

## Guideline No. P2/2016

### Pacific Organic Standard(POS) Above Ground Crop Production

#### 1. Purpose

This guideline provides clarification on permitted practices with regard to above ground production under the Pacific Organic Standard.

#### 2. Scope

This guidance applies to all POETCom Approved Certification Partners (ACPs) and Registered Participatory Guarantee Systems (RPGS).

#### 3. Background

Queries have been made as to compliance of above ground crop production systems under the POS including hydroponic, containers, raised beds, rooftop gardening.

POS regulations for crop production are developed from:

##### IFOAM Norms:

**4.4.10** *The production of terrestrial plants shall be soil-based. The production of such crops in hydroponic systems is prohibited. "Soil-based" means that apart from the propagation or seedling stages, a plant must spend its life in the soil. For herbs, flowers and ornamentals in pots that are sold directly to the final consumer, the CB can allow production on permitted growing media.*

and

##### Codex Alimentarius CAC/GL 32 :

**2.1** *Soil fertility is maintained and enhanced by a system which optimises soil biological activity and the physical and mineral nature of the soil as the means to provide a balanced nutrient supply for plant and animal life as well as to conserve soil resources.*

The POS states 4.4 **Soil Fertility and Fertilisation**

#### **General principle**

Organic farming includes returning microbial, plant or animal material to the soil to increase or at least maintain soil fertility and biological activity. The need to maintain optimal levels of fertility to strengthen the health of plants and enhance their resistance to pests and disease is well recognised.

The guideline is issued in the context of lack of arable land for crop production in some Pacific islands, the growing needs in organic nursery's and in urban gardening for food security.

#### 4. Guidelines

- a. **Hydroponic crops** without living organic matter as substrate, even with organic liquids, is not permitted.
- b. Crops grown in **raised-beds, containers or Roof-top farming** must comply with all requirements of the POS. In addition Organic crops are grown on living soil regularly<sup>1</sup> enriched with organic matter using at least compost<sup>2</sup> and thick non-synthetic mulch.

Directly bringing nutrients to the crop in bypassing the work of macro & microorganisms is not permitted.

Materials used for containers or raised bed construction must comply with requirements of the POS.

- c. **Soilless production of sprouts** is allowed as per the following:

##### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Sprouts are grown without land in clean water.

##### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The use of naturally sourced spring or rainwater is preferable to mains water.

##### **STANDARDS**

1. Organically certified sprouts must be produced only from organically certified seeds.
2. The production process must give due consideration to the potential effects of by-product effluent and other waste products to the manufacturing surrounds.
3. Water used in production must be at least of World Health Organisation (WHO) standard for (potable) drinking water.
4. No growth promoting, fungicide or other prohibited additives may be mixed with sprout water.
5. The growing medium must be hygienic, non-permeable and able to be cleaned effectively using organically approved methods. Cleaning methods must in no way pose a contamination risk to sprout production.

#### 5. References

CODEX Alimentarius

IFOAM Norms (2014)

Pacific Organic Standard (2008)

National Association of Sustainable Agriculture Organic Standard (2012)

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<sup>1</sup> Regularly: Non perennial plants, during planting phase and during each crop renewal. Perennials, during the planting phase, then at least twice a year.

<sup>2</sup> Compost must be compliant with the POS and not be heated after maturing.