November 2, 2026

DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

New SOP sets out organic certification for fish farms in the Northeast

A Department of Fisheries SOP sets out how fish farms, grower groups, processors and traders in the Northeast get organic certification.

THE DEPARTMENT OF Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, launched a "Standard Operating Procedure for Organic Certification of Fisheries in the North-Eastern Region" on November 2, 2026 (the SOP itself is undated). It sets out how operators in the Northeast get organic certification for farmed fish, scampi and other aquaculture products, and for cultivated aquatic plants. The Department runs it, with the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the State Fisheries Departments and ICAR's fisheries institutes. It covers the organic fisheries clusters in Sikkim and Meghalaya and may be extended to other states by a Department notification. The SOP records that the first organic fisheries cluster, in Soreng District of Sikkim, was notified on January 6, 2025 under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), one of 34 fisheries processing and production clusters the Department has notified.

KEY FACTS

AUTHORITY
Department of Fisheries

PUBLISHED
November 2, 2026

ISSUED BY
Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

DOCUMENT
Standard Operating Procedure for Organic Certification of Fisheries in the North-Eastern Region

New SOP sets out organic certification for fish farms in the Northeast

Department of Fisheries · November 2, 2026

The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, launched a "Standard Operating Procedure for Organic Certification of Fisheries in the North-Eastern Region" on November 2, 2026 (the SOP itself is undated). It sets out how operators in the Northeast get organic certification for farmed fish, scampi and other aquaculture products, and for cultivated aquatic plants. The Department runs it, with the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the State Fisheries Departments and ICAR's fisheries institutes. It covers the organic fisheries clusters in Sikkim and Meghalaya and may be extended to other states by a Department notification. The SOP records that the first organic fisheries cluster, in Soreng District of Sikkim, was notified on January 6, 2025 under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), one of 34 fisheries processing and production clusters the Department has notified.

It applies to inland aquaculture in ponds, tanks, pens, raceways and reservoirs; cold-water aquaculture such as trout; paddy-cum-fish culture; ornamental fish and crab culture; aquatic plants; hatcheries and organic feed mills; systems such as recirculating aquaculture and biofloc; and processing, packing, storage and trade of organic fish products from certified units in the region. It doesn't apply to marine capture or deep-sea fisheries. Individual fish farmers, grower groups of small and marginal farmers run through an Internal Control System (ICS), fisheries farmer producer organizations, processors, and traders or exporters may apply.

The SOP names two certification systems. PGS-India, run by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, is a low-cost peer-review system for the domestic market only, and the SOP says it has limited use for aquaculture. The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), run by APEDA, uses accredited third-party certification bodies, is mandatory for organic exports and works through the TraceNet platform. It lists the Meghalaya State Organic Certification Body (NPOP) and the Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (PGS-India), and tells operators to check a body's current scope on APEDA's website before applying.

An operator applies to a certification body with proof of ownership or lease of the farm or water body, a layout map with coordinates, an identity document, a declaration of inputs used over the past three years, a baseline water test from a NABL-accredited or recognized laboratory, a soil test for ponds, and an Organic Management Plan (also called an Organic System Plan), updated every year. The body signs a written agreement with the operator and registers it on a traceability platform such as TraceNet 2.0, which gives it a unique ID. The conversion period runs from registration: 12 months where no synthetic inputs were used in the past 12 months, up to 24 months where they were, and as little as 6 months in cases such as new ponds or traditional low-input systems, with evidence. Fish from the conversion period may be sold as "in-conversion", not as "Organic".

The production rules require distance and a buffer zone from sources of contamination, prefer indigenous and locally adapted species, and ban genetically modified, hormonally treated and unapproved exotic stock. Stocking must be below conventional densities, feed must be organic as far as possible and free of synthetic amino acids, preservatives, colors, antibiotic growth promoters and GM ingredients, and synthetic antibiotics may be used only as a last resort under a registered veterinarian. The certification body inspects before certifying, then every year, plus unannounced and pre-harvest inspections where needed. It issues a scope certificate, normally valid for one year, and a transaction certificate with a unique code for each consignment. Records are kept for at least three years. Critical non-conformities, such as prohibited substances or passing off produce as organic, lead to suspension or withdrawal. Certification costs may be met from PMMSY, FIDF, PM-MKSSY or other ministries' schemes. The State Fisheries Department prepares a convergence plan for each organic cluster and sends it to NFDB for approval.

Issued by	Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
Document	Standard Operating Procedure for Organic Certification of Fisheries in the North-Eastern Region
Launched	November 2, 2026 (the SOP itself is undated)
Applies to	Aquaculture, aquatic plants, hatcheries, feed mills and post-harvest handling in the Northeast; organic clusters in Sikkim and Meghalaya
Does not apply to	Marine capture fisheries and deep-sea fisheries
Who may apply	Individual fish farmers, grower groups under an ICS, fisheries farmer producer organizations, processors and handlers, traders and exporters
Certification systems	NPOP (APEDA, third-party, needed for export) and PGS-India (peer review, domestic market only)
Conversion period	12 months; up to 24 months if synthetic inputs were used; may be cut to 6 months with evidence
Certificates	Scope certificate, normally valid one year; transaction certificate for each consignment
Inspections	Initial, annual surveillance, unannounced, and pre-harvest where needed
Records	At least three years
First organic fisheries cluster	Soreng District, Sikkim, notified January 6, 2025 under PMMSY

Certification bodies named in clause 3.2

Certification body	Scope	Base
Meghalaya State Organic Certification Body (MSOCB)	Accredited under APEDA for NPOP third-party organic certification across Northeast and East India; farms, groups, processing, wild collection in the NER	Upper Shillong
Sikkim State Organic Certification Agency (SSOCA)	PGS-India certification of organic farming practices, mainly for local and domestic markets	Tadong, Gangtok

The standard operating procedure (PDF, 4.8 MB)

Source: Department of Fisheries's own copy.

Checked against the official copy on November 12, 2026.

IndusDesk

hello@indusdesk.com · +91 11 4141 3939

9th Floor, Hemkunt House, Rajendra Place, New Delhi, Delhi 110008, India

Read online: indusdesk.com/department-of-fisheries/insights/new-sop-sets-out-organic-certification-for-fish-farms-in-the-northeast/