must keep a record of the e-mail addresses and names of the persons or organizations that received the invitation.
- The national workshops will be coordinated and conducted by the competent authorities. In the workshops, the competent authorities will:
  - i) present information on the background and scope of the regional standards;
  - ii) explain the most important aspects of same, and
  - iii) present the **country-document** derived from the national consultation, which they will take to the meeting in Costa Rica for consideration.
- The Technical Secretariat of the ICOA will support the workshop by preparing a basic presentation for the consideration of the competent authorities.
- The date for holding the national workshops will be determined the competent authorities once the national consultation is under way. The national workshops are to be held at least 15 days prior to the meeting in Costa Rica.

### **3. On-site meeting in Costa Rica**

- Once the national consultation processes have concluded and the national workshops held to distribute the **country-documents**, an on-site meeting of the competent authorities will be held in Costa Rica to discuss the importance of incorporating the suggestions contained in the **country-documents** into the final version of the regional standards.
- This meeting will take place at IICA Headquarters and will be held at least 15 days after the last national workshop.
- The meeting in Costa Rica will last five days and will be attended by the competent authorities of the Dominican Republic and the six countries of Central America, as well as the competent authority of Argentina, who shall serve as advisor to the process. Also participating will be two observers chosen by the competent authorities from among stakeholders in the organic agriculture sector of the region.
- For purposes of decision making during the meeting, the competent authorities of the countries involved will have the right to vote, but the advisor to the process will not.
- The observers of the process will not have the right to participate or vote in the meeting. Their role will be to supervise the process in order to ensure that all the suggestions contained in the **country-documents** are considered at the meeting.

#### **Working methodology**

- The competent authority of Costa Rica will serve as Coordinator of the meeting and will both direct the process and deal with matters of order and methodology. The Coordinator will have the support of a secretary.

- The competent authorities will work on the harmonized version of the regional standards that emerged from the meeting in Panama and which was submitted to a public consultation process in each country.
- The suggestions contained in the **country-documents** will be discussed by chapters, articles and subparagraphs. To this end, the Coordinator will give the floor to the competent authorities to present the positions of their countries on the point under discussion. When necessary, discussion will be invited on the suggestions made the competent authorities.
- The competent authorities will decide on the pertinence, or lack thereof, of the suggestions presented by the countries. When suggestions are approved, they will be incorporated into the final document by the Coordinator of the meeting and the secretary.
- The final document containing the approved suggestions will be reviewed by the participants in the meeting, who will validate it by signing the document, as the proposed Regional Standards for Organic Production in Central America and the Dominican Republic.
- The document validated by the competent authorities will be submitted to an international consultation process through the WTO.

#### **4. International Consultation (WTO)**

- The competent authorities will be responsible for promoting the international consultation process and obtaining necessary authorization from their superiors.
- The competent authorities will ask the Sanitary and Phytosanitary enquiry points and the Technical Barriers to Trade enquiry points to send notification of the regional standards to the WTO.
- The international consultation through the WTO will last 60 calendar days, beginning on the date the WTO is notified.
- The date of notification of the opening and close of the consultation process will be coordinated by the competent authorities and the enquiry points in each country.
- The suggestions received from interested individuals or organizations in the member countries of the WTO will be sent directly to the respective Centers of Information and Notification in the notifying countries. These centers will notify the competent authorities of the issue and acknowledge receipt of each suggestion.
- The competent authorities, for purposes of subsequent notification, must keep a record of all suggestions received, taking note of the name of the sender and the date of receipt.

#### **Receipt and processing of suggestions**

- Given the number and complexity of the suggestions that may emerge from the international consultation, consideration will be given to the possibility of holding a second on-site meeting, or of considering and/or approving suggestions in virtual meetings.

- Once the pertinent suggestions emerging from the international consultation have been included, the document will be validated by the competent authorities and then edited for presentation to the countries.
- The competent authorities will coordinate and reach agreement on the responses to the observations derived from the international consultation in each country.

## **5. Presentation in the countries of the harmonized standards**

- During the meeting in Costa Rica, the competent authorities will decide on the mechanisms or bodies through which the standards will be officially adopted in the countries