



PL0503 Use of accreditation status

A Preamble

Introduction and purpose of the policy

1. The accreditation contract [Doc# FR0513](#) places a number of limitations on the use of the accreditation status designation. Reference is made to the relevant accreditation contract for the exact wording. Abuse of accreditation status designation is a breach of contract and may result in the termination of accreditation. This policy is to assist the accredited certification bodies in the implementation of these contractual obligations.

Scope

2. This policy is intended to be used by the accredited certification bodies to determine how to use their accreditation status or how to instruct operators in the use of accreditation status. This policy refers to accreditation status and not to the use of scheme owner logos either on product or promotional material which are separately regulated by scheme owner rules. Use of the IFOAM seal is regulated by separate agreements and instructions. ([Doc # PL0513](#), [Doc# PL0514](#) and [Doc# PL0515](#)) Use of IFOAM membership status is determined by IFOAM and regulated in IFOAM's policy documentation. This policy does not replace or in any way amend the stipulations in the accreditation contract. Regulation of use of the IOAS accreditation symbol is covered in [doc # PL0515](#).

Definitions

3. Promotional material: For the purposes of this document promotional material is defined as all material including web sites and electronic communications other than packaging of product.

4. Reference is made to the Quality Manual for general definitions.

Distribution and Access

5. This document is distributed to the Certification Bodies immediately upon finalizing any changes. In addition it is distributed to the Board and Accreditation Committee annually. Staff are informed of changes as soon as they have been finalized. Interested parties may obtain a copy on request.

Authority and revision

6. This policy is approved by the IOAS Executive Director. It is the responsibility of the IOAS Executive Director to review the appropriateness of the policy from time to time. It may be revised when the need arises. Revisions must be approved by the IOAS Executive Director. Its effectiveness in meeting the quality policy of the IOAS will be assessed during Internal Review and any measures for improvement notified to the Executive Director and the Board.

B Policy

Accreditation claims by accredited certifiers

7. Accreditation claims shall not be misleading about the scope of the accreditation.

8. If the promotional material refers to any activity not covered by the accreditation scope mention of accreditation shall be accompanied by limiting clauses as specified in 1.3 and 1.4 below. The scope of accreditation is stated on the accreditation certificate and on the current accredited certification body list.

9. Promotional material that specifically mentions **categories of activity** that are not covered by the accreditation scope shall not mention the accreditation status without specifically referring to the accreditation scope. Thus a brochure that for example mentions the certification of non-scope activities shall not include on the brochure the accreditation status without specifying the activities that the accreditation scope covers. Certifier X is accredited for Etc”

10. The same rule applies to promotional material that mentions other **certification programmes** operated by the certification body that are not covered by the accreditation scope. Thus a brochure that mentions (for example) that the certification body operates a sustainable forestry certification programme which is outside of the scope of accreditation shall not mention the IOAS accreditation status without referring to the programme that is covered by the accreditation scope. In such a case the statement that “Certifier X is accredited” is not permitted without clarifying language of the scope of the accreditation.

11. Materials that do not mention specific activities or programmes such as letterheads or business cards may refer to the accreditation status without limiting clauses if there are no programmes outside of the accreditation scope. If the certification body does operate other certification programmes the accreditation reference must specify the applicable programme.

12. IFOAM accredited certification bodies shall not utilise the IFOAM logo for the name IFOAM unless the certification body has signed the separate agreement for use of the IFOAM seal. In the absence of that agreement only generic typefaces may be used.

13. Certification bodies shall not use reports or certificates in a misleading manner. The IOAS shall take measures (such as ensuring sufficient information on certificates) to reduce the possibilities for fraudulent use.

14. If at any time the certification body is in doubt as to the correct use of the accreditation status, the IOAS office shall be contacted for clarification.

References to accreditation by operators.

15. Operators may make statements regarding the accreditation status of their certification body in brochures and other promotional material as long as scheme owner rules are observed.

16. Accreditation statements shall clearly refer to the certification body and not any product. Thus statements such as “this product is certified by Certifier X, an IOAS accredited certification body” are permitted. A statement that states eg. “IFOAM accredited” on the promotional material is not permitted.

17. If the operator promotional material refers solely to products not covered by the accreditation scope no reference to accreditation shall be made

18. If the promotional material refers to products only some of which are covered by the accreditation scope, then reference to the accreditation shall state the categories of accreditation covered by the accreditation scope.

19. Operators certified under an IFOAM accredited programme shall not utilise the IFOAM logo or the name IFOAM unless the certification body has signed the separate agreement for use of the IFOAM seal. In the absence of that agreement only generic typefaces may be used. Accreditation status may never be used on packaging unless a specific agreement for licensing the use of the IFOAM seal has been signed by the Certification body and the IOAS (doc# PL0513) and that the operator has signed an agreement with the certification body.

C Procedures

Accreditation claims by accredited certifiers

Notification of Misuse:

20. Any potential misuse should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director (ED).. All notification of potential misuse must be made in writing or electronically containing any evidence (labels, brochures, etc.) to support the alleged misuse.

Investigation of misuse of accreditation status:

21. Upon receipt of an alleged misuse of accreditation status the IOAS ED shall

- i. clarify the following information (if applicable):
 - ii. name, address and telephone number of party making the claim
 - iii. name of party alleged to misuse of accreditation status
 - iv. extent, location and/or circumstances where alleged misuse occurred
 - v. date and time when alleged misuse occurred
 - vi. any witnesses and/or evidence to support the alleged misuse
 - vii. any other information deemed important.
- viii. (if applicable) gather additional evidence from other sources to substantiate the claim
- ix. within 3 weeks of receipt of the allegation notify the alleged party of the potential misuse and invite a response using [Doc# FR0536i](#). This shall require a response within 2 weeks.

22. Following the response to notification letter the IOAS ED shall assess whether a satisfactory resolution of the misuse is imminent or may require further action.

23. If the resolution is satisfactory and imminent, ED shall, within 3 weeks of receipt of response to the notification letter, confirm the mutual understanding of the resolution by sending [Doc# FR0536ii](#) which shall advise of possible action if the resolution is not adhered to.

24. If a timely and acceptable resolution is unlikely or if there is no response, ED shall, within 3 weeks of receipt of response (or due date) to the notification letter, invite a (further) response within 2 weeks by sending [Doc#FR0536iii](#) which shall advise of possible action if there is either an unsatisfactory or no reply.

25. If this action results in an unsatisfactory or no reply the ED shall consult with the IOAS Board of Directors who will consider any of the sanctions indicated in clause D of the Accreditation Contract.

References to accreditation by operators.

26. If the ED determines that an unauthorised use of the accreditation status has been made by a producer that has been certified by an accredited certification body, the ED shall implement procedures indicated in [Policy PL0516](#) on Violation of Trademarks by 3rd Parties (without contractual agreements).