
**ASSESSMENTS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UNANNOUNCED
CERTIFICATION INSPECTIONS IN THE ORGANIC FOOD SECTOR**

**INDIRA GABRIELA VILLANUEVA RAMÍREZ
MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.Sc.) IN INTERNATIONAL AGRIBUSINESS FACULTY
OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES**

ABSTRACT

The globalization of the organic food makes difficult to control for the quality of the products. In this context, the certification approach arises as mechanism that can give certain guarantees. However, the existence of different incentives to enter the organic market still encourages opportunistic behaviour. To reduce the risk of frauds, unannounced inspections have been introduced by several organic standards in the last years. Although a number of studies have analysed the effectiveness and reliability of different quality assurance systems in the food industry, it seems to be that the effectiveness of unannounced inspections to control for frauds and their effect on the reliability of the system remain unclear. This study analyses data reported by 23 certification companies in Germany during 2007, 2008 and 2009, in order to shed light onto the effectiveness of unannounced inspections. The findings reveal that although the importance of unannounced inspections has increased in the last years, they are not completely effective for imposing graver sanctions and, thus, they would be exerting a limited role in improving the reliability of the organic certification system. However, data constraints did not allow to test in more detail the hypothesis addressed in this study. Further research should focus on analysing, in a more disaggregated level, the relationship between reported non-conformities and unannounced inspections. In this way, the results presented here could be validated