




Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

The German Bio-Siegel

– Brand protection until 2021 –

Manual and decision aid





Clear labelling, unequivocal and visible at a glance, is essential for marketing sustainable products. Making commodities, such as food items, known or creating an image for them is not an easy task. Hence, brand creation and advertising play a major role in food marketing. The point is to convey a catchy message, i.e. signal, to the consumer. Only a very small number of now highly popular signs, marks or symbols which gained the trust of the industry and consumers alike, meet this requirement.

The German Bio-Siegel is one of them.

It was introduced in September 2001 by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) as a voluntary label for organic foods and has since then become one of the most widely-known and most frequently used logos in food labelling.

While over 90% of consumers in Germany know the German Bio-Siegel, more than 50% trust its message and among them, 70% are willing to buy food bearing the Bio-Siegel! — This is the conclusion of the respective study carried out by the University of Göttingen and published in spring 2013.¹ Given the tremendous positive feedback, trademark protection was extended until 2021.

The logo is a signal, not only for newcomers in organic farming, for organic food producers or for trade to successfully introduce and establish organic foods on the market. It also gives already established food producers, distributors and importers the opportunity to make bio- or organic food interesting by presenting it in connection with a visually striking sign and to awaken or increase consumer willingness to buy such products.

See it at a glance: “If there’s Bio on it, there’s Bio in it!”

As a protected logo for organic foods, the Bio-Siegel conveys the clear message that the minimum standards EU legislation provides for organic farming are met. Operators may use the Bio-Siegel voluntarily and free of charge. Using it is simple and unbureaucratic.

¹ Study by the University of Göttingen, Requirements to be met by a sustainable agro-industrial sector: “The consumer’s role.” [Anforderungen an eine nachhaltige Land- und Ernährungswirtschaft: „Die Rolle der Konsumenten“], by Marie von Meyer Höfer, Achim Spiller

Legal bases

The label may be used on the basis of the Eco Labelling Law in its version published on 20 January 2009 (Federal Law Gazette, BGBl. I, p. 78).

With respect to usage criteria, the Eco Labelling Law refers to the requirements provided for by European Union legislation on organic farming (Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 and the implementing rules in their applicable versions).

Food that bears the Bio-Siegel must have been produced and prepared according to the respective rules and must be part of the control procedure of an approved eco inspection body.


If these requirements are not met or if the Bio-Siegel is misused, the Eco Labelling Law provides rules regarding fines and sanctions.

Details on the layout and usage of the Bio-Siegel are laid down in the Eco Label Regulation [Öko-Kennzeichenverordnung, Öko-KennzVO] of 6 February 2002, last amended by regulation of 30 November 2005 which provides for an obligation to notify, prior to the label's first use, every organic food item which shall bear the Bio-Siegel.

Products that may be labelled

All non-processed agricultural products and agricultural products processed for human consumption, or feedstuffs which fall within the scope of EC rules and regulations for organic production may be labelled with the Bio-Siegel. The same applies to products of aquaculture (e.g. fish from pond farming as well as algae). Principally, all ingredients of agricultural origin must stem from organic farming, while strict exceptional rules apply to up to 5 % of such ingredients: they must either be listed in Annex IX of Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008 or, in duly substantiated cases, an exemption must have been granted by the competent authority.

Outside caterers, such as restaurants, company canteens or catering facilities at schools may use the Bio-Siegel to label menus or menu components if they have been certified according to EU legislation for organic farming. A direct reference to organic production must be made in daily menu lists.



The labelling of organic or biological wine has been possible as of the 2012 harvest, if the vinification facilities have been certified according to EU legislation on organic farming. The wine may be labelled as „organic/biological wine“ and must bear the EU Bio Logo. The German Bio-Siegel may be used additionally. Stocks of wine that were produced according to EU legislation on organic farming prior to 1 August 2012, may continue to bear the reference „wine made from organically produced grapes“ and may be marketed with the Bio-Siegel until these stocks run out. The EU Bio Logo may not be used on such products.

Products from hunting or wildlife fishing are not considered organic products and may not be labelled with the Bio-Siegel. This also applies to medical and cosmetic products not included in or subject to EU legislation on organic farming. Neither foods nor feedstuffs which have been enriched with vitamins and mineral substances nor agricultural products produced during the transition period to organic farming may be labelled with the Bio-Siegel.

May imported goods bear the Bio-Siegel?

Yes, any product produced and controlled according to EC legislation on organic farming and any product imported from other EU member states (third countries) according to the specific import regulations may be labelled with the Bio-Siegel.

May the Bio-Siegel be used together with the EU Bio Logo?

Yes, indeed! - Any organically produced food item may bear the German Bio-Siegel in addition to the EU Bio Logo that includes the inspection body code and the designation of origin.

Steps on the way towards using the Bio-Siegel

As soon as the control procedure has been successfully concluded by an authorized eco inspection body and the certificate according to Article 29 of Regulation (EC) 834/2007 (the Eco or Bio Certificate) has been submitted, any foodstuff may be labelled with the Bio-Siegel according to the rules of the Eco-Label Regulation. A bit of bureaucratic effort is required as, prior to the Bio-Siegel's first usage, the organic foods to be labelled need to be registered with the Bio-Siegel Information Service at the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Bonn. During the process, the label design containing the Bio-Siegel (or sample menu lists in case of catering or gastronomic services) must also be submitted. Please note that a direct reference to organic production must always be made!

Ways to register

Online:

Register via the website www.biosiegel.de and the „Bio-Siegel data base“ on its left. If your registration was successful, an administrative code number will be assigned automatically. Electronic versions of labels/ sample menu lists may be uploaded directly as pdf-files or may be e-mailed to bio-siegel@ble.de, indicating the administrative code number assigned. Data can be updated or corrected within the data base and users may register new products by logging in with their e-mail addresses and the assigned passwords. This is the easiest and fastest method to register products.

In writing:

At www.biosiegel.de, you will find the form „Notification of products labelled with the Bio-Siegel“. Required proofs illustrating the complete product label may be sent either electronically, by fax, or by surface mail.

As soon as the complete labels have been submitted, the Bio-Siegel Information Service will include the registered products in the data base. Irrespective of how a product was notified/ registered, the Bio-Siegel user shall receive an automatically generated e-mail to confirm the successful registration or notification of the products concerned

For reasons of data protection, only the information (number of products of a certain product group) of those companies shall be published that agreed to such publication when they notified their products.

Retailers who sell products bearing the Bio-Siegel directly to the final consumer and who do not label or prepare such products according to the EU legislation on organic farming or who have such labelling or preparation done by third parties, need not register.

Guidelines on graphic design

Bio-Siegel artwork in the most common file formats as well as information regarding label design and usage on packaging, on promotional material and on other items used for sales promotion are available online at www.biosiegel.de. They can also be ordered by e-mail or on CD-ROM from the Bio-Siegel Information Service at the Federal Office for Agriculture and Food (BLE) in Bonn.

Layout and design shall meet the rules provided by the Eco Labelling Regulation, i.e. labels must be graphically designed as follows:

The Bio-Siegel must have a minimum size of 10 mm and a maximum size of 33 mm. Its size is measured from the outer left to the outer right corner of the green frame. However, the maximum width may only be used to an extent where the size of the Bio-Siegel „B“ does not exceed 60 % of the largest letter contained in the product title. If only the minimum size is used, the „60% rule“ need not be observed.

In case of a coloured background, the Bio-Siegel, in its original colour, must be surrounded by a white contour of the same size as the green frame. The spatial relation of words and graphic elements must not be modified.

The Corporate Design Manual for the uniform use of the Bio-Siegel provides guidelines on the usage of signs, graphic indications and samples (e.g. on the option „adjusted colours“ or „transparent background“). The Corporate Design Manual is available, together with the above-mentioned CD ROM, from the Bio-Siegel Information Service. It can also be downloaded as a pdf-file at, www.biosiegel.de.

The Bio-Siegel for promotional purposes

Please note that, in case of items for sales promotion or advertising, there should always be a direct connection with the organic foods offered at the point of sale. In this case, there is no obligation to notify. Yet, the prerequisite according to which the respective products may bear the Bio-Siegel continues to apply. Accordingly, both price displays for the bio products and shelves, for instance, on which organic food items are offered, may bear the Bio-Siegel. The Bio-Siegel may also be used on ceiling dangles, hanging signs or shop window stickers. For those purposes, the maximum size mentioned above may be exceeded.

What about other current eco labels?

The Bio-Siegel replaces neither the signs, logos or labels of organic producer organisations nor trademarks or producer labels. They may be used in addition to the binding EU Bio Logo. Beyond the basic information conveyed by the Bio-Siegel, producers and suppliers may communicate the additional services connected to or offered by their products through target group-oriented, product specific or sales point-related marketing concepts.

Unlawful use of the Bio-Siegel

Food items that bear the Bio-Siegel unlawfully may be withdrawn from the market. In addition, the Eco Labelling Law provides administrative fines of up to 30,000 Euros.

The Bio-Siegel is a brand protected with the German Patent and Trademark Office until 2021. Resulting private claims for injunction or indemnity shall be pursued by the trademark owner, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

Information on the internet

www.bmel.de » a strong agricultural sector » Sustainability and organic farming
Consolidated versions of EU regulations on organic farming, the Eco Labelling Law and the Eco Labelling Regulation

www.oekolandbau.de
Information on organic farming

www.biosiegel.de » For information on how to use the label; Bio-Siegel data base, online registration

Support and consultation:

Information Centre Bio-Siegel

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Publisher:

Federal Office of Agriculture and Food

Initiated by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture

Layout and photo:

BLE, Sub-Division 422

Printed by:

Druck- und Verlagshaus Zarbock GmbH & Co. KG,
60386 Frankfurt am Main

Status:

August 2017