

# Social Responsibility Standard

*International Standard for the use and certification of Demeter,  
Biodynamic and related trademarks (as of: Oct 2022)*

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## 1. Introduction

The Biodynamic Federation and the respective certifying organisations have a long history and thus a high level of acquired experience in the certification of Biodynamic agriculture and processing. This standard claims to be applicable worldwide. Setting standards for cultivation and processing methods alone that can be applied worldwide already is a challenge, since climatic and cultural differences impede comparability.

For social issues around working conditions, it is even more difficult, as the starting conditions in the respective countries and regions are much more diverse.

In this respect, this standard does not claim to be applied equally everywhere. It formulates a minimum requirement. National organisations are entitled and encouraged to make national adaptations along these lines.

In concrete terms,

- this means that requirements do not have to be incorporated into national versions if stricter rules exist on the part of the state.
- this means that requirements do not have to be adopted in national regulations if there is another solid legal basis or solid legal institutions for the respective issue.
- this means that national organisations are invited to formulate stricter requirements in cases where requirements formulated in this Standard turn out to be lower than existing national practices.
- this means taking into account the general capability of the respective organisation certain aspects of this Standard can be implemented at a later stage.

The national concept of transposition of this Standard must be presented and explained to the Standards Committee and the Social Responsibility Committee for approval. The Review of

the national implementation is subject of the regular accreditation activity of the Accreditation Council.

Demeter operations should strive for working conditions, which are above the average, as well as a positive and fair social relationship with the surrounding community. Therefore, the following is to be considered only as minimum requirements.

Operators must comply with national legislation concerning the topics addressed in this chapter. Wherever national legislation and this standard are different, the stricter version gives a ruling.

## 2. Scope

Chapter 2.5. of the International Standard for the use and certification of Demeter, Biodynamic and related trademarks is valid also for this Standard. This Standard comes into use for every Demeter certified operator as long as the activity falls under the Scope of the BFDI Standard for the certification of agriculture and processing and the Quality Management Manual of BFDI.

Subcontractors are excluded for the time being and will be integrated in the scope at a later stage.

If labour intermediaries are used (for example to organize peak seasons during harvest), management is responsible for ensuring compliance with the standard by such service providers. This does not apply to service providers not directly related to the operation's core business, as e.g., contractors for construction or repairing equipment.

## 3. Certification

Chapter 2.6. of the International Standard for the use and certification of Demeter, Biodynamic and related trademarks is valid also for this Standard. Risk-oriented approaches in inspection and certification are desired and encouraged. Risk assessments should take the national situation into account as well as the type of operations. For the sake of comparability and equal treatment, risk-based assessments need the approval of the AC and are subject of the regular accreditation activities.

## 4. Public declaration, information and complaint mechanism

Each licensee must have a publicly available social responsibility declaration, in which all relevant parts of this chapter are summarized. Together with the social responsibility declaration, workers must also be informed about relevant national legislation.

This information must be provided in a language (or different languages) understandable to all workers. "Publicly available" can be a billboard in the company premises, a leaflet distributed

to all workers, or on the company’s website or in social media – depending on the environment and what is most easily accessible to workers. Publication through more than one medium is preferred. If illiterate workers are employed, verbal information must be provided.

The declaration must include three contact details for presenting complaints related to social compliance (compare to table below).

Table 1 : Contact levels for presenting complaints	
Contact	To be used in case
1. A person, committee or office belonging to the licensee	This is the contact to be used normally as a first step in a complaint case.
2. An external contact at the level of the corresponding certification organisation	Normally, this is the second complaint level, if a complaint case cannot be resolved at the internal level.  However, in case of doubt that an internal complaint could lead to repression, dismissal, or not be addressed, a claim can also be addressed directly to this external contact.
3. An international contact at the level of the SRC	Complaints will normally be directed to this contact only if they have not been resolved at the previous two levels.  However, in case of doubts that complaints at the national level could lead to repression, or not be addressed, a complaint can also be addressed directly to this international contact. An email address has been established specifically for these complaints: <a href="mailto:complaint-social@demeter.net">complaint-social@demeter.net</a> .

Both internal and external grievance mechanisms must guarantee the confidentiality and protection of whistle blowers. The first two instances are required to coordinate with the next higher instance in case of critical complaints.

## 5. Employment contracts

Written contracts are required, contracts must be in a language that is understood by the workers, and they must be written in clear, simple terms.

Repeated freelance / temporary worker contracts must not be used for avoiding legal requirements related to permanent employment (social security, vacations). If national law does not establish shorter timelines, a worker must be considered 'permanent' when working more than three months in a row or working more than six months per year.

## 6. Freedom of association and collective bargaining

Workers must have the right to organise themselves, to join worker unions, and to collectively bargain their wages and working conditions. Trade unions must be free to exercise their activities in the enterprise.

Where national laws set high bureaucratic hurdles for establishing formal worker organisations, management must recognise informal labour organisations as an alternative, provided these can demonstrate they represent a substantial number of workers. The same applies to enterprises, where the number of employees is below the minimum number established in national law for setting up a labour organisation. The right to organise also applies to seasonal and migrant workers. Mechanisms must be established for ensuring that seasonal workers can participate effectively (e.g., elections at the time when seasonal workers are present).

Management must be open and responsive to requests for meetings with the labour organisation or their representatives but must not try to influence the internal processes of the organisation. If management feels that, e.g., internal processes of the labour organisation are not democratic, or organisation funds are not being handled correctly, an independent third party should be involved for solving the problem.

## 7. No forced labour

Workers must not be obliged to stay with a company. Mechanisms such as, e.g., retaining personal documents or part of the salary, are prohibited.

## 8. No child labour

Child labour is defined here as "hired labour of minors". Children working on their own family farm, are not considered child labour – provided that farm work does not impede school attendance or affect their health and personal development. School attendance should preferably last until reaching secondary school graduation but must never be less than the legally established compulsory schooling years.

The licensee must comply with national legislation in what refers to minimum age of workers. Even if allowed by national law, persons younger than 15 years must not be employed. If allowed under national law, minors from 12 to 15 years may work during school holidays, up to

maximum 4 hours per day and 20 hours per week. Persons from 15 to 18 years must not work more than 40 hours per week. Working must not affect their school attendance.

If the work of students is part of an educational concept and the proceeds of this work benefit the children or the community, then work organized by the school or community-oriented groups can also be permitted up to 10 hours per week during school time.

Under any circumstances, it is prohibited for minors of 18 years to perform hazardous or very hard work and to work at night-time. Any activity that might affect their health or personal development must be avoided. They can only be employed with written permission from their parents.

Prohibition of child labour, however, should not lead to families losing essential income. If children have traditionally contributed to family income, licensees are responsible for ensuring that adults earn enough for this purpose (see next chapter).

## 9. Minimum wage

Payment of all workers must comply with the respective legal minimum wage regulation in each country.

In the event that a respective legal minimum wage is not existing, outdated or unrealistic, the Social responsibility committee will assist the respective national certifying organisation in defining a minimum wage. To determine a realistic value the social responsibility committee will take the average minimum wage of the European Union and adapt it by the purchasing power index (cost of living index in relation to gross national income per inhabitant) to the respective region.

All worker payments shall be transparent. Workers must receive detailed payslips, including regular and extra hours that were worked. Any deductions from wages must be transparent and duly justified.

Payment must be regular and timely, not later than established by national law. If part of the salary is paid in kind (e.g., food, transport, housing), the value of the in-kind benefit must be transparent and fair.

## 10. Working time and vacation

### **For all workers (full-time, part-time, seasonal):**

- Working hours, including resting periods per day and per week, shall comply with national legislation.
- When working more than 6 hours per day, a minimum resting time of 30 minutes must be granted. When more than 9 hours are worked per day, the minimum resting time is 45 minutes.

- Regular working hours (excluding overtime) shall not exceed 48 hours per week.
- Maximum working time (including overtime) during peak season shall not exceed 60 hours per week and 10 hours per day.
- All workers must have minimum one day off per week, even during peak season.
- Working time must be properly and transparently recorded for each worker.

### **For permanent workers (full-time and part-time)**

Annual paid vacations must comply with national labour laws. Where required by law, also for temporary workers the proportional vacation days must be granted. If not defined by law, minimum vacation is three working weeks per year (i.e.: if people normally work five days per week, 15 days; if people work six days per week, 18 days). For part-time workers, vacation days are calculated proportionally.

## **10.1. Overtime**

- Overtime payment must comply with national legislation, including any premiums established in the laws.
- Overtime work must be voluntary. Mandatory overtime work can only be required in well justified, exceptional and non-predictable cases.
- In the event that overtime hours cannot be compensated in a timely manner, they must always be paid for.
- All overtime work shall be properly recorded and based on a documentation which is transparent and accessible for all parties involved.

## **11. Social security**

### **11.1. Social security for permanent workers**

- Social security arrangements must comply with all national legislation.
- All permanent workers must be entitled to paid sick leave, with a minimum duration as established in national laws.
- All permanent workers shall have insurance in case of work accidents.
- All permanent workers shall have health insurance.\*
- All permanent workers shall have unemployment insurance.\*
- All permanent workers shall have old age insurance.\*



*\* For the requirements identified with an asterisk, the respective certifying organisation can issue an exemption taking into account the respective national situation.*

## 11.2. Social security for temporary workers

Demeter licensees should strive for granting similar social security to temporary as to permanent workers. As a minimum, however, the employer must have reliable written arrangements to ensure that temporary workers are protected in case of work accidents. These arrangements shall include medical care and, if an accident leads to occupational disability, an invalidity pension.

## 12. Safe working places

Operators are responsible for providing safe working conditions, minimising the risk of work accidents and work-related illness. Especially for working places with a risk of accidents, illness or injury, strict compliance with national legislation must be ensured.

Regardless of national legislation, attention must be given, among others, to the following:

- Buildings are solid and safe.
- Moving parts on any machinery are protected.
- Any electric equipment, connections and installation are protected and safe to use.
- Vehicles for internal transport of staff, comply with basic transport safety requirements.
- Objects, building or machine parts that pose a risk of injury are removed or covered accordingly.
- Places are protected, when there is a risk of falling.
- Efforts are made for reducing noise to a minimum. Workers exposed to noise wear ear-plugs.
- Exposure to bad smells, dust, exhaust gases, smoke, hazardous substances, vapour, excessive temperature etc. must be minimised. Rooms must have appropriate ventilation. Workers exposed to unavoidable risks must wear appropriate personal protective equipment. If people work routinely under such conditions, a job rotation system must be established, and staff must have additional resting time.
- All necessary measures for fire prevention must be taken. When people (partly) work in locked places, fire emergency plans must be posted publicly. Annual fire drills are to be conducted by all operations with more than 10 employees working (partly) in locked places. Operators with more than 5 employees working (partly) in locked places, must have regularly serviced fire extinguishers.

- New workers must receive adequate training for their jobs, especially in what refers to safe handling of tools and equipment.
- All operations with more than 10 employees (permanent or temporary) must provide, as a minimum, one annual worker safety training to all employees. Such trainings must be conducted by a competent person, must address the specific risks for each specific working place, and must be recorded, including the subjects treated and the names of participants.
- Workers must have access to clean toilets during working time.
- All operations with more than 10 employees (permanent or temporary) must offer suitable and clean places for eating and drinking during breaks.
- All operations must have a first-aid box equipped with non-expired material (minimum: plasters in different sizes and shapes, sterile gauze dressings in different size, sterile eye dressings, triangular bandages, crêpe rolled bandages, safety pins, disposable sterile gloves, tweezers, disinfectant). For larger operations, or operations with different production / processing sites, the number of first-aid boxes must be appropriate to the size. Boxes must be easily accessible and their location must be known to staff. Operations with more than 10 employees (permanent or temporary) must have a sufficient number of trained first-aiders.

## 13. Non-discrimination

All workers must have the same rights and opportunities, regardless of gender, nationality, political opinion, religion, age, sexual orientation, etc. Salaries must comply with the principle of "equal pay for equal work"; any differences can be based only on seniority.

Since discrimination often happens unconsciously, all operations with more than 20 workers (permanent or temporary) must conduct a self-critical discrimination analysis, considering all potential aspects of discrimination, and setting targets for improvement. For new licensees, this analysis must be part of their conversion plan. The analysis and improvement plan must be updated every three years. It is recommended to involve external specialists in this exercise.

## 14. Cancellation of working contracts

- Licensees must comply with national law in what refers to work contract cancellation (period of notice, written notification, severance allowance, etc.).
- Work contracts may not be cancelled because of participation in worker union activities, filing a complaint, absence of work during maternity leave, or similar reasons.
- If workers are dismissed because of conduct or performance, they must first be given an opportunity to defend themselves.

- Workers must have the right to appeal against their dismissal to an independent third party.

## 15. Drinking water

Workers must have easy access to potable water during working hours, at no cost. The reference to what “potable” means under different conditions, is the type of water that people would drink at their homes.

## 16. Accommodation

Where applicable, accommodation provided to workers complies with the following:

- It is safe, secure and hygienic
- Protected against cold, heat, wind, sun, dust, contamination, etc.
- Has easy access to potable water
- Has good sanitary conditions
- Offers enough privacy
- There is one bed per worker, enough space per person
- Dormitories are separated by sexes
- People can lock up personal belongings
- Charges for worker housing must be fair and proportionate.

## 17. Respect for local and indigenous communities

- Companies involved in land grabbing, Illegal appropriation of (cultivated) land or land speculation cannot be Demeter certified.
- As part of the conversion plan every license unambiguous and unequivocal has to declare ownership and acquisition of the certified entity based on meaningful documentation.
- Not only the specific land affected by land grabbing, but also other farms owned or managed by the same company, are excluded from Demeter certification.
- Operations must not use local resources (especially water) in a way that negatively affects the rights and needs of the local and/or indigenous communities.

## 18. Personal development

Companies must offer employees opportunities for personal development. This can include courses on biodynamic farming, professional training (not necessarily related to the employee's current job), any other training or cultural activity the employees are interested in. Provided the employees are interested, part of such activities must take place during working hours (minimum one hour per week).