

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
(DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE)

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1327
ANSWERED ON 02/08/2024

CERTIFICATION OF INDIAN ORGANIC PRODUCTS

1327. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE & INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the European Union (EU) audit findings reveal deficiencies in the certification process of Indian organic products for exports to the EU;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of measures being taken in this regard to overcome the same;
- (d) the challenges being faced in this regard; and
- (e) the proposed measures to be taken hereon to ensure promotion of Indian organic products?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SHRI JITIN PRASADA)

(a) & (b) India has equivalency with European Union (EU) for export of unprocessed organic products. Under this arrangement, peer evaluation is done by EU with trading partners periodically. EU audit team recognized that there is an overall structure in place with all the necessary elements for control of organic products and pointed out certain areas where improvements are required.

Observations were mainly related to organic certification processes such as risk assessment by Certification Bodies (CB); competence of staff including periodically witness/shadow audit of their works; verification of Internal Control System (ICS) of the Grower Groups; checks to prevent cross contamination; proactive inspection of fields, premises, equipment for any signs of use of unauthorized products; verification of maps provided by the ICS; transfer of full history of entire operator files when operator change certification bodies; appropriate procedures and instructions for sampling standing crops samples; appropriate sanction catalogue for sanctions of its operators etc.

(c) The following measures have been taken on the audit findings of the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audit:

- The NPOP guidelines 2014 are being revised bringing in more clarity in the processes. For simplification, a separate procedure manual has been developed.
- APEDA is revamping into a new organic Traceability system-Tracenet which will bring in the latest technology to strengthen the regulatory oversight of the NPOP.
- Regular advisories are being issued to the Certification Bodies on EU onsite audit observations and requirements for export to EU.

- Frequent stakeholders' consultations are being conducted.
- The renewal and surveillance audits for the financial year 2023 were completed within the stipulated deadline.
- During the regular audit, the implementation of the corrective action of EU observations is being verified.
- Based on the observation of the unannounced inspection, action is being taken on non-compliances and observations.
- As organic is a process certification, testing is carried out based on risk. As per EU requirement for having uniformity in sampling procedures, sampling protocol has been developed through National Referral Lab (NRL).
- Training and capacity building of the Evaluation Committee members and Certification Bodies were organized to strengthen the certification and audit process which brings in clarity and uniformity in audit processes.
- Training courses are being designed for internal inspectors of Grower Groups and Managers of the Internal Control System (ICS) of Grower Groups.
- The software modification for intimation of the irregularity, notification alerts of the EU and No Objection Certificate (NoC) module have been made and implemented on Trace net.

(d) Organic certification faces several challenges, including small and fragmented landholdings, thin distribution of production clusters, limited awareness on organic practices, Competence and quality Grower Group management and functioning & operations of few certification bodies.

(e) APEDA has been making continuous efforts for promoting export of organic products under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). The some of them are as below:

- Training and capacity building of stakeholders, interaction with stakeholders of different product categories, export promotion events such as trade fairs, buyer seller meets, etc. are being organized.
- Intensifying Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) which will simplify the process of exports. Negotiation with Australia and South Korea are at an advanced stage. Discussion with other countries/ Groups like Oman, ATIGA and Peru are being taken.
- A detailed study on the Indian organic market has been conducted to understand the market potential of organic products.
- A dedicated organic promotion portal to also include an organic e connect portal for linking buyers with organic growers/FPOs.
