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Indian regulations for organic products

In March 2000, the Government of India, through the Department of Commerce in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, launched the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). A Steering Committee, the apex advisory body appointed by the MoC, assisted the government in bringing out the National Standards for Organic Products and the logo 'India Organic'. To ensure the implementation of NPOP the Steering Committee formulated the National Accreditation Policy and Programme (NAPP). The Accreditation Regulations followed in May 2001.

The Accreditation Regulations make it mandatory that all certification bodies, whether already engaged or proposing to engage in inspection and certification of organic crops and products, shall be accredited by an Accreditation Agency. Foreign certification bodies operating in the country must also be accredited.

The appointed Accreditation Agencies are the Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Coffee Board, Tea Board and Spices Board. Only APEDA has invited applications for accreditation. An appointed Evaluation Agency is to ascertain the programmes and credentials of the implementing agencies and submit its re-

port to the Accreditation Agency. According to information from APEDA, to avoid duplication a common Evaluation Agency and Committee for Accreditation will be formed with experts and members drawn from other Accreditation Agencies.

The Regulations also make a provision for export, import and local trade of organic products. At present, though, only the export of organic products comes under the government regulation, while imports and local trade do not. Accordingly, on 11 June 2001, a notification from the Director General of Foreign Trade was issued to regulate the exportation of organic products. The notification required that an agricultural product could only be exported as an 'Organic Product' if it was certified by a certification body duly accredited by APEDA as one of the accreditation agencies. Earlier the deadline for this to take effect was 1 July, 2001. However, a second Public Notice, sent out on 2 July 2001, extended this deadline to 1 October 2001.

The categories of products covered under accreditation are organic crop production, organic animal production, organic processing operations, wild products and forestry.

The National Standards for Organic Products include production

■ The notification requires that an agricultural product can only be exported as an 'Organic Product' if it is certified by an accredited certification body.