

## IFOAM publishes its first Policy Brief on PGS

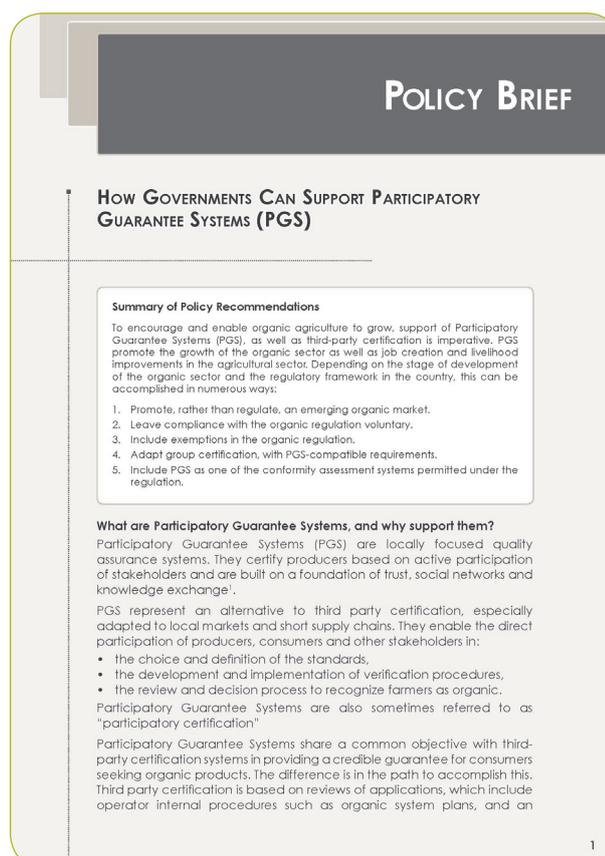
by Joelle Katto Andrighetto



In July, the IFOAM World Board approved the final version of the IFOAM Policy Brief on “How Governments Can Support Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)”. This is in fact the first “Policy Brief” published by IFOAM, a new type of official publications targeted at governments and aiming at influencing and improving the policy landscape in favor of organic agriculture development.

This Policy Brief on PGS is also a landmark in IFOAM’s advocacy work for PGS. It is the first time that IFOAM has an official position, not only on the fact that PGS should be recognized in governments’ organic regulatory systems, but also on how governments can actually achieve that. Recognizing that different countries have very different regulatory environments, the Policy brief proposes various PGS- supportive scenarios, ranging from “not regulating an emerging organic market”, to “including PGS as one of the conformity assessment systems permitted under the regulation”.

IFOAM will now make use of this tool, in any possible occasion, to advocate for regulatory frameworks more favorable to PGS development. PGS initiatives, national organic movements, NGOs, consultancies and other actors



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supporting the development of PGS are also encouraged to download, print and make use of the ideas and recommendations in the Policy Brief in their advocacy efforts and counseling work towards governments.

Finally, government representatives themselves are invited to read the Policy Brief and to find in this resource a set of clear and concrete recommendations that would enable them to further improve their legal framework for the benefit of their domestic organic sector.

You can download the Policy Brief [here](#).

Questions, feedbacks and updates on your use of the tool will be highly appreciated, as we launch a new era of political advocacy for PGS development. To coordinate our efforts, please write to [pgs@ifoam.org](mailto:pgs@ifoam.org).

## India: a government “PGS-India” and a private “PGS Organic Council”

*by Joelle Katto Andrighetto*

With the launch of the governmental program to support PGS, India is now the only country in the world with a private (NGO-lead) PGS system and a government-lead PGS program running in parallel.

In India, PGS actually began with the involvement of both government and NGO representative. It was in 2006, with the support of an FAO project, that consultations were held with the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers, NGOs and state government officials, to work on the development of a specific PGS model suitable for India. After a national workshop, pilot programs were launched in different parts of the country, under the leadership of various NGOs. Later on, these NGOs consolidated their efforts into one national PGS network, coordinated by the “PGS Organic India Council”.

In 2010, the National Center for Organic Farming (NCOF), a government institution part of the Ministry of Agriculture, began consultations for the development of a national PGS program. This program was launched in April 2011, under the name “Participatory Guarantee System (PGS-India)”. The “PGS-India Organic” logo was developed in relation to this program.

Meanwhile, the NGO-lead “PGS Organic India Council” was working on its legal registration, which was completed also in April 2011. Due to the existence of the new government-lead PGS program, the “PGS Organic India Council” had to change its name and logo. The word ‘India’ had to be dropped from the original name and the association is now called “PGS Organic Council”. The word “certified” was taken out of the logo that instead now spells out fully “Participatory Guarantee Systems”. The logo however conserves very much its original look.



Original logo of the NGO-lead PGS



New logo of the NGO-lead PGS



Logo of the Government-lead PGS

Both systems have a national scope and have their own structure to consolidated all farmers local groups under one system:



Structure of the government-lead PGS program (DAC: Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture)



Structure of the NGO-lead PGS

## How does PGS South Africa work?

by Konrad Hauptfleisch



Recent developments in the South African organic agriculture sector are paving the way for PGS to flourish. The Draft Organic Policy is on its way to be ratified by Government, and in the policy, PGS is definitively mentioned as an initiative to be supported by government. The further

publication of a Consumer Protection Act and labelling regulations for foodstuffs, make it mandatory for suppliers to comply with accepted standards. While third-party organic certification already enjoys acceptance within the broader industry, thousand of emerging farmers, supplying local markets, are at risk of falling foul of these regulations. PGS presents a real alternative for these growers, and PGS South Africa was formed to support and develop PGS as an accepted system for this constituency.

It is important to note that PGS South Africa is not a governing body for PGS, but rather a facilitating network. PGS, by its nature, should be grassroots

organisations, owned and operated by its beneficiaries at local level. PGSSA aims to support the development of PGS locally, while giving the whole movement a voice and a face at national level. PGS systems already in operation may choose to form part of this network, or operate under their own banner and associate at will. For those who choose a closer association, wanting to operate under a common mark and common or even “equivalent” standards, PGSSA is developing an assessment and endorsement system that could be operated at local level, with national credibility.





In order to achieve this, PGS South Africa will operate according to the guidelines for Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) as defined by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM): “Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.” (IFOAM, 2008)

It is essential that we develop the small and emerging farmers in our region. Our network helps small farmers to access local markets, while giving consumers the organic assurance they require. The power of PGS lies in the fact that it is transparent and collective. The whole process is open to scrutiny by consumers, and the work is done by the farmers themselves in conjunction with the consumers. This means that the cost of PGS assurance is a fraction of third-party certification. This has obvious benefits to all.

**The Standard:** Growers are assessed according to a set of Basic Production Principles. These principles are based on the AFRISCO Organic Standard and

in compliance with PGS requirements in the South African Draft Regulations. The choice to use the AFRISCO Standard as a baseline is due to the fact that the standard is in general use across Southern Africa and has been approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards.

**The application:** A grower fills in an online or paper application, which is then assessed by the PGS administration. If the application complies with the basic requirements, an on-site assessment is arranged.

**The assessment:** A group consisting of fellow local farmers, consumers and even retailers will visit the farm, complete an assessment report and issue a recommendation to endorse the farmer. This report is also posted on the website for scrutiny.

**The pledge:** The farmer makes a pledge to honour the principles of the PGS. This pledge, along with the certificate issued by the PGS, is the final set of documents open for scrutiny on the website.

**The mark:** Qualifying farmers or groups will be able to display the PGSSA Logo on their products. This logo serves as a visual assurance to customers that the product has undergone the PGS assessment process.



**Public scrutiny:** Any member of the public can log on to the PGS website and view a farm’s documentation. A consumer may also choose to become a member of PGSSA, and can then participate in farm assessments. This is actually recommended, as consumers are, after all, the people we want to have as partners in our system.

The way to know your food is to see it growing!

## Alice Varon replaces Ron Khosla on the IFOAM PGS Committee



The IFOAM World Board has recently approved a change in the IFOAM PGS Committee. Alice Varon, executive director of Certified Naturally Grown - CNG (<http://www.naturallygrown.org/>) from the US, is now a member of the committee, replacing Ron Khosla.

Nominated PGS Committee member in 2009, Ron has provided bright insights and innovative approaches during meetings and discussions, contributing to the committee's activities and to the promotion of PGS worldwide. He has been running an organic Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farm in New Paltz (<http://www.flyingbeet.com/>) for the past 13 years, and this year the size of the CSA is increasing to provide up to 200 local families with locally grown, organic produce. Of course that requires lots of dedication!

Ron had been involved with Certified Naturally Grown since its foundation in 2002. He also served as a PGS adviser to the FAO project to set-up a national PGS system in India in 2006, a work with far reaching impact today (see article on the Indian PGS systems). In 2006, Alice became the executive director of CNG. Alice's background in grassroots organizations has helped her expand CNG's membership and operations, such as the apiary certification program launched in 2010.

In her words, CNG "is the grassroots alternative to certified organic for farmers and beekeepers. It's created specifically for small-scale, direct-market producers who are committed to organic agriculture, but were forbidden to use "organic" to describe their practices once the national organic program took effect in 2002 – unless they went through the certification process, which is really too expensive and time-consuming for many small farms."

We would like to welcome Alice and to support her in her activities, hoping that more initiatives and farmers worldwide will benefit from her experience through her contribution to the IFOAM PGS committee. We also take the opportunity to thank Ron for his dedication to the organic movement as a whole and especially, through the PGS committee, to small-scale farmers promoting local organic alternatives, just like him.

## Continental news: What's new in...



### ...Africa

- **Namibia:** The Namibian Organic Association (NOA) is a membership based organization that coordinates and promotes organic agricultural development, networking and marketing in Namibia. The organization owns the standard and the Namibian Organic Mark, developed with the support of the national standards authority and the government. The primary assurance system for local markets is PGS which is administered by the NOA. The Organic Mark can be used by growers certified through the PGS, while third-party certifiers can operate alongside the PGS. Third-party certification is primarily used for export markets. The Namibian Standard was developed in line with a standard compliant with the IFOAM Basic standard, which facilitates an easy migration of PGS-certified farmers to third-party certification when and if required. NOA has developed a PGS system and it is possible to assess some information and download some documents from their [website](#). NOA is financially supported by the Namibia Country Pilot Partnership for Integrated Sustainable Land Management (CPP NAM ISLM) with funds provided by the Global Environment Facility and administered by the United Nations Development Programme. For more info contact [Manjo Smith](#).
- **Uganda:** Mid-July, representatives from the national organic movements and certification bodies of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as IFOAM representatives, participated in a one day field visit of the Namulonge farmers group in the area around Kampala. The group is implementing PGS to guarantee that their products are produced in compliance with the East African Organic Product Standard. The PGS is being overseen by Nogamu, the national organic movement in Uganda, which has granted the group the right to use the East African Organic Mark on their products. The field visit was organized in the context of the OSEA II project, and was a good source of inspiration for stakeholders in the East African region where several others groups will be coached into developing their own PGS.



## ...Asia and Oceania

- **South Korea:** PGS presented at the OWC. During the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress that will be held in Korea from 26 September to 05 October, PGS will have two dedicated sessions. The first one, on September 31 will be dedicated to Latin American and Caribbean initiatives. The second, on October 1st, will focus on South Africa. From the many papers submitted, 8 were selected and will be presented by their authors in South Korea. The list of authors and papers titles can be found [here](#). For a summary of the approved papers, please contact [f.castro@ifoam.org](mailto:f.castro@ifoam.org).



## ...Latin America

- **Brazil:** PGS and public policies were discussed during the 2ª Agroind Familiar, a national fair for products and services for small scale family producers, held from 13 to 17 July in Lajeado, RS, South of Brazil. National, regional and local authorities and different stakeholders participated in a seminar on Organic Agriculture and workshops on agroecology, family farming and Participatory Certification. More than 900 people attended the event. There was also room for discussion and exchange of experiences for organic producers. For more info (in portuguese): [www.agroindfamiliar.com.br](http://www.agroindfamiliar.com.br).

## Imprint

The Global PGS Newsletter is published monthly. All PGS-related articles are welcome. Please send your articles for submission in English, French or Spanish to [pgs@ifoam.org](mailto:pgs@ifoam.org). Deadline for submission of articles is the 30th of each month for the following month's issue.

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