

Program of the PGS sessions at the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress

As the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress approaches, we are pleased to publish the programme of the two sessions dedicated to PGS that will be taking place during the event. From the many papers submitted, 8 were selected, and will be presented by their authors.

The first session will take place on September 31, from 16:30 to 18:00, and will be dedicated to Latin American and Caribbean initiatives.

Sergio Carrano, from Brazil, will present his paper entitled “The Legal Characteristics of the Brazilian Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for Organic Agriculture, and The Emphasize in Joint Liability”.

Rita Schwentesius, from Mexico, will present two papers, “The Participative Certification in Mexico: The Mexican Experience in Participative Guarantee Systems Mexican Network of Organic Markets” and “Mexican Network of Organic Markets and Tianguis (REDAC) and Participatory Certification”.

Jannet Villanueva, member of the IFOAM PGS Committee will discuss the paper “Participatory Guarantee Systems in Latin America and The Caribbean: From Discourse to Practice”.

The second session will be on October 1, from 11:30 to 13:00 will focus on South Africa, Asia and Europe.

Eva Torremocha, member of the IFOAM PGS Committee and candidate to the IFOAM World Board will present a paper entitled “Participatory Guarantee Systems: a useful tool in Europe? What for? Whom for?”

Community Based Organization and Participatory Guarantee System of Organic Farming in Java is the theme of the presentation by **Slamet**.

Jane Tsao, from BIOFarm, an urban farm in Shanghai, will present “Participate Guarantee System in China”.

Raymond Auerbach, Director of the Rainman Landcare Foundation will discuss “Participatory Guarantee Systems: A Route into Local Markets for Emerging African farmers”.

For a summary of the approved papers, please contact Flávia Castro (f.castro@ifoam.org).

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Assessing PGS initiatives: a challenging learning experience

By Flávia Castro



Since the launch of the new IFOAM PGS Logo (PGS Newsletter, April, 2011, v.2, n.6), interested PGS initiatives from all over the world have contacted the IFOAM PGS Team, to apply for the use of the logo, and to be listed on the upcoming new IFOAM PGS Global Database. Part of a quality review of PGS initiatives, the assessment started as soon as the applicant initiatives submitted their Self Evaluation Form (the SEF is available for download in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, [here](#)), the document that serves as the basis for the evaluation. Upon request, other relevant documents, such as training and procedures manuals, were also submitted by the applicant initiatives, which provided the assessors with clarifications and specific information through continuous interaction and exchange of communication. Members of the IFOAM PGS Committee, according to geographical relevance, have been involved, commenting on the initiatives that they know personally or that they have been in contact with, and assisting in the collection of data and documentation.

For the IFOAM staff involved in the assessment, this has been an interesting and challenging learning experience, in terms of developing the most appropriate tools, to effectively assess PGS initiatives against the PGS concept document [Shared Vision, Shared Ideals](#), as well as in terms of broadening the understanding of peculiarities in different PGS initiatives from different parts of the world. There is no formula or recipe for PGS, we are well aware!

The next phase of the process will take place on the beginning of October, in the framework of the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress and General Assembly, in Korea. IFOAM PGS Committee members Alice Varon, Chris May, Eva Torremocha, Janet Villanueva, Konrad Hauptfleisch and Mathew John, and the IFOAM PGS Coordinator, Joelle Katto-Andrighetto, will meet for a whole day to discuss progress since their last meeting, new projects and especially to review and agree on the final decision about granting access to the logo and to the IFOAM PGS Global Database for 11 different PGS initiatives. Included in this review are not only eligible PGS initiatives that have so far applied for the logo, but also some of those that are currently listed in the IFOAM PGS Global Database. The idea is that all the initiatives will be reviewed as soon as possible and that

the database will be regularly updated.

Just as PGS are based on a permanent process of learning, which develops capacities in the communities involved, the assessment of PGS initiatives is also an ongoing process, open for possible improvements in terms of tools and methodologies adopted. It must remain flexible and inclusive enough to guarantee that local specificities and variations are taken into account. Many issues have already emerged and will be further discussed by the PGS Committee Members in Korea and later reported in this Newsletter. So far, though, the reviewed initiatives demonstrate a remarkable consistency of core principles, confirming the relevance of the key PGS elements and characteristics currently identified and synthesized in the concept document, which remains the main reference for PGS.

Organic Act on hold in South Africa

By Gunnar Rundgren



This article was originally published in The Organic Standard (TOS), 124, August 2011

For more than a decade South Africa has been preparing an organic legislation, and last autumn its adoption was supposed to be imminent (see TOS 115, November 2010). However, recently the Legal Department of the Department of Agriculture ruled the regulation to be incompatible with the Act under which they were supposed to have been promulgated. The Regulations on Organic Agriculture Products are deemed to be a set of rules for a production system, and not a set of product standards, and therefore cannot be published under the Agricultural Products Standards Act, as was planned. This means that a new act or an amendment of the existing act is needed, both of which are lengthy and resource demanding procedures.

South Africa has just implemented a Consumer Protection Act, which introduced protective measures for consumers. One of the consequences of this Act is that producers are now required to be able to justify any claims they make regarding the products they sell. In addition, there are new labeling regulations that will come into force in March 2012, requiring all claims

such as 'organic' to be controlled by an accepted set of regulations. This now forces the Government to publish organic regulations before March 2012. Apparently the different Government departments have not been in sufficient communication. The Department of Trade and Industry is now leading an initiative to turn the regulations into a voluntary standard, in collaboration with the Bureau of Standards.

Konrad Hauptfleisch from PGS South Africa, a voluntary association of growers, retailers and consumers, told TOS that he believes there are some advantages to the organic legislation being delayed. South Africa has developed an Organic Policy, which clearly supports participatory guarantee systems (PGS). This policy is now likely to be in force before any new organic standard. This means PGS South Africa will have a better basis for lobbying their cause regarding the standards with reference to the Policy. PGS South Africa has also embarked on organic livestock standards development (see Continental News: What's new in South Africa, page 6). One of the main stumbling blocks is the use of urea as a supplementary feed during the winter season and a general shortage of organic animal feed.

The role of NGOs in PGS development in India: the Green Foundation in Maralawadi



With contributions from Vanaja Ramprasad (Member of the IFOAM World Board, founder and director of Green Foundation)

PGS initiatives are being promoted by NGOs in different parts of the world.

As presented in the last issue of our PGS Newsletter (PGS newsletter July/August, 2011, v.2, n.9), in India there are two different parallel systems, both of them national, and one of them is the NGO-lead PGS Organic Council (PGSOC). The structure of this system builds up from the farmers' families, moving on to local groups (including mostly organic farmers but also consumers and other stakeholders), then to regional councils and finally to a national council, the "guardian" of the PGS which is composed of the permanent representatives of the regional councils.

These regional councils are supposed to be elected by the local groups, but in the initial period of set up, NGOs will act as lead role players and facilitators of Regional Councils. The current strategy adopted by PGSOC values

the important role played by the NGO community in India, which is fairly well established and includes a number of groups that are actively promoting organic agriculture and servicing the needs of farmers who are growing organically.

Green Foundation is an NGO in Bangalore, in the state of Karnataka, India, that has been facilitating PGS local groups since 2009. In the beginning, two groups were formed—one at Thally and the other at Maralawadi—with about 25 members in each group, involving then a total of 57 farmers. Farmers are registered as members, once they agree to follow organic farming practices and take the pledge, and meet once every three months at the central committee office, in Maralawadi. Field representatives, selected by each group, visit PGS members' fields to observe farming practices and submit their reports to the central office. Field representatives and field managers of GREEN Foundation are responsible for maintaining field-level documents like field visit reports, field maps, and so on.

This year, an annual PGS meeting for Maralawadi was held on August 25. There are currently 108 PGS farmers in the project area. The meeting was organized to increase the number of PGS farmers, and more than a 100 women and 40 men attended it. The inaugural speech was given by Mr. KP Suresha, Executive Director of Green Foundation, who spoke about the importance of the role of women in agriculture and on the negative impacts of conventional farming, with synthetic, chemical inputs. He highlighted the benefits of PGS and its importance in marketing.

A PGS certified farmer, Ms. Hombamma, spoke about how she has consistently been saving her seeds and emphasized the fact that she obtains a higher price for her certified produce. Other contributions followed and participants from new groups were invited to express their opinion on PGS. One section of the group raised doubts about benefits they receive as PGS certified farmers, but explanations came from Green Foundation and registered PGS farmers, clarifying the long-term benefits of certification both in terms of production and marketing. The PGS meeting concluded on a positive note among the women groups and farmers were enthusiastic to form PGS groups.

Three Andalusian PGS experiences interacting in the province of Granada

By Cesar De la Cruz, Rodrigo L. González and Victor C. Soldevila

In southern Spain, in the province of Granada, Andalusia, three PGS initiatives have been developing over the past years: BioCastril, El Encinar and EcoValle. These are based on the project started some years ago by the Andalusian government and on the subsequent promotional activity carried out by the association BioCastril (The Global PGS Newsletter, February, 2011, v.2, n.4), that has been incorporating media components and principles of other organizations to the experience, so as to improve the concept.

The three organizations consider PGS as a specific form of relationship and organization that puts together producers and consumers aiming at actively guaranteeing the organic quality of a product, a production system, a distribution system (marketing, exchange, etc.) and/or a kind of consumption. PGS are local process, adapted to a specific reality and therefore no one-size-fits-all recipes or formulas are possible. The work is based on a set of principles adapted from IFOAM PGS Concept Document **Shared Vision, Shared Ideals:**



Rodrigo from Encinar and Victor from EcoValle during a field visit

- **Shared vision:** Producers and consumers share the core values and principles of the system. That is the starting point. While third party certification implies that producers and consumers have divergent interests, and therefore need a third party or an arbitrator, the certifier, who says what is or is not organic, PGS presumes that producers and consumers can agree, and indeed they do, and build trust without referees or intermediaries.
- **Transparency of the process:** All participants know

or have access to the functioning of the system as well as the decision-making system, which is open and visible.

- **Horizontal:** Stakeholders can participate with equal rights, duties and responsibilities. That is, the power of decision and action is shared.
- **Participation:** PGS represent a method and a practice that facilitates maximum participation of all stakeholders in building trust.
- **Confidence-Reliability:** A range of mechanisms and instruments are developed, agreed and shared by producers and consumers to build trust. Examples include exchange of experiences between producers, monitoring visits to farms, establishment of internal rules, collective organizational activities and decision making, soil and/or product analysis, consumer visits, training, etc. These mechanisms and tools, well structured and organized, help develop a reliable system.
- **Pedagogical and organizational process:** the interaction of people builds the system. They learn to manage it, strengthen the organization and gain autonomy.

For these initiatives, PGS goes beyond the official standards for organic production, deepening, adjusting and working on issues such as the use of local varieties, reduced use of external resources, biodiversity management, and giving value to rural practices such as family labor, reciprocity, etc. In PGS it is understood that organic farming is more than just technical standards and more than just a logo or certificate. These three PGS experiences are evolving in harmony with their environment, and are developing different ways to network. As a result of the dynamics between the three organizations, PGS are increasingly present in the lives of Spanish Andalusian producers, consumers, and stakeholders. Also, while developing this system and networking, these organizations are strengthened and better prepared.

BioCastril

The association BioCastril was established in 2006 and was primarily a farmer's organization, even though consumers were also involved. It has been restructured and has incorporated new members: there are currently 8 organic farmers involved in PGS, of which only one is certified by third party. A new initiative has been launched based on a collective organic garden, and it has been evolving with the help of El Encinar and EcoValle. In this collective area, each participant (elderly people who have converted from traditional agriculture, with

little use of chemicals, to organic farming) has a plot for growing organic traditional varieties. These producers have agreed to start working with the PGS, although the process is slow. The idea is to establish a stand in the town market for their products, certified through PGS.

Unlike the other two organizations, BioCastril is far from the city of Granada, two hours by car, and in one of the poorest regions of Andalusia, which makes it difficult to sell organic products. This is why it is important for BioCastril to network with other PGS experiences. The collective gardens are visited by University students and school children, who learn about traditional varieties, organic farming and PGS.

El Encinar

El Encinar was created in 1993 as a meeting place for organic farmers and consumers in Granada. The association brings together a group of people with common concerns about healthy and environmental-friendly production and consumption methods, that respect human rights. Some of the founders of the association had been adopting organic practices, but were not certified. Trust and visits to their farms had been the tools to assure organic guarantee.

In 2010, some consumers had the idea of developing a PGS to provide organic guarantee to the producers and to stimulate their participation in the association. This guarantee was aimed at incorporating more elements than those set out in the EU Regulation on Organic Production, such as socio-economic issues, adding more specific criteria to management issues (e.g.: biodiversity on the farm) or to environmental aspects (e.g.: reusing packages or reducing distance covered by products to the point of sale). The idea therefore is not only to provide formal recognition to farmers without third party certification, but also to set their own criteria that should apply to all the producers of the association, providing a guarantee of quality that goes beyond what is offered by third party certification. Even though the initiative did not come from the producers at first, they have gradually become interested and participating actively in the process. On May 26 this year, the initiative officially started, involving 10 producers. These include 4 producers who are not certified by third party, and another 6 who are, but see the potential of PGS as a means to get organized.

The process has been conducted within a working group, consisting mainly of consumers, but including also 3 producers and a technician. While it would have been desirable to involve a larger number of producers,

the association decided to launch the process with few, but deeply involved people and see the results. In fact, producers have become more interested, and the trend is towards greater participation. The criteria to be met by producers and their farms have been set and procedure rules have been drafted, such as a visit guide that is based on documents from BioCastril. The association is promoting PGS also through their store, to new producers who wish to participate in the activities.

Ecovalle

Ecovalle is an association created in 2007 in Lecrin Valley, Granada, for the promotion and development of organic agriculture and livestock production. Decision making is by consensus, through the association's assembly, and it is open to individuals, cooperatives and other associations. Ecovalle organized a working group to develop a PGS. The focus of the activity is to promote consumer awareness, by encouraging a more direct and proactive approach to food, that goes beyond the act of buying it, and creating a space where organic producers can sell their products locally, without intermediaries. An example is the farmers markets for local producers in some of the larger towns of the region, such as Padul and Dúrcal.



Members of PGS initiatives testing the Ecovalle farm visit protocol

The producers who are members of this initiative consider it to be essential to interact with consumers, in order to build trust in their products and production systems. Just as in the case of El Encinar, several of the Ecovalle's producers are not third party certified, so PGS is extremely relevant. The initiative counts now 8 producers, and has developed a farm visit protocol, rules of procedure and a work plan. Most members are young and well educated new farmers, who have settled in the region. For the creation of the PGS, the Ecovalle working group is in contact with BioCastril. Ecovalle is

also working to promote interaction between PGS initiatives and to create a network for alternative marketing, that is respectful of the environment, stimulates the creation of jobs and that provides consumers with access to healthy and local high quality food, at affordable prices. Producers started to sell to local restaurants in Granada, creating an interaction between restaurants and the farmers markets: farmers promote the restaurants which buy their products through advertisement it in the market. The association also organizes tasting events, and the restaurants participate in the preparation of the dishes using the local, PGS certified products.

Continental news: What's new in



...AFRICA

- **South Africa:** PGS South Africa is developing Livestock Standards LIVE!!! PGS South Africa had a Livestock Production meeting on 27 July and discussed the issues around producing organic livestock in South Africa. Organic feed and the use of urea as feed supplement were robustly debated! In order to take this even further, and making sure we honor the "P" in PGS, they decided to open up a discussion forum on the web. You are invited to comment, post, criticize and make suggestions. In this way, we can develop a transparent, inclusive and workable standard that would give our farmers the market access they deserve and our consumers the product they demand. Take some time and go to www.organicsafrica.co.za. Click on the "READ MORE" banner in the homepage article and read the article "Animal Talk". From there you can link to the Forum, and have your say! You can also read the minutes of the meeting at <http://www.organicsafrica.co.za/meeting-on-livestock-standards> to see how they have worked through the regulations and came up with questions! This is the first time any PGS is taking the route of a web-forum to consult on production standards. Join PGSSA in this pioneering work!



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **Philippines:** Conference on PGS. On October 26-27, at the University of the Philippines, Diliman, a conference on PGS will take place, organized by MASIPAG. This is a national activity involving organic producers, NGOs and local government units and agencies that promote and support organic agriculture through different means, such as funding, providing common service facilities and banning the entry and/or field testing of GMOs in their respective areas. PGS practitioners in the country will be able to meet with government officials, and hopefully will have the opportunity to advocate for the revision of the legal framework on Organic Agriculture, that currently does not recognize PGS. In fact, according to the Organic Agriculture Act published in 2010, stating the organic guarantee of a product through a system that is different from third party certification could lead to severe punishment, such as imprisonment for not less than one month. In the mean time, MASIPAG keeps pushing for PGS by assisting groups that are willing to establish PGS initiatives. The Food Bowl Night Market, for example, is an organic market in the heart of Manila that has started collaborating with MASIPAG, and has invited Dr. Medina (MASIPAG National Coordinator) to hold a workshop on standards last August. For more info please contact info@masipag.org.
- **South Korea:** PGS and Social Justice Meetings. On September 28, 2011, a whole-day meeting will take place in Korea, in the framework of the 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress, to discuss social justice principles in organic certification. During the first part of the meeting, certifiers will share their experiences on the topic, discussing standards (who sets them?), audits (how they work and who participates in them?) and other issues such as public response to domestic fair trade labeling as well as relations with Fair Trade. In the second part of the meeting, certifiers and representatives of PGS initiatives will discuss different ways to provide a full range of fair and organic guarantees accessible to a full range of farmers (from smallest and most marginal to commercial scale). This part of the meeting will also try to identify solutions on how to build relationships between third party certification and PGS, such as creating or adjusting existing national laws, avoiding competition and creating synergies. For more information please contact: Jacqueline Haessig Alleje (jha@rizaldairy.com) and Elizabeth Henderson (elizabethhenderson13@gmail.com)



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Spain:** PGS in the SEAE magazine. The last issue of the monthly magazine published by the Spanish Society of Organic Agriculture (Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica -SEAE), a member of IFOAM, includes an interesting article about PGS within the socio-political framework of agroecology. The author, Cesar de la Cruz, who has been collaborating with our PGS Newsletter and sharing information about current developments on PGS in Spain, develops his analysis of PGS in different parts of the world from the perspective of the “reinterpretation of power and the decision making capacities” in agro ecological studies, presenting PGS as processes that create social fabric through a different understanding of production and consumption, and promote endogenous community development. The magazine is available [online](#) for purchase.

Imprint

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