

LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Adopted on April 8, 2008

Chapter 1 General Provisions

Article 1. The Subject as Regulated by the Following Law

The law regulates the production, preservation, processing, transportation and sale of agricultural products and materials as well as the storage of wild plants, and defines the principles of and legal grounds for the management of organic agriculture, its main circulation demands, directions of state support, and the duties of the authorized body.

Article 2. Legislation on Organic Agriculture

1. The legislation of the Republic of Armenia on Organic Agriculture is composed of the following law and other legal acts.
2. If the norms defined by the Republic of Armenia's international treaties differ from those in the following law, then the international treaty norms take precedence.

Article 3. Main Concepts Used in the Following Law

1. The main concepts used in the following law include:
 - 1) **Organic agriculture** – a special type of agricultural activity that is generally in harmony with agro ecosystems and implemented in compliance with the requirements of relevant technical regulations and other normative documents.
 - 2) **Agricultural products** – products and materials made from vegetables, animals, or wild plants, which are produced or processed under organic agricultural management and circulated according to requirements established by technical regulations.
 - 3) **Organic agricultural foodstuff** – organic agricultural products that are consumed as human food.
 - 4) **Organic agricultural unit** – a production area where organic agricultural production is implemented.
 - 5) **Commodity circulation** – the stages of production, preservation, transportation and final realization of the product, as well as operations in between – from production up to the final product (sorting, loading, unloading, packaging, marking, labelling, delivery, advertising, supply, use, etc.).
 - 6) **Conversion period** – the period established for each type of agricultural product during which conversion is made from ordinary (traditional) agricultural production to managed organic agricultural production.
 - 7) **Certificate of organic production conversion period** – certificate given to production that has been obtained from the organic agricultural unit in the conversion period.
 - 8) **Buffer zone** – the zone left between the organic agricultural unit and the area of ordinary (traditional) agricultural production.
 - 9) **Genetically modified living organism** – any living organism that contains a new combination of genetic substance generated as a result of modern biotechnology.
 - 10) **Living organism** – any biological form that has the capacity to transfer or reproduce (replicate) genetic substance.
 - 11) **Agro ecosystem** – an ecological system where agricultural production is implemented.
 - 12) **Register of Economic Entities** – records that briefly detail information on how organic agricultural methods are being used by economic entities.

Article 4. Main Principles of Organic Agriculture

1. The main principles of organic agriculture are the following:
 - 1) Formation of a favourable environment for the preservation of biodiversity as a result of selective breeding of plants and livestock, as well as reduction of risks caused by human activity;
 - 2) Improvement of the soil's physical, chemical and biological qualities, and the maintenance of fertility by natural means (crop rotation, organic fertilization, creation of forested zones to combat erosion, etc.);
 - 3) Selection of methods and technologies of agricultural foodstuff processing that will ensure maximum preservation of their biological value;
 - 4) Elimination of environmental pollution – terminating the use of synthesized chemical substances, using environmentally friendly technology in agricultural activities;
 - 5) Harmonization of plant growing and cattle farming;
 - 6) Elimination of the use of hormones, hormonal preparations, as well as genetically modified living organisms, genetic engineering, or other modern biotechnologies and ionic x-ray methods.

Chapter 2

State Regulation of the Field of Organic Agriculture

Article 5. RA Government's Powers in the Field of Organic Agriculture

1. RA Government's activities in the field of organic agriculture are:
 - 1) Systematizing the activities of relevant state governing bodies;
 - 2) Ensuring an integrated approach to policy making and its implementation;
 - 3) Adopting legal acts to regulate the field;
 - 4) Adopting state target projects and ensuring their implementation;
 - 5) Establishing the procedure for maintaining the register of economic entities engaged in organic agriculture and calendar records;
 - 6) Establishing the catalogue of and procedure of use for permitted and partially permitted substances, including fertilizers, substances for soil quality improvement, fertility increase and plant protection, disinfectants;
 - 7) Establishing the catalogue of and procedure of use for additives used in processing food materials;
 - 8) Establishing the procedure for organic agriculture organization, production of plants, foods of plant origin, production of agricultural animals and food of livestock origin (including bee-keeping products), organic processing, packaging, preservation, transportation, finalization and marking;
 - 9) Establishing the duration of the conversion period and the procedure for reducing or extending it;
 - 10) Establishing the procedure for importing and exporting agricultural foodstuffs;
 - 11) Executing the powers conferred by this and other laws.

Article 6. Powers of the Authorized State Governing Body in the Field of Organic Agriculture

The activities of the state governing body, authorized by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (henceforth 'authorized body'), in the field of organic agriculture are:

- 1) Making and implementing integrated public policy;
- 2) Within its powers, creating rules of production, preservation, processing, transportation and the realization of organic agricultural food, and drafting of other normative legal acts that regulate the field;

- 3) Maintaining the Register of Economic Entities engaged in agriculture;
- 4) In conjunction with relevant state bodies, controlling the stages of goods circulation, starting from agricultural goods production up to final realization;
- 5) Within its powers, adopting orders, rules and other normative acts;
- 6) Fostering international cooperation in the field of organic agriculture with the introduction of advanced methods, scientific achievements, and personnel training;
- 7) Implementing other powers conferred by this law and the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

Article 7. Conformity Assessment (Certification) in the Field of Organic Agriculture

- 1) The conformity assessment (certification) body in the field of organic agriculture (henceforth 'certification body') conducts conformity assessment of organic agricultural products by giving a certificate with "organic" or "organic conversion period" on it. The procedure for giving the certificate is established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.
- 2) The conformity assessment activities are conducted in compliance with the Law of the Republic of Armenia entitled "On Conformity Assessment".
- 3) At least once a year, the certification body makes an evaluation of organic agricultural units' production processes and documentation.

Chapter 3

Main Requirements for Organic Agriculture, Labelling of Organic Agricultural Production, and External Goods' Circulation

Article 8. Main requirements for Organic Agriculture

1. Organic agricultural production is based on the principles defined in Article 4 of this law.
2. The methods of organic agriculture in the production and processing of agricultural food of vegetable origin, as well as in the storage of wild plants, shall comply with the following requirements:
 - 1) Maintenance and increase of soil fertility by means of optimum (favourable) crop rotation, organic fertilization and other natural means, acquisition of manure used for fertilization only from organic agricultural units, elimination of those chemical substances that not included in the catalogues of permitted or partially permitted chemical substances;
 - 2) In organic agriculture, only the use of permitted or partially permitted substances, including fertilizers, substances for improving soil quality, increasing fertility and protecting plants, as well as disinfectants, additives and components used in processing;
 - 3) In the fight against weeds, pests and diseases:
 - a. Selection of disease and pest-resistant types and use of favourable crop rotation,
 - b. Formation of buffer zones between units of organic and traditional agriculture,
 - c. Use of biological and technological methods to fight against pests;
 - 4) In organic plant cultivation, use of seeds obtained by organic production for at least one generation with annual or biennial crops or for at least two growing seasons with perennial crops;
 - 5) Gathering and storage of wild herbs and edible plants may be certified as organic if:
 - a. Substances forbidden in organic agriculture have not been used in the area for 3 years prior to the gathering (storage),
 - b. The harvesting does not distort the biodiversity and agro ecosystems of the area,

- c. The harvesting of the plants is organized in compliance with the requirements of legal acts that regulate the field and under the supervision of the certification body.
3. Organic agricultural methods in agricultural animal breeding, production, and the processing of food of animal origin shall comply with the following requirements:
 - 1) As a rule, organic livestock activity should form an inseparable part of the agricultural unit and be related to organic plant cultivating,
 - 2) All conditions required for grazing pastures, accommodation and care should satisfy organic agricultural methods,
 - 3) The authorized body defines the boundaries of free grazing pastures if those boundaries relate to the physiological state of the animals, adverse climatic conditions, if nursery accommodation fully provides for the well-being of the animals, or if there are considerations of preventing the spread of animal disease, localizing or eliminating outbreaks, or neutralizing the threat of disease transmission from animals to humans,
 - 4) Organic agriculture in the field of agricultural animal breeding should aim to graze animals in certified pastures, minimize stress to those areas, prevent disease, eliminate the use of chemical drugs (including antibiotics), and gradually reduce the feeding of animals with products of animal origin,
 - 5) Isolation of animals and extension of conversion period when there is the need for use of prohibited treatment in order to prevent spread of animal disease, localize and eliminate outbreaks, neutralize the threat of disease transmission from animals to humans, or reduce economic costs,
 - 6) Selection of animal breed should be made taking into consideration its adaptation to local conditions, vitality and resistance to the most widespread diseases, as well as the absence of specific diseases associated with the breed.
4. The authorized body stipulates requirements related to the management of agricultural herds, conversion period changes, food and feeding, livestock, slaughter and care.
5. The use of substances used in ordinary (traditional) agriculture, but not included in the catalogue of substances permitted or partially permitted in organic agriculture, is possible in cases of disease prevention, the spread of plant and animal quarantine cases, localization and elimination of outbreaks, neutralization of the threat of disease transmission from animals to humans, as well as if it is necessary for the economic entities to avoid considerable financial damage. In this case, the product may be sold as common food and cannot be marked as an organic agricultural product.
6. The organic agricultural conversion period can be changed – extended or reduced – according to the procedure established by RA government (depending on specific activities of the economic entities and environmental conditions).
7. The terms of organic certification are determined by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Article 9. The Marking and Labelling of Organic Agriculture Production

1. In the labelling and marking of organic agricultural production, including food labelling and marking, as well as in advertising, the term “organic” (equivalent to the markings “Ecological”, “Ecologically clean” and “Biological”) may be used only if:
 - 1) It is produced by the methods of organic agriculture and is certified,
 - 2) An imported product is accompanied by a conformity certification document, established by rules of organic agriculture.
2. Organic agricultural production circulating in the Republic of Armenia should be labelled with the appropriate marking and accompanied by a certificate. The Government of the Republic of Armenia authorizes the procedure for marking and labelling of organic agricultural products and for the conversion period, as well as the forms of the product conformity mark, the conformity certificate and the conformity certificate of organic agricultural production methods.

3. When economic entities are in a period of conversion from traditional to organic production, products may only be labelled: “conversion period organic production”. This labelling can only be allowed if the conversion period production certificate is available.
4. Organic agricultural production is subject to obligatory conformity certification.
5. Organic foodstuffs that are produced, processed, and packaged in the Republic of Armenia, other substances connected with them, and food additives should contain information established by the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Safety of Foodstuffs”, as well as information on the name or symbol of the certificating body.
6. The procedure for labelling organic foodstuffs that are produced, processed, and packaged in the Republic of Armenia is established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Article 10. The Import and Export of Organic Agricultural Products

1. Imported organic agricultural products should be accompanied by certificating documents from the exporting country’s authorized body, should be labelled and marked in conformity with the requirements established by this law, international treaties and other legal acts of the Republic of Armenia, or, if these are absent, in conformity with international standards and norms. The importer should keep the above-mentioned certificating documents for at least two years.
2. If, according to the RA Laws “On Plant Quarantine and Plant Protection” and “On Veterinary Science”, the imported agricultural foodstuff has been subjected to quarantine measures that are not compatible with the requirements established for agricultural foodstuffs, the import loses its status of organic agricultural foodstuff.
3. The body authorized to deal with imported organic agricultural foodstuffs has the following powers:
 - 1) To demand information on the substances, means and methods that have been used in the exporting country if the documents stipulated in Part 1 of this article are not available;
 - 2) To eliminate ignorance among consumers by demanding that organic agricultural foodstuffs, herbs and edible plants be labelled and marked according to the procedure defined by RA legislation.
4. Provisions 1 and 2 of this Article shall not apply to crates of organic agricultural foodstuff that are imported into the Republic of Armenia under the tax regimes of “Transit Transportation”, “Import into a Customs Warehouse” and “Import into a Customs Free Warehouse”, which are established by the Customs Code of the Republic of Armenia.
5. Organic agricultural production exported from the Republic of Armenia shall comply with the norms established by the importing country, or, if such norms are absent, in conformity with international standards and norms.

Chapter 4

State Support in the Field of Organic Agriculture

Article 11. State Support in the Field of Organic Agriculture

1. The main directions of state support in the field of organic agriculture are as follows:
 - 1) Assistance to introduce innovations and modern technology;
 - 2) Organization of business-forums, exhibitions, fairs, thus strengthening economic cooperation between countries and fostering the export of organic agricultural production;
 - 3) Improvement of agricultural production infrastructures;
 - 4) Personnel training;
 - 5) Financing of ‘target projects’;
 - 6) Support foreseen by other legal acts.

**Chapter 5
Final Provisions**

Article 12. Responsibility for the Infringement of the Requirements of This Law

Those who infringe the requirements of this law are liable according to the procedure established by Law.

Article 13. Entrance of the This Law into Force

This Law will be effective one year after its official publication.

SERZH SARGSYAN

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

May 5, 2008

Yerevan