

## Brief Information on Organic JAS

CERES GmbH is accredited by the competent Japanese authority (MAFF = Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries), as ROCB (= Registered Overseas Certification Body for Organic JAS).

### 1. What is organic production according to JAS?

Organic production for the Japanese market, as part of the Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) is regulated by the following documents published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF):

**Standards:** JAS for Organic ...

Area	Standard	Technical Criteria	Covered by CERES accreditation
Agricultural Products	1605	1830	X
Processed Foods	18 (former 1606)	25 (former 1831)	X
Feed	1607	for unprocessed: 1830 for processed: 25 (former 1831)	X
Livestock Products	1608	1832	
Algae	2074 (JAS 0018)	for producer: 2079 for repacker: 2082	
Repackers		26 (former 1833)	X
Alcoholic beverages*	18	25	
*JAS certification will be mandatory after October 1, 2025			


**Q & A:** The answers to many frequently asked questions give detailed explanations about the implementation of the Organic JAS rules, where the standards and technical criteria lack precision.

The responsible authority for Organic JAS is the Dept. of Standards and Labelling at MAFF. The English version of JAS, including Q & A, is published at [https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/standard/specific/organic\\_JAS.html](https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/standard/specific/organic_JAS.html)

### 2. Differences with EU Regulation and NOP

Some differences between Organic JAS and the EU regulation and NOP are:

- Except for the substances explicitly listed in one of the tables, Notification 1605 does **not** allow the use of natural fertilisers which have undergone chemical transformation. This includes e.g. alkaline extracts of humic acids from **leonardite**.
- The first year of conversion of a farm needs not be monitored by a certifier. No certificate may be issued for the first year in conversion.
- Fallow or virgin land can be certified organic only after it has been cultivated organically during at least one year.
- The **main difference**, however, is that JAS requires a formally established "**Grading System**". This must be understood as an **internal auditing system**, established to best assure compliance with the standard. While the Operation Manager ("Production Process Manager") supervises the organic production, the so-called **Grading Manager** performs internal audits for each production lot, before authorising the use of the JAS label. Before the product is sold with the JAS seal to another company or directly exported to Japan, the Grading Manager goes through all relevant documents, to verify compliance of the product with Organic JAS. This "grading" must be documented in a checklist.

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### **3. Who needs to be certified**

#### **3.1. Equivalent countries**

Some countries or regions have "**equivalence agreements**" with Japan (including the EU member countries, Canada, the USA, the UK, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland and Taiwan).

Organic operators in these countries or regions have two options:

- a. The Japanese importer holds a JAS certificate and conducts the "grading". In this case, the exporter (e.g. in an EU member country) can sell EU certified products directly, without additional certification.
- b. Or the final processor in the country with an equivalence agreement is certified according to JAS, while their suppliers "only" need to hold a valid certificate according to the organic standard of the respective country.

The following operation and products are **not covered by the equivalence agreement**:

- Repackers
- Livestock products except from USA, Australia, Switzerland, and Canada
- Alcoholic beverages except from Canada and Taiwan

#### **3.2. Other countries**

In all **other countries**, **all operators** involved in the supply chain must be JAS certified.

Farmer groups can be certified as such, provided they have an internal control system. A processing or export company can take care of the internal control system and grading procedure for their group of suppliers.

Exporters or traders, who do not process, pack or label themselves, cannot get JAS certification, but they can of course trade JAS certified products.


### **4. Formal steps required to obtain and maintain JAS certification**

For general steps to organic certification, please see our "Brief information: Steps to Certification". Here we only describe those steps which are specific to JAS.

- As a first step, the interested producer must submit a **JAS application** to CERES.
- In addition to the certification contract, a **JAS agreement** must be signed.
- The production manager and all grading staff attend a **JAS seminar** organised by CERES. In some cases, this can be done online.
- In addition to the Organic Management Plan, the company, farm or group must describe their **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for grading** (see section 2 above; operator can use document 4-3-17 as Grading SOP by filling out the contents of this document completely).
- Even in case the operation should hold a valid EU or NOP certificate, an onsite JAS inspection must take place, to verify implementation of the grading system.
- Once all requirements are fulfilled, CERES will issue a JAS certificate. Together with the certificate the unit will receive the CERES "**JAS mark**" (see below section 7). JAS certification **remains valid**, i.e. certificates do not have an expiry date, but must be renewed annually.
- All JAS certified operators must **inform** the inspection body **annually** about the quantities of "graded" JAS products. The reference year is the Japanese economic year (April 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>). The summarized information for the previous year must be submitted to the certifier by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Recertification is not possible if this information is not submitted in time.

### **5. Documents required for JAS certification**

Additional records required for JAS certification, besides those which are necessary according to EU Regulation or NOP:

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- **Application** for JAS certification, **JAS Agreement**
- **JAS seminar attendance certificate**
- **SOP** for JAS grading
- **Grading checklist**, showing that the SOP are being implemented for each lot labelled with JAS mark
- Records summarising the products graded as JAS products by June 30th

## 6. Labelling requirements

All products sold as "JAS organic", **must carry the JAS logo** (also called "JAS mark" or "JAS seal"). A certification number assigned by CERES must be placed under the logo. Together with the certificate, CERES provides clients an electronic version of the JAS CERES logo. For **packed products**, **the JAS seal must be on each package**, or a **JAS seal tag** must be attached. For **bulk** containers, the JAS seal must appear on the **invoice or bill of lading**. If the official shipping document cannot be altered, a page bearing the JAS seal can be attached.



This is the **certification number** assigned by CERES. You find it on your JAS certificate.

The seal **may not be altered**. However, any colour is permitted. The position of the JAS mark on the label is not regulated by MAFF. Certified clients may use the JAS seal in advertising material.

In addition to the JAS-CERES logo, the label must include information on the kind of product, the organic condition, quantities, the company or farm name, a lot number and the country of origin.

## 7. Transaction Certificates

Transaction certificates are not compulsory, but are **recommended** for each sale of organic products to Japan.

## 8. Recent Changes

Some changes have been made to JAS, as e.g.:

- Agricultural PPM ("agricultural Production Process Manager" = clients who are certified for crop production) and/or processing PPM ("processing Production Process Manager" = clients who are certified for food processing) are allowed to repack products of the same product category without being certified as "repacker". For instance, an agricultural PPM is now allowed to repack agricultural products bought from other suppliers.

However, agricultural PPM cannot repack processed products and processing PPM cannot repack agricultural products. In such cases they still must get a certification as repacker.

- From July 2020, the JAS mark has become mandatory when exporting organic livestock products to Japan.
- USA, Australia, Switzerland, and Canada have equivalence agreements on livestock products with Japan.
- Canada and Taiwan have equivalence agreements on alcoholic beverages with Japan.
- 1) Salt that is used for organic JAS processing may contain other food additives than those listed in Attached Table 1. However, if the food additive not listed in Attached Table 1 used in the salt is also effective in the organic JAS product (e.g. as anti-caking agent), use of such salts is not allowed.

2) Notwithstanding the above, salt with added flavour enhancer and / or minerals (except natural bittern obtained from seawater or rock salt) cannot be used for processing JAS organic processed foods. "Minerals" mentioned above means such that are generally used for food fortification. (Iodine, Zinc salts, Calcium chloride, Iron(II) chloride, etc.).