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<b>Notification:</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> March 2020</b>
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Certification Body and Certified Operator Guidance</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>COVID-19 social distancing and auditing procedures</b>

## Background

In an attempt to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, travel restrictions and social distancing requirements are now in place in all Australian states and territories.

Agriculture and food supply chains will be deemed essential services, so will continue to operate, albeit with additional risk mitigation procedures in place.

Similarly, food certification services must continue to operate, and this includes organic certification.

Maintaining organic certifications for domestic and export markets, whilst mitigating COVID-19 transmission risk, and complying with social distancing requirements provides a unique challenge for our industry.

Organic certification bodies have implemented procedures to handle this unique challenge, typically including options for remote auditing or desktop audits using video or telephone conferencing, to be followed up with full physical inspections within a reasonable timeframe.

## Guidance for Certification Bodies

International Organic Accreditation Service (IOAS) who provide ISO/IEC17065 accreditation for Australian Organic licensed certification bodies, is requiring CBs assess the risks of continuing certification and establish a documented policy and process, outlining the steps it intends to take in the event that a certified organization is affected by the COVID-19 event or where on-site visits are not possible due to travel restrictions

Australian Organic Ltd does not intend to place any additional requirements onto our licenced certification bodies.





## Guidance for Certified Operators

Many certified organic operators already hold Food Safety Management System certifications, such as ISO22000, BRC, SQF, or similar. For these operators, now is the time to refer to, and perhaps review, your visitor and staff health and infection control procedures.

Operators which do not hold such certifications may wish to consider developing a documented procedure for infection control in emergency situations, and may use the above Standards for guidance.

With careful management, your initial or annual physical audit may well proceed. If you have any concerns regarding your audit, or wish to understand the procedures that will be in place at your upcoming audit, please contact your Certification Body.

### Australian Organic licensed Certification Bodies

ACO Certification Limited	07 3350 5706	<a href="mailto:info@aco.net.au">info@aco.net.au</a>
AUS-QUAL	07 3361 9200	<a href="mailto:ausqual@ausqual.com.au">ausqual@ausqual.com.au</a>

### Government and ISO/IEC 17065 accredited Certification Bodies

Bio-Dynamic Research Institute (BDRI)	03 5966 7333	<a href="mailto:info@demeter.org.au">info@demeter.org.au</a>
NASAA Certified Organic (NCO)	08 7231 7700	<a href="mailto:info@ncocertifiedorganic.com.au">info@ncocertifiedorganic.com.au</a>
Organic Food Chain (OFC)	0400 979 435	<a href="mailto:ofc@organicfoodchain.com.au">ofc@organicfoodchain.com.au</a>

Should you have any queries regarding this guidance, please contact our office.

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