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## Implementation of Malaysian organic certification scheme revised

*A year after the Malaysian Organic Certification Scheme was announced in August 2002, many things have changed.*

*Below is an update.*

In August last year the Malaysian Department of Agriculture (DOA) revealed the government certification programme (reported in TOS September 2002, issue no. 17). Many changes to the scheme have taken place, and on 20 July, 2003, these developments were presented to the public at a seminar organised by the Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia (CETDEM), a Malaysian NGO, held in Kuala Lumpur.

### Restructuring of the Malaysian certification scheme

At the DOA seminar in 2002, the DOA announced an innovative public-private partnership arrangement for the implementation of the Malaysian government organic certification scheme. The then proposed public-private partnership arrangement with Organic Alliance Malaysia (OAM), the private sector organic association, had the following key components.

- A joint Steering Committee (SC) consisting of government bodies and private sector nominees. Its purpose was to oversee policy development

and programme implementation, including approval of standards and hearing appeals and complaints.

- A joint Certification Committee (CC) consisting of government bodies and private sector nominees.
- An arrangement where the DOA will handle small and poor operators based on agreed criteria at a nominal fee and OAM will handle medium size and more commercial operators, who are thought to be able to afford the cost of private inspection.

A little less than a year later, this arrangement is now void. Acceding to requests for greater support, the DOA announced it would now offer certification to all operators (primary production) at a nominal fee. Whilst private sector representatives are still invited to sit as Steering Committee members, they are now excluded from the Certification Committee.

The programme scheduled for implementation in January 2003 is now due to start this month (September 2003). The name of the scheme has been changed to Skim Organik Malaysia (SOM) – Malaysian Organic