



ORGANIC BEEKEEPING

Guidelines no. 36:

Rules for organic beekeeping

According to Ecocert Organic Standard (EOS)



I. Scope

EOS sets rules for organic beekeeping.

Bee hive products (honey, propolis) and plant products collected from beehives (pollen) may be certified as products from "organic farming".

Beeswax is not fully considered to be a product of agricultural origin, therefore may not be certified as a product from "organic farming". However beeswax must be supplied by organic production units in order to be suitable for use by organic beekeepers. Therefore an attestation with the following references "beeswax suitable for organic **farming**" or "produced from organic **beekeeping**" may be issued for beeswax supplied by organic production units.

II. Conversion

The conversion period to organic farming is a transitional phase from conventional farming to certified "organic farming".

Conversion starts when:

- ✓ All breeding requirements set in Chapter (E) of Title IV of EOS are fully met (beehive, feed, prophylaxis...)
- ✓ The operator has committed the organic operation to an organic control body.

Transition time for beehives lasts 12 months. During transition time, original beeswax shall be replaced by beeswax coming from organic beekeeping and beehive products shall be sold as conventional products only.

***NB:** Please refer to chapter III "Starting up and renewing bee colonies" for information on requirements with regards to the introduction of bees of non-organic origin into the apiary.*



III. Starting up and renewing bee colonies

A. General rules

Beehives, swarms on frame or standalone swarms shall all be supplied by organic production units, when starting up or renewing a bee colony.

B. Origin of non-organic bees

For the **renovation of apiaries**, 10 % per year of the queen bees and swarms may be replaced by non-organic queen bees and swarms in the organic production unit, provided that queen bees and swarms are placed in hives with combs or comb foundations coming from organic beekeeping production units. In this case, conversion period for apiaries does not apply.

C. Exceptional production rules

In the case of high bee mortality caused by health or catastrophic circumstances, Ecocert SA may authorize, only on a temporary basis, the renewal or reconstitution of the apiary with non-organic bees, when organic bee colonies are not available. In this case, conversion period for apiaries applies (12 months).

IV. Siting of the apiary

During production period (flowering time and when beehives are not dormant) : within 3 kilometre radius from the apiary site, nectar and pollen sources shall come **mainly** from organic crops, spontaneous vegetation or crops, which have been treated through low environmental impact methods (meadow, high humidity areas, forests...).

Honey types produced in areas where apiary siting is mainly located near conventional crops do not qualify for organic certification.

The siting of the apiaries shall maintain enough distance from any sources which could possibly lead to contamination of beehive products (urban centers, motorways, industrial areas, waste dumps, waste incinerators, ...) .



V. Housing conditions

A. Beehive materials

The hives must be made of natural materials posing no risk of contamination to the environment or the bee products.

With the exception of substances authorized for disease prevention and veterinary care (please refer to chapter VII), only natural materials (e.g. propolis, wax and plant oils - NB: mineral oils are not permitted) may be used for wood protection purpose in beehives.

B. Bees handling

Mutilation such as wing clipping of queen bees is strictly prohibited.

C. Wax origin

<u>Regular cases:</u> only wax coming from organic production units may be used		<u>Exceptional cases</u> when "organically produced wax" is unavailable: uncontaminated "non organic" wax extracted by capping may be used	
New foundations		New beehives	
For foundation replacement during conversion period		During conversion period	

VI. Feed

A. General rules

At the end of the production season, hives must be left with sufficient reserves of pollen and honey to ensure that bees can survive the winter.



B. Specifics

The **"artificial" feeding** of colonies is only permitted under specific circumstances:

- with organic honey, organic sugar or sugar syrup
- where survival of the hives is endangered due to extreme climatic conditions

C. Exceptional circumstances

In case of long lasting exceptional weather conditions or catastrophic circumstances, which hamper the nectar or honeydew production, bee-feeding may be authorized **by derogation issued by Ecocert SA** on a temporary basis. The supplemental feeding of bees will consist exclusively of organic honey, organic sugar or organic sugar syrup.

VII. Disease prevention and veterinary treatment

A. Hygiene measures

Thermal treatments such as steam and direct flame are permitted for beehive disinfection.

For the purpose of cleaning and disinfection of frames, hives and combs, sodium hydroxide may be used.

In order to protect frames, beehives and foundations against pest, rodenticides may be used (only in traps) as well as products listed in Annex II of EOS.

B. Veterinary treatments

When preventive measures have proved to be inefficient, sick or infested colonies must be treated immediately and may be required to be placed in isolation beehives.

In case of *Varroa destructor* infestation, male brood may be destroyed. Formic, lactic, acetic and oxalic acids as well as menthol, thymol, eucalyptus and camphor may also be used.



When bees are treated with chemically synthesised allopathic products, the designated bee colonies should be placed in isolation beehives during treatment. Moreover, all was should be replaced with wax produced by organic units. The colonies should also undergo a new 12-month conversion period.

VIII. Honey harvest

Using means such as destroying bees in the process of harvesting honey is forbidden.

Chemically synthesised repellents are also forbidden when extracting honey. However techniques such as using blower, bee escape and brushes are permitted.

Extracting honey from brood frames is not permitted.

IX. Records

A. Apiary register

Organic beekeepers must be able to provide the control body with a register where the following details are recorded:

- A detailed map including beehive locations and foraging areas and when applicable honey and/or pollen analysis results to proof the compliance of foraging areas.
- About feeding: feed type, dates, quantities and identification marks of the designated beehives.
- About veterinary treatments: product type, main ingredients, diagnostic, posology, prescription length and permissible deadline.
- Beehive identification, location, migration records
- Super removal dates

B. Extraction records

Honey extractions (process and dates) and harvested quantities must also be recorded.



X. Definitions

Animal production : Products from farm animals or domesticated animals (including insects)

Holding:

Means all the production units operated under a single management for the purpose of producing agricultural products.

Production Unit:

Means all assets to be used for a production sector such as production premises, land parcels, pasturages, open air areas, livestock buildings, fish ponds, containment systems for seaweed or aquaculture animals, shore or seabed concessions, the premises for the storage of crops, crop products, seaweed products, animal products, raw materials and any other input relevant for this specific production sector.

Veterinary treatment:

Means all courses of a curative or preventive treatment against one occurrence of a specific disease.

XI. References in EOS

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| IV.(E).1 | - Origin of bees |
| IV.(E).2.1 | - Siting of the productive apiaries |
| IV.(E).4 | - Feeding |
| IV.(E).5 | - Disease prevention and veterinary treatments |
| IV.(E).3 | - Husbandry management practices and identification |
| IV.(E).2.3 | - Characteristics of hives and materials used in beekeeping |

The above documents are available upon request to ECOCERT or may be downloaded from our website www.ecocert.com

