



1. Legal basis: S.L. 427.90

2. Background

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide the basic guidance for the procedure in participating in the Product of Quality National Scheme. The contents of these guidelines are based upon the national legislation S.L 427.90 and in no way superseded the provisions established in the national regulatory framework.

3. Scope of the scheme

- a) To promote, qualify and diffuse products as defined in these regulations in order to give value to agricultural products and create awareness and appreciation of such products.
- b) To attain the national recognition of Quality Mark acknowledging that the product/s in question adhere to the quality scheme established in these regulations and are thus to be considered of a superior quality.

4. Products of Quality National Scheme Logo



5. Establishment of the scheme

- 5.1. The scheme is open to all interested actors who form part of a recognized agricultural value chain, being involved in a set of activities which collectively increase the commercial value of a basic product of the agricultural industry, this may involve Production, Processing, Packaging, Storage, Transport and Distribution.
- 5.2. Such actors within a particular sector may collaborate and come together to set up a Standard binding the product and, or method specifications for each product which identify the production and, or farming methods and the elements that characterize the superior quality of the product.
- 5.3. Actors must be willing and ready to abide by the administrative criteria established by the Competent Authority required for the participation in the scheme.
- 5.4. Actors must be willing to follow and comply with a control system in order to monitor the binding product and, or method specifications.
- 5.5. Actors must be willing to participate in a compulsory traceability system which guarantees the transparency of the scheme and assures complete traceability of the products.

6. Procedure for Participation

- i. A Product Standard document needs to be drafted involving all relevant stakeholders involved in the sector, such exercise is coordinated by the Competent Authority.
- ii. Once the Product Standard whose production and, or farming methods and the elements that characterize the superior quality (as mentioned in 5.1) of the product is drafted and agreed upon by all stakeholders, this is to be presented to the EU for approval.
- iii. The draft standard goes through 90 days stand still period where the European Commission and Member States can provide their feedback on the standard.
- iv. Once approved by CION, any actor within the agricultural value chain established in the Product Standard Document can apply to participate in Products of Quality National Scheme by filling the application provided by the Competent Authority - Agriculture Directorate.
- v. Together with the application, the operator shall also submit the required documents as per Product Standard specification, these include an Auto Control Document, Proof of engagement with an independent approved Control Body and Traceability Document.
- vi. Upon receiving the application which must be submitted through https://www.servizz.gov.mt/mt/Pages/Ambjent_-Ener_ija_-Biedja-u-Sajd/Biedja/Biedja/WEB271/default.aspx, for Land Based applications or https://www.servizz.gov.mt/en/Pages/Environment_-Energy_-Agriculture-and-

Fisheries/Agriculture/Agriculture/WEB2380/default.aspx for Animal Based applications, the Agriculture Directorate will evaluate the application submitted.

- vii. If the application together with the documents required to participate in the scheme are true as declared, and satisfy in terms of correctness and completeness the AD shall inform the affiliated Control Body for the execution of inspections as required on the respective holdings to ascertain that there is conformity with the product standard specification.
- viii. Following inspection, the Control Body issues a report with the findings during the initial inspection and sends it to the AD.
- ix. The report is reviewed by the AD and if the applicant is compliant with requirements set in the Product Standard specification, the operator is approved in the PQNS.
- x. On admittance to the scheme the Competent Authority shall issue a certificate of adherence to the scheme, and enlist the operator in the Register.
- xi. Once approved, any operator producing the product to be marketed with Quality label will be followed by a Control Body which inspects the respective holdings and his/her operation to ascertain the operator is operating in line with regulation in place and the products standard specification. This will ascertain the superior quality of the product while keeping a full traceability of the product.
- xii. The operator is to then submit the application to be granted authorization for the use of the quality mark.
- xiii. It is only after these steps are followed, the operator will be allowed to affix the quality label to his/her products.
- xiv. Once the whole process is carried out for the year the operator must be submit a claim form together with receipts to ARPA so as to get the reimbursement for the services provided by the Control Bodies and other service providers, if any.