**ANDHRA PRADESH STATE ORGANIC PRODUCTS CERTIFICATION AUTHORITY (APSOPCA), GUNTUR-522034.**

## Certification Procedure as per 4.2 Version of IndG.A.P. which Is Benchmarked with 5.2 Version of GlobalG.A.P

## Application for certification

* 1. Any farmer/producer/organization/producer group who is a legal entity can apply for certification to an approved CB.
	2. The application shall be made before harvesting of the crops.
	3. All relevant information concerning farmer/producers applying for certification shall be recorded.
	4. The prospective applicant shall along with the application, pay all applicable fees, declare any judicial proceedings relating to their operations/product, any proceedings by any regulatory body or suspension/cancellation/withdrawal of any certification/ approvals under any regulations or otherwise.

## Application review

* 1. The APSOPCA shall review all applications for adequacy and deficiencies observed, if any, shall be informed to applicant within seven days (07) of receipt of application. Review of applications can be done by the Evaluator.
	2. Antecedents of applications shall be verified. If punished under the law because of violation of terms and conditions/misuse of certification mark, it will not be entertained during the period of punishment for at least one year from the date of punishment after giving a due notice of 15 days.

## Certification Agreement

1. Signed between the producer/producer group and the APSOPCA. The following information is required for each producer
	1. Name of producer/farmer to be certified,
	2. Annual Area under production,
	3. Farm produce to be covered,
	4. First harvest or further harvest details/timings.
2. Sign acceptance of the “IndG.A.P. Sublicense and Certification Agreement” with the APSOPCA and hand over a copy to the producer and he/she shall comply with the agreements signed and with the requirements defined by APOSPCA as per the latest versions.

## Registration

The applications found to be complete and supported with all documents along with fee receipt shall be accepted and registered with a Unique Identification Number (UIN), acknowledged and records maintained.

## Evaluation

## Option 1 - Individual producer without QMS

* 1. The Applicant may be individual producer or company with single or multiple production sites that are not separate legal entities and operated without the implementation of a QMS.
	2. **Self-assessment:** Be carried out annually before the initial or surveillance inspections by the producer against complete checklist.

## External inspection:

The APSOPCA shall conduct annual inspections (announced and unannounced) carried out by the inspector against the checklist of applicable scope and sub-scope. The inspection shall cover:

* + - 1. All accepted products and production processes
			2. All registered production sites
			3. Each registered product handling unit
			4. Where relevant, the administrative sites

## Option 2 and Option 1 multisite with QMS

1. The groups and individuals with multiple sites implementing QMS. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that all producers and production sites under the certification scope comply with the certification requirements at all times.
2. The APSOPCA does not inspect all producers or production sites, but just a sample. Thus, APSOPCA not only responsible to determine the compliance of each producer or production site (this responsibility rests with the applicant).
3. **Internal assessment:** The applicant shall undertake annual internal assessments of all producers and/or production sites, covering all products and processes under the certification scope to verify and ensure compliance with the certification requirements.
4. **External Quality Management System (QMS) audit**: The audit (announced and unannounced) shall be carried out by APSOPCA auditor based on the QMS checklist.
5. **External inspection**: The APSOPCA shall inspect the selected producer members or production sites against the complete checklist (Critical, Major and Minor) of the applicable scope(s) and sub-scope(s) and shall cover all accepted products, production processes and where relevant, the product handling units and administrative sites.

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## Non-Compliance and Non-Conformance

All non-conformances shall be closed and compliance to be recorded before the certification. The status open non-conformance cannot be given to producer group members products.

1. **Non-compliance:** A Critical or Major in the IndG.A.P. checklist is not fulfilled according to the compliance criterion.
2. **Non-conformance:** A IndG.A.P. rule that is necessary for obtaining the certificate is infringed.
3. **Contractual non-conformances:** Breach of any of the agreements signed in the contract between the APSOPCA and the producer related to IndG.A.P. issues.

## Sanctions

1. If non-conformance is detected, the APSOPCA shall apply a sanction (warning, suspension, or cancellation). It stays with the cycle, if the non- conformance is not closed.
2. Producers cannot change the CB from the existing APSOPCA until the non- conformance is closed.
3. If the APSOPCA or the grower group has issued sanction is entitled to lift it, provided there is sufficient and timely evidence of corrective action.

## Notification and Appeals

1. The producer may appeal to APSOPCA against the non-conformances rose within 30 days in writing by citing the reasons.
2. The APSOPCA will notify and register the producer appeal and forward the appeal to the appeal committee.
3. If the non-conformances are not resolved within the permitted period, the sanction will be escalated.

## Grant of Certification

The APSOPCA shall grant certification after ensuring:

1. Complete compliance to the Certification Criteria
2. Certification scheme requirements
3. Satisfactory resolution of nonconformities

## IndG.A.P. Certificate

1. On grant of certification, the APSOPCA shall issue a Certificate indicating the Unique identification number (UIN), names of the produce certified, the certification criteria, effective date, validity date and the name and address of the producer/organization site.
2. The APSOPCA shall issue the IndG.A.P. certificate to the applicant legal entity after all NCs have been resolved.
3. The certification cycle is 12 months subject to any sanctions and extensions in accordance with the scope described.

## Labeling requirements

1. One of the objectives of this IndG.A.P. scheme is to provide information to the stakeholders - secondary processors, aggregators, buyers and retailers about the status of the produce being adhering to IndG.A.P.
2. The off product material such as invoices, letter head, promotional materials and end product packets are labeled with the Certification Mark/Logo of ‘IndG.A.P.’ Any additional information that adds value and apprises customer will be encouraged, provided it is not inaccurate or misleading.

**Maintenance of IndG.A.P. Certification**

a. The registration of the producer and the proposed products for the relevant scopes shall be confirmed with APSOPCA annually before the expiry date

b. The inspector shall complete the entire checklist and the verification process annually.

## Extension/Reduction of Certificate validity

1. If there is a valid reason, the validity may be extended up to 4 months only in addition to 12 months.
2. The producer cannot change the APSOPCA in the cycle subsequent to the one for which the extension was granted.
3. The producer shall be re-inspected during that extension period.
4. The validity of certificate may be reduced/shortened if the client has not applied for renewal and there is a risk of certificate being used for selling the produce from more than one harvest and growing season.

## Surveillance Evaluation

1. Surveillance evaluations of the certified sites shall be carried out at least once a year, ensuring that the gap between two surveillance evaluations does not exceed one year.

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1. The full checklist and verification process shall be completed by the inspector annually, so that operations and their controls are witnessed during the evaluation.
2. Surveillance planning must keep in view the crop maturity timings to coincide visit with harvest time as for as possible. There must be at least one produce registered in the field or in the storage.
3. The APSOPA may increase the frequency of surveillances with duly recorded justification for reasons like investigation of complaints, any doubts about continuing adherence to standards prescribed etc.

**Termination or withdrawal of certification**

Clents who wish to withdraw / terminate from Certification shall inform to the APSOPCA in writing duly explaining the reasons for withdrawal and also return the certification document if necessary.

If the Client violates any of the clauses under APSOPCA Rules and Regulations or fails to comply with instructions / orders issued by APSOPCA from time to time and persistent non-compliances and failure to improve, the operator is liable for punishment for a specific period or permanently terminated from Certification process.

APSOPCA ensures that the termination or withdrawal of certification is clearly communicated to the client and clearly specifies in the certificates, public information and authorization for use of mark etc.,

## Suspension of certification

1. The APSOPCA shall issue due notice of at least one week for suspension of certification to the unit. In case of serious failures, the notice may not be required.
2. During the period of suspension, the producer shall be prevented from using the logo/trademark, License/certificate or any other type of document that has any relation to certification.
3. The APSOPCA shall revoke suspension only when corrective actions have been taken and verified by the APSOPCA.
4. Suspension shall not exceed a period of six months. If the cause of the Suspension is not resolved within the time period set, the certification shall be cancelled.

## Cancellation of certification

1. A Cancellation shall be issued when:
	1. A producer cannot show sufficient corrective action after Suspension has been issued and six months have elapsed,
	2. A nonconformity in one scope leads to doubt about the integrity of the produce,
	3. Major contractual nonconformities are detected.
	4. Certified client contravenes the terms and conditions of certification and provisions of certification scheme like suspension of certificate, inadequate corrective actions, lack of compliance to criteria for Certification etc.
2. A Cancellation of the contract will result in the total prohibition of the use of the logo/trademark, License/certificate.
3. ASPOCPA shall cancel the certification at the request of the certified client, if the operation(s) in the certified client’s premises can no longer be carried due to reasons of natural calamities such as flood, fire, earthquake etc., or closure of operations etc.

## Recertification

1. The certificate shall be renewed at the end of every year
2. The APSOPCA shall inform the client about recertification at least four months prior to expiry of certificate validity period.
3. The certified farmer/producer shall apply for recertification in the prescribed format along with fee at least 3 months prior to expiry of the certification.
4. Based on the satisfactory performance of the certified client the recertification shall be done. If not satisfy, the recertification shall be withheld by APSOPCA with clear reasons and give time for effective corrective actions.
5. If corrective action against non-conformance detected is not taken within one month it will lead to suspension of client and if the non-conformance is not closed within 3 months cancellation of certificate shall happen.

## Extension of scope

1. Extension of scope of certificate for inclusion of additional produce, varieties under the same certificate shall be done after ascertaining that the certified client has required resources and technical skills for the new produce/variety are available. It is possible to add a new product to an already existing certificate during an unannounced inspection or during a surveillance inspection and sampling, provided all applicable control points for this product are verified.
2. The extension of scope shall be clearly mentioned in the certificate document along with its date of inclusion for avoiding any misrepresentation or misinterpretation. Irrespective of the date of inclusion, the validity of the Certificate shall remain unchanged.
3. In case of option-2, the APSOPCA can add up to 10% producer members or sites or area of production whichever is less to the existing certificate without doing any additional inspections.