

Use of spinosad at BIOSUISSE ORGANIC operations

Information note for BIOSUISSE ORGANIC (BSO) operations outside of Switzerland (last updated 01/2025)

Basis: [The Bio Suisse Standards, part V, Art. 4.2.7 Crop protection](#)

Introduction

Spinosad is an insecticide derived from natural soil bacteria. It can be used to control various pests in different crops. In direct contact, the freshly sprayed solution is very toxic to bees and other insects. For this reason, the use of spinosad in organic farming is always viewed critically. Application is only permitted when bees are not in flight in the evening or when the spray does not come into contact with flowering plants or plants with honeydew. This also includes the undergrowth of tall crops such as fruit trees. Greenhouse applications in permitted crops are possible at any time provided the greenhouse is closed and no pollinators are present (or pollinators are enclosed in their boxes at the time of application). Spinosad applications must be declared, meaning that the inspection bodies must transfer all applications to the BSO checklist as part of the annual inspection.

Spinosad can make a significant contribution to controlling some important pests. However, its use is subject to frequent criticism because of the risk it poses to bees and other beneficial insects, and it can leave residues in the crop. For this reason, Bio Suisse has decided to limit the use of spinosad as far as possible and only to approve it if it is indispensable, no alternatives are available and it does not concern leafy vegetables that can be eaten raw and are more sensitive to residues. For organic production in Switzerland, Bio Suisse assesses individually for each crop whether the use of spinosad is permissible. Potential risks to humans and the environment are weighed against the necessity and benefits of the application. Permitted applications are listed in the [Input List](#) (only in German/French).

Bud operations, meaning Bio Suisse operations in Switzerland, may only use spinosad in the crops listed there. Bio Suisse operations outside Switzerland (BIOSUISSE ORGANIC operations) must comply with the specific regulations set out in [Part V, Art. 4.2.7.1 e](#)) (see standards extract below). These are explained in detail in the following sections.

Changes since 1 January 2024

The use of spinosad in cultivation of field crops is generally prohibited at Bio Suisse operations in Switzerland. This takes into account the large-scale cultivation of these crops and the associated ecological impact of a possible use of spinosad. In addition, organic farming takes a holistic approach to crop protection, which is based primarily on preventing pest infestations and using natural regulatory mechanisms. Long-term experience in Switzerland shows that the use of spinosad is not essential in these crops. Since 1 January 2024, spinosad is also no longer permitted in cereals, pulses, oilseeds and sugar beet for BIOSUISSE ORGANIC operations.

Further restrictions on the use of spinosad at BIOSUISSE ORGANIC operations concern selected special crops. Therefore, the use of spinosad is not permitted on lamb's lettuce, other lettuces, rocket and all types of baby leaf lettuce. These crops are usually eaten raw and belong to the leafy vegetables. In the interest of health and ecology, certain quality losses are accepted by dispensing with spinosad. Experience from Switzerland shows that these crops can be grown economically without spinosad. For certain now restricted crops, the spinosad ban may mean that cultivation is not possible in the field, but in the greenhouse or under crop protection nets (e.g. protecting rocket from flea beetles). In the interest of consumers and in order to avoid unfair competition, the ban on spinosad for these crops does also apply abroad.

For questions from BIOSUISSE ORGANIC producers, the local organic advice centre is the first point of contact. If required, the competent inspection body can also be contacted.

See also [Part V, Chap. 4.2.7](#) **Crop protection e) Provisions for spinosad**

The following restrictions apply in order to ensure protection for pollinators: Application is only permitted when bees are not in flight in the evening or when the spray does not come into contact with flowering plants or plants with honeydew, or if no pollinators are present in an enclosed greenhouse. The use must be declared*

The following additional restrictions apply:

- No use in cereals, legumes, oilseeds and sugar beet
- No use in the following special crops:
 - Lamb's lettuce, other lettuces, rocket
 - All types of baby leaf lettuce

* The declaration obligation is fulfilled if the inspection body records the plant protection application in the BSO checklist as part of the annual inspection.