

Status of national organic regulations

The organic industry has been experiencing rapid growth throughout the world, but nowhere more than in the expansion of government regulations. In fact, it has been reported that a total of 56 countries have now implemented, finalised or initiated the drafting of organic regulations.

According to a report on the status of national organic regulations, the Codex Alimentarius Commission Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labeling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods and the IFOAM Basic Standards provided the necessary blueprints to governments seeking to regulate the industry. However, it was the EU Council Regulation 2092/91, the first fully implemented regulation of a major importing region, that played a major role in influencing the content of the regulations that ensued.

In many countries the need to gain access to the European market has been more influential in stimulating regulations than the desire to protect

consumers in the home market. In some cases, draft regulations have been promulgated in countries with little organic production, while other countries with a more developed organic sector have refrained from starting the regulatory process.

The table below shows the current 'state of play'. Countries are listed according to three categories:

Fully implemented

The authority has approved certification bodies or carries out certification itself under the law.

Finalised, but not fully implemented

There is a law and detailed standards and rules have been finalised, but the authority has not yet approved

certification bodies or carried out certification under the law.

Drafting regulations

The standards and rules and/or enabling law are still in draft stage. This includes countries in the process of promulgating a first draft.

In reality the situation is more complex than the above categories imply. Countries may have a finalised enabling law without having developed the rules for implementation. In some cases the law has defined detailed standards, while in others it has only set out guidelines, leaving the establishment of standards and the system for approval of certification bodies left to the administration.

Other countries have a national standard that has been developed and finalised before the passage of any law.

The Taiwan government, for example, has implemented a regulatory system based on administrative measures rather than the law.

The scope of the laws and regulations also vary between the different countries. Australia has a fully implemented regulation, including a developed system for approval of certification bodies, but it only applies to exports. A domestic regulation is in the draft stage.

In a few countries the government has established a voluntary system, whereby compliance with the regulation lets operators use the government seal or fall within trade agreements established by the government. ■

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See overpage for contact details of government organisations responsible for national regulations.

Summary of the countries with national regulations

	Fully implemented	Finalised, but not fully implemented	In draft form
Europe	23	3	4
EU	15		
rest of Europe	8		
Asia & the Pacific	6	1	4
Americas & the Caribbean	2	4	3
Africa	1	1	2
Middle East	0	0	2
Total	32	9	15