

# New JAS law from March

## A must-read for those interested in the Japanese market

The Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) law was revised last June and the new law will be implemented from March 1. This dramatically affects not only the JAS Organic Standard but also accredited certifiers and their clients (who could be you).

The main change to JAS is that accreditation of existing certifiers under the old JAS law will be cancelled on February 28. Only certifiers who have applied for accreditation under the new law can continue certification work from March 1.

At the time of writing, the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries (MAFF) said only a couple of certifiers around the world had been accredited under the new law to continue certification work. There are 93 JAS accredited certifiers (69 in Japan, 24 in other countries) under the old JAS law.

Australian Certified Organic (ACO) has been successfully accredited under the new JAS law. Moreover, it is the first certifier to become JAS accredited outside Japan and the only one in Australia.

Here are some answers to common questions about changes in JAS certification.

### Q: What happens to my labels?

**A:** Anyone accredited under BFA JAS may continue their JAS operation. At their next annual audit, their JAS operation will simply change to ACO JAS. If you still have old JAS labels, you have a three-year transition period before needing to use the new ACO JAS logo.

### Q: I am with another certification body which is no longer a JAS accredited certifier. What should I do?

**A:** MAFF sent an official letter to all 93 certifiers advising their clients to become JAS accredited certifiers under the new JAS law as soon as possible. A transition period of three years is provided to transfer your certifier but during the three years, clients of the certifier cannot add any new products to their JAS certification.

### Q: I plan to apply for JAS certification. What is the process and cost?

**A:** The new JAS law requires applicants to attend JAS training held by ACO before

becoming certified. An application form and other relevant documents need to be filled out. Because of its unique system, you may not understand some terminology and content of JAS.

To resolve such problems before you start handling JAS products, it is good to attend the training course to get a grasp of the system. If you are an ACO client, the fees are: application fee \$350; JAS training fee \$195; audit fee \$270 plus travel fee (depends on the area you are in); and certification fee \$210. If you are not an ACO client, please contact the office for.

### Q: How often will JAS training be held?

**A:** ACO will hold JAS training courses around Australia as often as it can. Because all applicants must attend the training before they become certified, ACO understands the importance of running the training often. But due to costs and other factors, frequency will depend on client demand. If you plan to apply for JAS, do not hold off until the crucial moment. Please contact the office as soon as possible.

### Q: I am JAS certified with BFA. Will anything change?

**A:** Remember your JAS operation can continue. Because of some changes to the law and clarification of grey areas, you may be asked for additional documents or receive Corrective Action Requests (CARs) regarding JAS at your annual audit.

Since the new JAS law is stricter and clearer, if you do not respond to those CARs within the given period, it may lead to suspension of your operation. Remember, the best way to sort out your problem is to always seek the advice of the office if you have any trouble understanding the system or have questions.

### Q: What about equivalency?

**A:** Yes, the good news is that the equivalency system will still be in place. This means that if you are currently certified with ACO or another Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) accredited certifier and wish to export to Japan, as long as the importer in Japan is JAS certified and willing to affix the

JAS logo in Japan, you do not require JAS certification. In this case, you may export your currently ACO or AQIS accredited certifier's certified product to Japan.

### Q: What about a wholesaler wishing to export to Japan?

**A:** If you are a wholesaler and simply buy JAS certified product to export to a buyer in Japan, you do not require JAS certification. If you wish to have a JAS logo and certification number of your own however, you could apply as a production process management director (PPMD).

To apply under this category, you need to have a particular processor under your certification and must attend the processors' audit. For example, if you wish to label product with your own JAS logo, for instance, orange juice from Acme juice company, you can apply as a PPMD of Acme juice company. Audits will be held at Acme juice company annually which you need to attend. A certificate will be issued to you, not the processor.

### Q: Can JAS recognise ingredients certified under the United States Department of Agriculture NOP or IFOAM systems?

**A:** No. The equivalency between MAFF and AQIS allows only certified products through an AQIS accredited certifier to be used as ingredients.

If you are a processor and intend to use ingredients from overseas, make sure they are certified under the JAS or AQIS certification system. As you already know or are gaining some idea, the JAS system can be complicated and may require you to think differently from other certification systems. ACO staff are more than happy to help you achieve your JAS certification.

Contact: ACO; email <info@aco.net.au>

