Brief Introduction to the Organic Standard of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (OSKSA)

1. Introduction

The Organic Standard of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (OSKSA) establishes the legal basis for organic production in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The current version is from May 2014. Any food product sold in Saudi Arabia, with a reference to “organic” or the respective term in Arabic, must comply with this standard.

2. Origin and Structure

The OSKSA is mainly based on the European Regulation on Organic Production (EC) 834/07. Technical details are defined in a separate document called “Saudi Technical Specifications for Good Practices in Organic Production”, which is derived mainly from the Annexes to Regulation (EC) 2092)/91.

3. Differences with Regulation (EC) 834/07

- The „competent authority“ in Saudi Arabia is the Department of Organic Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture (Art. 16.1)
- “The competent authority confers its control competences to private control bodies” (Art. 27.3 – the EU-Regulation leaves this open).
- Explicitely allows accreditation of control bodies by IOAS (Art. 27.4)
- All commercial farm inputs for organic production have to be approved by the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture
- Prohibits nanotechnology for production of any materials used for organic farming or processing
- Explicitly prohibits burning of vegetation
- Explicitly prohibits use of synthetic soil cover (plastic mulch)
- Allows hydroponic production, using authorised fertilisers only
- Allows “Natural plant extractions such as sugar cane flower extraction and garlic, etc.” as fertilizers or soil amendments (Spec. 1)
- Spec. 2-1 allows several substances for crop protection, which are not explicitely listed in the respective Annex to the EU-Regulation, like:
  - Matrine substance extracted from Sophora flavescens
  - "Natural acids such as vinegar, casein, preparations from shiitake fungus, Chlorella extracts, plant extracts in general, Tobacco tea (except net nicotine)
  - Calcium hydroxide as fungicide (without restrictions, as opposed to the EU-Reg.)
  - Porgundi liquid, Mineral powders (stone powders and silicate), Diatomic soil, Silicate and Bentonite, Sodium silicate, Sodium bicarbonate, Homeopathic and Ayurvedic preparations, Herbal preparations
- Livestock shall have permanent access to shaded areas and to open range areas (Art. 14.b - EU-Reg. refers only to open range, not to shade).
- Certain percentages of conventional feed are allowed for organic livestock
4. Import of organic products

Importers of organic products to the KSA need to be certified. All products certified abroad according to Reg. (EC) 834/07, NOP, JAS, or standards complying with the requirements of the IFOAM Base Standard, are accepted in the KSA, as long as the certificate is issued by a certification body which is accredited by acknowledged accreditation bodies for the respective standard. Once imported by a certified importer, such products can be sold as being compliant with the OSKSA, using the Saudi National Organic Logo.

Procedures for import of organic products are explained in "Conditions and procedures", issued by the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture.

All other requirements are basically identical to Reg. (EC) 834/07. For summaries of these requirements, please see the CERES Brief Infos 3.2.1 through 3.2.7.