

Social responsibility in operations that are certified according to Bio Suisse standards

Information note for BIOSUISSE ORGANIC (BSO) operations outside of Switzerland (last updated 01/2025)
 Basis: [The Bio Suisse Standards, part V, section 3.3: Social responsibility](#)

General

Fulfilment of social responsibility towards employees is a core element of Bio Suisse principles. The dignity as well as the physical, psychological and social well-being of employees are a priority focus and must be protected. The standards are based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialised agency of the United Nations.

Requirements

On a transitional basis, compliance with **social responsibility** requirements ([part V, Articles 3.3.1-3.3.7](#)) will be reviewed in two different systems. Since 2023, social audits have gradually been incorporated directly into BIOSUISSE ORGANIC control inspections, and it is anticipated that these social audits will be rolled out across the world by 2029. The requirements applicable to BSO operations in countries that are already covered are described hereafter in the section *New system*, whilst those applicable in countries not yet covered are described in the section *Previous system*.

New system

Applies in 2025 to BSO operations in the following countries:

- Italy
- Spain

A Bio Suisse social audit is mandatory for BSO operations in the countries mentioned above. Depending upon the risk classification, the social audit is carried out annually or every two years. For the time being, there is no social audit requirement for farming operations with a maximum of three employees and for processing and trading operations with a maximum of five employees.

| Frequency of social audit | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Number of staff, permanent and temporary cultivation | 0-3 total | 4-15 total | >15 total |
| Number of staff, permanent and temporary processing and trade | 0-5 total | 6-50 total | >50 total |
| Low-risk countries as per amfori BSCI* >80 | No social audit | No social audit | Every two years |
| Medium-risk countries as per amfori BSCI* 60-80 | No social audit | Every two years | Annual |
| High-risk countries as per amfori BSCI* <60 | No social audit | Annual | Annual |

*Classification is based on the annually updated amfori BSCI Country Risk Classification

If a BSO operation has a valid certificate under a standard recognised by Bio Suisse, no Bio Suisse social audit will be required.

Standards recognised under the new system:

- Fairtrade Standard for Hired Labour (other Fairtrade standards are not recognised)
- Fair for Life
- FairWild
- For Life
- Naturland
- SA8000

In order to be eligible for recognition, the corresponding certificate must be valid at the time of the BSO inspection. Within the ambit of the BSO inspection the certificate must be issued to the inspection body together with the inspection report and the covering letter from the standards organisation as either hard copies or digital copies.

Previous system

Applies in 2025 to BSO operations in the following countries:

- All countries except Italy and Spain

Bio Suisse requires a social certificate/audit according to Bio Suisse Standards from farming operations in France, Morocco, Peru and Portugal that have more than four employees and produce vegetables, fruit or herbs. The same requirement applies to banana producers from all countries of origin, as well as to hazelnut producers from Turkey.

Farming operations in the following countries that produce the products listed must provide proof of social accountability certification/auditing accepted by Bio Suisse:

| List of products and countries | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Products | Country |
| Primary production (incl. packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation*) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fresh vegetables (except seedlings and products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) ■ Fresh fruit (incl. berries, citrus fruit and table grapes; except seedlings and products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) ■ Fresh herbs (except products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) | France, Morocco, Peru, Portugal |
| Primary production (incl. packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation*) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fresh bananas (except products that will undergo further processing in the country of origin) | All countries of origin |
| Primary production (incl. packaging or processing on an affiliated production operation) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hazelnuts | Turkey |

* Producer groups that have been certified by GLOBALG.A.P. are subject to GRASP audits in compliance with GLOBALG.A.P. regulations.

Bio Suisse accepts the following certifications and auditing programmes:

| List of accepted social certifications and auditing programmes | |
|---|--|
| Certification/auditing programmes | Comments |
| BSCI | |
| Fairtrade | |
| GLOBALG.A.P. GRASP | Not accepted for hazelnuts from Turkey |
| Naturland | |
| Rainforest Alliance | Only for hazelnuts from Turkey |
| SA8000 | |
| Sedex SMETA | |

Exceptions

- BSO operations with fewer than five employees are exempt from this requirement.
- For BSO operations where no GLOBALG.A.P. certification is possible, Bio Suisse may issue temporary derogations.
- Hazelnuts from Turkey: Bio Suisse can issue temporary derogations regarding the acceptance of social standards that do not fully comply with the core labour standards of the ILO.

Confirmation by self-declaration form

BSO operations in the previous system not subject to a requirement of mandatory external certification or auditing that employ more than 20 employees are obliged to complete and sign the [social responsibility self-declaration](#) form every three years and to submit it to the inspection body within the BSO inspection.

BSO operations that are able to present a valid certificate or a valid audit report (not older than 18 months) under any of the following standards do not need to make the Bio Suisse self-declaration:

- BSCI
- Control Union Fair Choice
- Fair for Life/For Life
- Fair Trade USA
- Fairtrade
- GLOBALG.A.P. GRASP
- IBD Fair Trade
- Naturland/Naturland Fair
- Rainforest Alliance
- Rapunzel Hand in Hand
- RSPO P&C 2018/RSPO ISH 2019 or corresponding follow-up standard
- SA8000
- Sedex SMETA
- Soil Association Ethical Trade

Contact

Bio Suisse, International Division: international@bio-suisse.ch; +41 61 204 66 44