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QAI TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM

The QAI Transitional Program provides certification to recognize and incentivize farmers to transition their fields from conventional to organic growing methods. Currently, less than 1 percent of U.S. farmland is organic and farmers are struggling to meet the growing demand for organic food. While organic products can fetch higher prices, it takes three years for a farm to transition from conventional to organic and typically farmers are not compensated for the initial costs of incrementally converting their land. While large farms can shoulder this cost, small and medium-sized farms often cannot afford this upfront investment and this transitional period becomes a barrier to becoming certified organic.

To ensure farms are progressing through the program, QAI uses unannounced audits and sampling and sets increasingly rigorous requirements for Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 of the program. The goal is that transitional farms become certified to organic standards in Year 3 and graduate out of the program.

Eligible Product Categories

The QAI Transitional program can certify operations from farm to fork. Eligible products include:

- ▶ Food and Beverage
- ▶ Dietary Supplements
- ▶ Textile Products

Benefits of Certification

The QAI Transitional program not only benefits the grower, processor or trader being certified, but also benefits the environment and the vitality of the global organic market.

Some benefits to farms and companies receiving certification include:

- ▶ Use of an on-package label if it meets 51 percent minimum content by weight (doesn't include water or salt)
- ▶ Distribution of premium pricing down from retailer to farmer
- ▶ Increased financial stability for farms during the transition period
- ▶ Increased education and understanding on how to attain organic certification

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CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Your QAI project manager guides you through the transitional certification process which involves five basic steps.

Step 1: Application

We ask you to provide details about your operation to help us understand the scope of your operation, the procedures you follow and the products that your company produces, processes or trades. At this stage, you should submit your signed contract, transitional compliance plan, self-assessment and affidavit of date of last application of prohibited substances.

Step 2: Inspection

If your application is approved by QAI, we conduct an on-site inspection of your operation to verify the information in your application and documentation. You may be able to use your current organic inspection rather than having an additional visit, if you are already organic certified.

Step 3: Technical Review

A QAI Reviewer examines the inspection report and if we identify deficiencies, we will notify you.

Step 4: Resolution and Notification

Applicants should submit corrective action responses. QAI will then review the corrective action responses, and approve them if they rectify the deficiencies identified during the inspection.

Step 5: Certification and Ongoing Compliance

Once you've successfully completed the process, you will either receive a Letter of Enrollment (if you are a producer and less than 1 year of transition has been completed) or a Certification (if you are a producer with at least 1 year of transition completed, or a handler). Organizations receiving the certificate, can start promoting their certified products.

To get started, contact us at transitional@qai-inc.com.

Quality Assurance International

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