

SOPA Product Evaluation Scheme for Evaluating and Approving non-certified Inputs



Conditions for Issuing and Maintaining Product Approval

1. Introduction to Scottish Organic Producers Association (SOPA)

The Scottish Organic Producers Association was founded in 1988 to provide a focus for organic food producers across Scotland, and is committed to the long-term growth of a viable organic industry infrastructure linking producers, processors and retailers in the interests of the consumer.

To give some background to SOPA:

- We are a non-trading co-operative offering two key member services: organic certification and organic guidance/support through our partner OF&G (Scotland).
- The SOPA membership consists of more than 300 organic businesses ranging from primary producers through to further processors, with the majority based throughout Scotland we do also provide organic certification to producers & processors throughout the UK.
- Based on the latest organic figures released by DEFRA in May 2020, more than 60% of Scotland's organic farmers are SOPA Members with 80% of the organic land in Scotland certified to the SOPA Organic Production Standards.
- We are led by a Board of Directors and every Member is a shareholder, having a right to vote at the AGM and shape the future for the organisation.
- The SOPA scheme encompasses two sets of standards; 1 - Production and 2 - Processing.
- We have a bank for experienced Inspectors & Auditors located the length and breadth of the country and a team of specialist organic Certification Officers. Each SOPA Member has a designated Certification Officer (CO) and in turn a regular point of contact.
- SOPA also have a dedicated Membership Support and Development team utilising extensive knowledge of the food and farming industry within Scotland and helping SOPA to raise its profile to the benefit of all its members

2. SOPA Evaluation Scheme

In response to demand from farm input suppliers, and organic producers alike, for a Scottish recognised organic approved input accreditation SOPA developed a programme for evaluating and approving farm input products – the **SOPA Evaluation Scheme**. The SOPA Evaluation Scheme is for products that can not be granted organic certification but can be granted approval for use within an organic system. There are strict protocols about ingredients and manufacturing processes.

Being a SOPA Evaluation Scheme Member and gaining Approval for Use greatly helps companies to reassure organic customers that their organic status will not be compromised by using the Approved Product. Instant recognition of the SOPA logo saves time and gives organic farmers and growers confidence in the approved product range on offer.

This leaflet explains the requirements and conditions that organisations wishing to have their

SCOTTISH ORGANIC PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SOPA)

Website: www.sopa.org.uk

@ScottishOrganic

T: 0300 772 9795

products considered for approval through the SOPA Evaluation Scheme must comply with.

3. Statutory Obligations

The **EU Regulations 834/2007 and 889/2008** are the legal basis for all organic farming and processing in Europe. These were last updated on 01 January 2008. The EU Regulations define a method of agriculture

production and define appropriate practices for processing agricultural products and production of animal feedstuffs. They also define how products must be labelled and set out rules for trade and importation of organic goods.

All inputs used on organic farms and processing businesses must be compliant with the above Regulations, as implemented in the SOPA Organic Production and Processing Standards.

The Standards contain positive lists of inputs relating to the following:

Soil conditioners & fertilising materials

Pest & disease control materials

Livestock mineral and trace element supplements

Disinfectants for livestock buildings

Food additives and carriers

Processing aids

Only the products listed may be used on organic farms or by organic processing businesses, all other materials are prohibited

4. Initial Steps to joining SOPA

SOPA offer a pragmatic yet professional approach to organic certification to our members through OF&G (Scotland), guided by the SOPA Board and in turn our members. If you do opt to join the SOPA scheme you will become a member of SOPA and need to follow the SOPA Standards. We also recognise that the organic sector is a niche industry and we lobby Scottish, UK and EU governments on policy issues that affect our members.

4.1 Application Pack

Request a SOPA Evaluation Scheme Application Pack by contacting SOPA Membership Services on 0300 772 9795 or emailing info@sopa.org.uk.

The application pack includes;

- SOPA Product Evaluation Scheme Application Form;
- SOPA Producer Standards (Issue 4)/Processing, Importing and Animal Feed Compounding Standards (*dependent on input type*); and

SCOTTISH ORGANIC PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SOPA)

Website: www.sopa.org.uk

@ScottishOrganic

T: 0300 772 9795

- Applicable guidance notes & copies of the most recent SOPA newsletters.

4.2 Application Form

The Application form, including product information (labels, specifications/ingredients, instructions for use, chemical analysis, trial results, COSHH safety data sheets & non-GMO declarations), must be completed and returned with the application fee (see below).

Once checked for completeness the application form and product information will be passed on to the SOPA Product Evaluation Certification Team for assessment.

4.3. One-off Application Fee

For an application to join the SOPA Evaluation Scheme to be considered and for your business to be registered as a Member of the SOPA scheme your SOPA Application Fee payment **of £65 (£50 + VAT + £5 share capital SOPA)** should be returned at the same time as your application form.

The application form can be completed electronically provided the declaration at the back is deleted and signed accordingly. Likewise, the application fee can be paid by BACS using your business name/initials as the reference for the payment.

See point 9 for details of annual membership fee.

Return completed form to;

Post: SOPA, PO Box 5, Golspie, KW10 6AA

Email: info@sopa.org.uk or

Fax: 01939 291 250

5. Certification Team Evaluation and Approval

5.1. Evaluation

On receipt of your application form and accompanying information the products will be assessed against the SOPA Standards and EU Regulations for their suitability for use in an organic production or processing system. Where required, the applicant may be asked to provide additional information by the Certification Team.

5.2. Approval

Once a company is registered as a Member of the SOPA Evaluation Scheme with a unique membership number and product(s) are found to be compliant for use in organic farming systems a certificate will be issued to the company specifying the product(s) that have been granted approval for use in organic systems and any conditions attached to use. Having a valid product approval certificate assures your customers that your products have been evaluated and can be used in organic systems.

Please be aware that there are two categories of products approved for use in an organic farming system;

- **SOPA Approved Product** - can be used without customer needing to seek prior approval from their organic certification officer before use.
- **SOPA Approved Product with Restricted Use** - customer must seek prior approval from

SCOTTISH ORGANIC PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SOPA)

Website: www.sopa.org.uk

@ScottishOrganic

T: 0300 772 9795

their organic certification officer before use.

Where a product(s) is found not to comply with the SOPA Standards, you will be notified of the reasons and this product must not be marketed as an approved product. At this point you will have the opportunity to amend the formulation and resubmit the revised formulation for consideration by the Certification Team.

6. Use of SOPA Approved Product Logos

Once the approved product status of individual products are known the corresponding SOPA Approved Product Logo can be used on product labelling, marketing material and website advertising to identify Approved Products:



The SOPA Approved Product logos may only be used by businesses who are approved Members of SOPA. The version of the SOPA logo required can be issued to Members as an electronic file on request. Please note as such products can not be granted organic status the EU organic logo and OF&G (Scotland) certification mark/code for SOPA Members can not be used for approved inputs.

It is in the interest of consumers, purchasers, approved Members, OF&G (Scotland) and the SOPA Board to ensure that the SOPA logo is used correctly to provide confidence in the integrity of the SOPA Schemes they represent. OF&G (Scotland) will therefore, as part of its continuing inspection process, audit regularly the use of the SOPA logo by approved Members.

Please see the guidance note on Governing the Use of the Certification Mark & Logo for the Scottish Organic Producers Association (SOPA) Scheme for more information on logo use.

7. Annual Renewal – Continued Product Approval

7.1. Renewal Forms

Prior to the expiry of your current product approval certificate, you will be notified by the evaluation scheme certification team that your Product Approval is due for renewal. With this notification, you will be sent;

- a SOPA Evaluation Scheme Renewal Form (RD709) tailored to your business and range of approved products. To be checked, updated if necessary, and returned to OF&G (Scotland);
- the SOPA Evaluation Scheme Declaration and Licencing Agreement (RD710). To be reviewed, signed and returned to OF&G (Scotland); and
- Annual Membership Fee Renewal Notice (see 9.2 below).

You need to complete these forms and return to your certification officer, who will review the information returned following steps 5.1 and 5.2 above. It is important to renew your product

SCOTTISH ORGANIC PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (SOPA)

Website: www.sopa.org.uk

@ScottishOrganic

T: 0300 772 9795

approval certificate to ensure that you can still market the product range to organic businesses as approved for use. Payment for your annual membership fee is also required before your renewed product approval certificate can be issued.

8. Notification of Changes & New Products

Any major changes to the company, including contact details, use of sub-contractors or new premises must also be notified to your certification officer immediately as they arise through the year.

Likewise, any changes to existing product specifications must be notified to your certification officer to ensure the product remains compliant with the organic standards prior to the revised product being put on the market. For a new product or change to an existing product ingredient a **New Product Form** must be completed and the relevant supporting information supplied. A revised certificate will be issued including the new product(s) once approved following steps 5.1 and 5.2 above.

9. Annual Membership Fee

9.1 Initial Membership Fee

Following the successful outcome of an application and product evaluation an invoice will be raised corresponding to the number of products associated to the Evaluation Scheme member. The invoice is to be settled before the certificate is issued. There is a set fee for the first 5 products registered under a membership and an additional fee for each product over and above this. Thereafter an annual SOPA membership renewal fee is raised at the start of each year and once paid validates the membership for the calendar year (1st Jan – 31st Dec).

9.2 Annual Membership Renewal Fee

The invoice for your annual SOPA Membership Renewal Fee will be issued to coincide with your renewal forms based on the number of products that have been previously approved under your SOPA Product Evaluation Scheme membership. If additional products have been added during the year the membership renewal fee will be adjusted accordingly. Once payment is received, and provided the renewal information is approved by your certification officer, your annual product approval certificate will be issued to cover the coming year.

Please refer to the SOPA Payment Terms and annual SOPA Product Evaluation Scheme Fee Table.

10. Advertising & Promotion

Your annual SOPA fee includes the approval of your product range to enable such products to be used by certified organic producers and processors PLUS various Member Services, such as promotion (e.g. through [SOPA website](http://www.sopa.org.uk) or [newsletter](#)) and establishing links with potential customers within the SOPA membership. If you wish to take advantage of advertising opportunities please contact SOPA Membership Services on 0300 772 9795 or email: info@sopa.org.uk.

We will also update the SOPA list of Approved Products with your company contact and approved product details.

11. Access to Members Area of SOPA Website - www.sopa.org.uk

Your unique login details to access the Members area of the website will be issued to you on approval of your application to join the SOPA Evaluation Scheme.

The SOPA Standards, Record Sheets and Guidance Notes are also available via the **Members Download** section and you can boost your profile within the SOPA membership by generating your company profile within the **Members Directory**.

TO DISCUSS ANY QUERIES YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT JOINING THE SOPA PRODUCT EVALUATION SCHEME PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT SOPA MEMBERSHIP SERVICES ON 0300 772 9795 OR EMAIL info@sopa.org.uk.