

# General guidance for COI / TC applications

## (for organic products, not including textiles)

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If you plan to apply for any type of COI/TC (or NCOI/NTC) please read the following instructions carefully.

Should there be any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or our colleagues at your local office of CERES.

#### COI Department of CERES Germany

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Office hours: Monday – Friday from 9am – 4pm

## 1) Abbreviations

<b>COI/TC</b>	COI = <b>Certificate Of Inspection</b> ; official term used by the EU TC = <b>Transaction Certificate</b> ; common term used internationally Both terms refer to a certificate issued for a specific sale of organic products and are often used synonymously.
<b>NCOI/NTC</b>	NCOI = <b>National Certificate Of Inspection</b> // NTC = <b>National Transaction Certificate</b> COI/TC for a national sale between two operators within the same country
<b>EU-COI</b>	Official COI for organic <u>imports into the EU, EEA (European Economic Area), CH (Switzerland) or NI (Northern Ireland)</u> . It is <u>mandatory</u> for organic imports into these countries and issued via the EU's online platform TRACES.
<b>TRACES</b>	<b>TR</b> Ad <b>E</b> <b>C</b> ontrol and <b>E</b> xpert <b>S</b> ystem = official traceability system for imports into the EU
<b>GB-COI</b>	Official COI for organic <u>imports into GB</u> (Great Britain, NOT including Northern Ireland). It is paper-based and <u>mandatory</u> for organic imports into GB.
<b>NOP-IC</b>	<b>NOP</b> Import <b>C</b> ertificate (special type of TC, mandatory for organic imports into the USA)
<b>OID</b>	<b>O</b> rganic <b>I</b> ntegrity <b>D</b> atabase (of the USDA)
<b>ETD</b>	<b>E</b> stimated <b>T</b> ime of <b>D</b> eparture, i.e. the estimated day when the product is going to leave the country of export
<b>ETA</b>	<b>E</b> stimated <b>T</b> ime of <b>A</b> rrival, i.e. the estimated day when the goods are going to reach the import destination
<b>BL // AWB</b>	<b>B</b> ill of <b>L</b> ading // <b>A</b> ir <b>W</b> aybill
<b>CMR</b>	<b>C</b> onvention <b>R</b> elative au <b>C</b> ontrat de <b>T</b> ransport <b>I</b> nternational de <b>M</b> archandises par <b>R</b> oute = Official document for international road transport

## 2) When to apply for a COI/TC (or NCOI/NTC)

### a. EU-COIs, GB-COIs and NOP-ICs

**Official EU-COIs, GB-COIs and NOP-ICs must be issued before the goods leave the country of export. EU-COIs are mandatory for imports of organic products into the EU, EEA, CH or NI. GB-COIs are mandatory for imports of organic products into GB. NOP-ICs are mandatory for imports of organic products into the USA.**

This means that once the goods have left the country of export it is no longer permitted to issue any EU-COI, GB-COI or NOP-IC for this shipment and it will be impossible to import these goods as organic into the EU, EEA, CH, NI, GB or the USA. **We can only issue the EU-/GB-COI or NOP-IC, if we receive the application as well as the complete and correct documentation in time before the shipment.**

**Hence, it is crucial that applications for EU-COIs, GB-COIs and NOP-ICs are made well in advance, with enough time for us to check the documents, clarify any potential doubts and issue the COI / IC before the goods leave the country of export. This is especially important for first time applications because for the first COI / IC it usually takes a bit longer to clarify all important aspects. Please make sure that the goods do not leave the country of export before the COI / IC is issued.**

Applications sent directly to CERES Germany ([admin@ceres-cert.de](mailto:admin@ceres-cert.de)) for EU-COIs, GB-COIs or NOP-ICs should ideally be received within the following time frames:

- for vessel and train shipments: 6 – 10 working days (not including weekends and national holidays) before the goods are planned to leave the country of export.

- for airfreight and truck transports: 2 – 5 working days (not including weekends and national holidays) before the goods are planned to leave the country of export.

Some applications are handled or prepared at our local offices and thus the application should be forwarded to these offices rather than the COI/TC department of CERES Germany and different deadlines may apply. If in doubt, please check with your local office.

**Please consider our regular handling times and in case an application for an EU-COI, GB-COI or NOP-IC cannot be sent with enough time in advance, kindly consider our EXPRESS service option for shorter handling times.** (For handling times of CERES Germany ([admin@ceres-cert.de](mailto:admin@ceres-cert.de)), see section [6\) Handling times, service options and prices](#); For handling times of staff at local offices, please check with the respective office directly).

We are aware that the final version of commercial invoices (issued by the exporter to their buyer) and international transport documents (for the shipment from the country of export to the country of import) cannot always be issued in time before the shipment. Consequently, **we also accept proforma, draft and other preliminary versions of these documents for applications of EU-COIs, GB-COIs and NOP-ICs. If it is impossible to obtain a DRAFT BL/AWB/CMR or Booking confirmation in time, we even issue the EU-COI, GB-COI or NOP-IC without this document. Similarly, in case there is no proforma invoice available, the application may be sent without this document.**

Naturally, the final version of commercial invoices and transport documents must be provided to CERES as soon as possible. For EU-COIs, the EU regulations determines that the shipment details shall be updated within 10 days after the issue date of the COI and in any case before the COI is endorsed by the competent authority within the EU.

For NOP-ICs we will not provide the PDF of the NOP-IC until all pending original documents are provided to us.

**Please carefully check our [brief info files about EU-COIs and TRACES \(No. 3-2-8-1\), GB-COIs \(No. 3-2-8-3\) and NOP Import Certificates \(No 3-2-10-6\) on our website under Documents > BIO > COI / TC where we explain further important rules and requirements regarding EU-COIs, GB-COIs and NOP-ICs.](#)**

In addition, **the most essential particularities of EU-/GB-COIs and NOP-ICs are also included in the annex of the corresponding application forms**, to make them conveniently available for you.

### **b. Other types of COIs/TCs** **(that are NOT for imports into the EU, EEA, CH, NI or GB)**

**For all other types of COIs/TCs (including NCOIs/NTCs) we only accept final versions of all documents (i.e., originals or copies thereof), seeing as it is not necessary to issue these before the shipment.**

For most countries (other than EU, EEA, CH, NI, GB and USA) COIs/TCs are not mandatory for organic imports. There are some exceptions, however. Information about the individual import rules for organic products of each country should be researched by the importer before the shipment.

Nevertheless, it is highly recommendable to obtain a COI/TC (or NCOI/NTC) to simplify later checks of sales as well as quantity flow and generally improve traceability. Also, many importers expect a COI/TC as part of the export documentation.

This means that usually applications for these types of COIs/TCs are sent shortly after the shipment, while the goods are under way to their destination. There is no specific time frame for these applications. However, **please be aware of our general handling times.** (See section [6\) Handling times, service options and prices](#))

### 3) Choosing the correct application form

You can always find the **latest versions of all application forms on our [website \(under Documents > BIO > COI / TC\)](#).**

There are 5 different application forms for the different COI types:

- **EU-COI (forms 5-2-1-1 & 5-2-1-1-1)**  
i.e. for exports of organic goods **from third countries to the EU, EEA (European Economic Area), CH (Switzerland) or NI (Northern Ireland)**  
>> Clients from Egypt use form 5-2-1-1-1 (\_EN\_EG-EU-COI-Application\_F)  
>> Clients from all other third countries use form 5-2-1-1 (\_EN\_EU-COI-Application\_F)
- **GB-COI (forms 5-2-1-5 & 5-2-1-5-1)**  
i.e. for exports of organic goods **to GB (Great Britain, not including Northern Ireland)**  
>> Clients from Egypt use form 5-2-1-5-1 (\_EN\_EG-GB-COI Application\_F)  
>> Clients from all other countries use form 5-2-1-5 (\_EN\_GB-COI Application\_F)
- **NOP-IC (form 5-2-1-4 & 5-2-1-4-1)**  
i.e. for exports of organic goods **to the USA**  
>> Clients from Egypt use form 5-2-1-4-1 (\_EN\_EG-NOP-IC Application\_F)  
>> Clients from all other countries use form 5-2-1-4 (\_EN\_NOP-IC Application\_F)
- **International sale to other countries (forms 5-2-1-2 & 5-2-1-2-1)**  
i.e. for **all international sales that are not imports into the EU, EEA, CH, NI or GB** (including all sales between any two countries outside of the EU, EEA, CH, NI or GB as well as sales between two countries within EU/EEA, CH or NI)  
>> Clients from Egypt use form 5-2-1-2-1 (\_EN\_EG-Internat-Col-Appl-Other Countries\_F)  
>> Clients from all other countries use form 5-2-1-2 (\_EN\_Internat-Col-Appl-Other-Countries\_F)
- **NCOI (forms 5-2-1-3 & 5-2-1-3-1)**  
i.e. for **national sales of organic goods (within the same country)**  
>> Clients from Egypt use form 5-2-1-3-1 (\_EN\_EG-National-COI-Appl\_F)  
>> Clients from all other countries use form 5-2-1-3 (\_EN\_National-COI-Appl\_F)

Please make sure to choose the correct application form when applying for a COI/TC and always use the latest version as available on our website (link above).

If you require any special details to be mentioned in the COI or a special type of COI, please be sure to highlight this in the application form and/or email.

## 4) Required documents

For every application, the following is mandatory:

- **Application form applicable for the requested type of COI** (see section [3\) Choosing the correct application form](#)).  
The application form must be **signed in the payment confirmation box** (in the middle section of the questionnaire) and, in addition, the **declaration at the end of the form must be signed and stamped (after inserting your name and the current date)**.  
**The signed and stamped application form must be sent to us in PDF format (or similar, non-modifiable format).**
- The **relevant documents** for the sale must be sent to us along with the application form and **according to the list of required documents included in the annex of each application form.**
- **The organic master certificate of the exporter / seller must be valid on the day the COI (or NCOI) is issued.** (Not just at the moment of sending the application.)

**Each application form contains an annex of required documents that must be provided along with the signed and stamped application form.** Please check it carefully, as it lists all documents that are usually necessary for the respective type of COI/TC. Of course, we may ask for additional documents on occasion, depending on the individual situation.

**Important: All documents need to be connectable and indicate the organic status of the product.**

In general, required documents are:

- **Transport document** (AWB / CMR / BL)
  - For EU-COI, GB-COI and NOP-IC applications, this can be draft or even still unavailable,
  - For other shipments must be original or copy
  - The first consignee must always be mentioned on the transport document
- **Commercial invoice** between the exporter and importer.
  - In case of sales via intermediary traders we please need all invoices in the transaction chain from exporter to importer.
  - For EU-COI, GB-COI and NOP-IC applications proforma invoices are acceptable. In case there is no proforma version available, the application may be sent without this document.
  - For all other shipments we can only accept the final original
- **In case you buy this product (or raw material) from another entity:**  
(N)TC for the purchase OR purchase invoice + transport document;  
Supplier's organic (master) certificate in case they are not certified by CERES
- **In case the product is stored or processed by one or more entities,** provide evidence that these entities are certified as well as documents that allow traceability for each step
- **For EU- and GB-COIs only:** Please note that the COI must be issued by the control body of the last operator to perform any activity of preparation on the product, i.e. packing or labelling.

- **For NOP-ICs only:** One NOP-IC can only cover one product/HTS code. Still, applications may be sent for all organic products of one shipment (as always: maximum one shipment per application). CERES will generally issue one NOP-IC per product listed in the application form. Also, one NOP-IC may cover more than one shipment.  
Please **carefully check the [Brief Information about NOP Import Certificates \(No. 3-2-10-6\)](#) as well as the annex of the NOP-IC Application Form (both documents available on our website under Documents > BIO > COI/TC) for detailed explanations and instructions.**

- **For coffee producer/processor groups only:**  
Please send evidence which washing station(s) was/were involved in processing the export lot(s). For this, please use the annex of washing stations (processing units) of your organic certificate, insert the relevant export lot number and mark the washing station(s) involved in processing the export lot(s).  
(Exception: If all producers are always contributing to all export lots, please explain and confirm this in an official declaration (company letter, signed and stamped) and send it to us in advance.)

**For ALL OTHER farmer groups (that do not produce coffee):**

Please send a list of all producers involved in the production for each export lot. For this please use the producer annex of your organic certificate, insert the relevant export lot number and mark the producers involved in the production of this export lot.  
(Exception: If all producers are always contributing to all export lots, please explain and confirm this in an official declaration (company letter, signed and stamped) and send it to us in advance.)

Also, rice farmer groups are generally excepted from this requirement.)

## 5) Sending the application

**Please observe the following instructions carefully, so that your application can be categorized correctly and is not delayed or overlooked.**

Some applications might be handled or prepared at our local offices and thus the application should be forwarded to these offices rather than the COI department of CERES Germany. If in doubt, please check with your local office.

### **For all applications handled directly by the COI department of CERES Germany:**

**For every new COI application, please send a new email to [admin@ceres-cert.de](mailto:admin@ceres-cert.de) (i.e. please do not send it as an answer to previous emails). By doing so, our ticketing system will create a new ticket\_ for this new application. **You will receive an automatic response with a new ticket number.****

Please be sure to check this automatic response is received as it confirms that your application has been received correctly. If you have not received an automatic reply after a maximum of 30 minutes (please also check your spam folder), this probably means there might be a technical problem and we have not received the application. Should this be the case, please be sure to contact us and check about the status of your application.

Please **do not send new applications as a response to any previous emails**, as this makes it hard to notice your application and will delay the issuance process considerably.

**When sending further information, questions or reminders concerning a pending application or request** (i.e., an application or request that was sent to us earlier already and for which you already received a ticket number), **it is important to always keep the relevant ticket number in the subject line.**

**When sending the application, please kindly support us by including the following details in the subject line of all COI application emails:**

- **Destination / Import country or NCOI** (for national sales within one country) (EU / EEA (European Economic Area) / CH (Switzerland) / NI (Northern Ireland) / GB (Great Britain) / USA / Other Countries)
- **For international shipments: Transport mode** (Vessel/BL, Airfreight/AWB, Land freight/truck / CMR)
- **For international vessel or train transport as well as all NCOIs:**  
Service option (**EXPRESS or STANDARD**)
- **Exporter** company name (for NCOIs: Seller company name)
- **Importer** company name (for NCOIs: Buyer company name)
- **For shipments to EU, EEA, Northern Ireland, GB or the USA: ETD** (estimated time of departure = date when the shipment is planned to leave the country of export)
- **For shipments to other countries: ETA** (estimated time of arrival = date when the shipment is planned to reach the point of destination) We receive a great number of applications every day and including the above details helps a lot in order to process them correctly and effectively. Thanks a lot in advance for your support in this matter!
- **Optional:** Reference number(s) for this sale/shipment

**International shipments by truck (CMR) or plane (AWB) are treated with priority.** If you send applications for international land- or airfreight, please make sure to **indicate Truck/CMR or Airfreight/AWB in the subject line of the email.** Otherwise, we might not realize this is a priority application and issuance may be delayed.

Furthermore, it is **especially important to include the ETD in the subject for shipments to the EU, EEA, CH, NI, GB or the USA.** Seeing as COIs / NOP-ICs for exports to these countries must be issued BEFORE the goods leave the country of export, the ETD is an essential detail.

For shipments to other countries, it is not needed.

If you require any special details to be mentioned in the COI or a special type of COI, please be sure to highlight this in the application form and/or email.

## 6) Handling times, service options and prices

(applicable for CERES Germany only)

Kindly consider our general handling times and service options as well as weekends and German bank holidays (these do not count as working days; upcoming holidays are mentioned in our signature and automatic reply).

<b>General COI handling times &amp; Service Options of CERES Germany</b>	
<b><u>Type of COI application</u></b>	<b><u>General handling time</u></b>
COIs for <b>international</b> shipments by <u>truck</u> or <u>airplane</u>	1 working day (can be 2 working days in times of high demand)
COIs for <b>international</b> shipments by <u>vessel</u> or <u>train</u> & all NCOIs for <b>national</b> shipments	<u>STANDARD service:</u> 3-5 working days (can be 5-8 working days in times of high demand)  <u>EXPRESS service:</u> 1-2 working days
<p><b><u>Remember:</u></b>  <b>Applications must be received before 12:30 pm (German time) to count the reception day as first working day.</b> If an application is received after 12:30 pm (German time) the following working day is to be considered as the first working day.            “Handling time” in this context means the time until we check the application and send feedback (either questions or the issued COI, depending on whether everything is clear and complete or if anything needs further checking.)</p> <p>When sending applications for <b>international shipments by truck or airplane</b>, please include <b>“AWB” or “CMR” in the email subject line</b> (do NOT mention or mark EXPRESS. <u>There is NO EXPRESS service for these applications, since they receive automatic priority</u>)</p> <p>When sending <b>applications for EXPRESS service</b> (only for international shipments by vessel or train as well as all national shipments) please always include <b>“EXPRESS” in the email subject line.</b></p>	

Our general price list, including prices for COIs/TCs (incl. NCOIs/NTCs) issued by CERES Germany, is available on our [website \(under Prices > Agriculture Price List\)](#).