

PGS standards in the IFOAM Family of Standards

By Joëlle Katto-Andrighetto



The IFOAM Family of Standards is IFOAM's framework to approve organic production standards. The Family of Standards contains all standards officially endorsed as organic by IFOAM, based on their equivalence with the Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards (COROS). All organic standards are eligible to apply for the IFOAM Family of Standards, whether they belong to governments, certification bodies, national associations or even PGS initiatives. Currently, the Family counts 57 standards (applicant and approved), from all continents. Among the already approved 50 standards, two are strictly PGS standards: these are the standards from Nature & Progrès (France) and Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos (Mexico). Both standards have applied early this year and have been assessed against the COROS by IFOAM and subsequently approved in September into the IFOAM Family of Standards. Among the applicant standards (not yet approved) there are three other PGS initiative standards.

Approval in the Family of Standards provides the needed credibility for a standard that it is a truly good organic standard. Applicants for the Family of Standards, including PGS initiatives, have so far found the assessment of their standard against the COROS to be very useful, as they found it provides unprecedented detailed advice on how to improve their standard.

Other PGS initiatives wishing to get their standard approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards are advised to apply before December 31, to benefit from the 50% discount on the application fee (1,250 Euros instead of 2,500 Euros, starting of January 2012). You can learn more about the IFOAM Family of Standards [here](#).

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III Latin American Forum on PGS

With contributions from Jannet Villanueva (IDMA, member of the IFOAM PGS Committee), Patricia Flores (IFOAM-GALCI) and Laércio Meirelles (Centro Ecológico)

The third meeting of the Latin American Forum on PGS took place in La Paz, Bolivia, from November 22 to 25. It was attended by 105 representatives from 18 countries, including Tanzania and Malaysia, all involved or interested in working with PGS. Created in 2009, in Antonio Prado, Brazil, where the first meeting took place, the Forum is the result of a long process starting in 2004, which included a series of seminars and workshops in the region. The second meeting of the Forum took place in Lima, Peru, in 2010.

Reaching its third edition in 2011, organized by Centro Ecológico, from Brazil, and the Association of Ecological Producers of Bolivia-AOPEB, the Forum received strong support from the participants; its relevance has been acknowledged and the importance of its continuity has been reaffirmed. The participants were also pleasantly impressed by the kindness and hospitality of the Bolivian hosts: representatives from AOPEB, from the Government and also from other civil society organizations.

This year's event aimed at promoting the exchange of the lessons learned across the many different initiatives in the continent, in order to strengthen PGS as a whole. Indeed, the meeting was marked by intense learning experiences, such as presentations prepared by representatives of 10 different countries, field visits and round tables focusing on specific topics. It is clear that PGS is a concept that continues to develop and to be implemented, one that it is suitable for small family farmers and producers organizations.

The results of this exciting event are now part of the final document approved by the participants, entitled "Carta de La Paz, Bolivia". These are a few excerpts from it, which highlight some of the main issues addressed:

"We reaffirm that one of the reasons why we promote PGS development is to create mechanisms to make sure that those who produce organically can have the right to be recognized as such."

"During these days, we have seen significant development of PGS in several countries. Everywhere, there are experiences that serve as references; in some countries these are numerous, and many of the PGS initiatives that have been implemented count a significant number of families involved. This confirms the opportunity presented by these systems to enhance organic production in Latin America."

"Throughout the meeting, the issue concerning which market should PGS prioritize was discussed in several occasions. We have confirmed local markets as our priority, while also targeting institutional markets. The search for fair prices should be constant and the dialogue between producers and consumers is the main mechanism to achieve it."

The full version of the original (in Spanish) can be found [here](#). The English translation will soon be available.



Closing ceremony of the III Latin American Forum on PGS
Source: <http://laerciomeirelles.blogspot.com>

A story of ABD, the first Biodynamic PGS initiative

By Flávia Castro

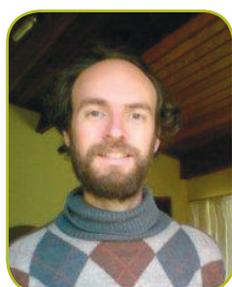


The Biodynamic Association (ABD) from Brazil took the challenge, in 1995, to adapt biodynamic production practices to tropical conditions. Focusing on small, family farmers, the association provides now advisory service through

different activities: by developing vegetable breeding and seed production; by producing biodynamic preparations for organic and biodynamic producers; by collaborating in partnerships with universities for research and by producing publications; and by organizing training courses, both at vocational and academic level. ABD is also the organization that is responsible in Brazil for publishing and updating the International Demeter Production and Processing Standards.

Since April 2010, ABD has been working with smallholder groups to develop Participatory Guarantee Systems for organic and biodynamic agriculture. ABD has obtained approval as a participatory certification body (*Organismo Participativo de Avaliação da Conformidade – OPAC*) by the Brazilian government in October 2011. The PGS now implemented by ABD is based on the Brazilian regulation for Organic Agriculture (Lei 10.831/2003) and on Demeter International Standards. Since it is accredited by the Brazilian national authority and a member of IFOAM, ABD has also received IFOAM official approval and has already started to use the IFOAM PGS Logo on communication materials, such as on its website (<http://www.biodinamica.org.br/>). In order to learn more about the process that led to the creation and implementation of ABD's PGS, we contacted Pedro Jovchelevich, general manager at ABD and asked him a few questions.

The initiative to develop a PGS, Pedro said, came both from the association and from the small holders working with ABD in different projects. The idea was that *“it would be interesting to raise awareness among producers about the certification process”*, while creating ownership by involving the stakeholders through intense participation. *“Also”*, he said, *“the*



Pedro Jovchelevich,
General Manager
at ABD

high cost of third-party certification was something the farmers used to complain about”, an issue that needed to be addressed. Today, the association features 53 biodynamic PGS certified producers, divided in 5 groups, in São Paulo and Minas Gerais, southeast of Brazil.



ABD members performing peer visits in Sapucaí Mirim-MG

Before applying for accreditation, some changes were necessary. The learning process, a key element of PGS initiatives worldwide, started even before implementation of ABD's PGS, through the study of available publications¹. In 2009, members of the group took part in a workshop organized by IFOAM and GALCI on *“Sustainable Organic Sectors and PGS”*, in Costa Rica, which also served this purpose. Also in 2009, the association had to perform changes to its statutes, in order to comply with the requirements of the Brazilian regulation. Romeu Leite, from the *Associação de Agricultura Natural de Campinas – ANC*, the first PGS initiative to receive accreditation in Brazil², assisted ABD through the process and held three workshops in 2010. By the end of that year, ABD decided to submit the necessary documentation and apply for accreditation. The first audit by the national authority took place in April 2011, and the second in October followed by the final approval, that came at the end of the month. According to Pedro, *“the accreditation process is quite slow, many changes were necessary and we had to call an extraordinary general assembly, specifically to address the changes that were requested to comply with the regulation”*.

1 For a comprehensive list, please see: http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/All-PGS-Publ.html

2 The Global PGS Newsletter, January 2011, v.2, n.3, p.2

Brazil is currently the country with the most advanced regulatory framework in terms of recognition of participatory guarantee for products of organic agriculture. ABD's PGS is now the first that we know of that also offers biodynamic guarantee and allows certified producers to use the Demeter trademark. This is a further innovation and opens up new possibilities for PGS worldwide. We asked Pedro: why is there is such a PGS-friendly environment in Brazil? According to him, *"the organic movement in Brazil has developed without any interference from the Government. When the*

accreditation system and the regulation framework started to be developed by the national authorities, the movement was already well organized to position itself and push for the recognition of alternative certification systems, such as PGS. The national authorities demonstrated a good degree of openness and did not impose obstacles for PGS recognition. I believe that in the near future other countries will also acknowledge the important role of PGS and maybe even make it possible for PGS certified products to be exported."

PGS discussions in the Greater Mekong Sub-region: going beyond organic guarantee

With contributions from Chris May - IFOAM PGS Committee member and Consultant on Paper Free Trade and PGS for the Asian Development Bank

In 1992, with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the six countries forming the Great Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) entered into a program of sub-regional economic cooperation, designed to enhance economic relations among these countries. Established in 2002 the Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) for the GMS (Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam) has since then been working towards the implementation of priority projects under the Core Agriculture Support Program (CASP). This Strategic Framework for Sub-regional Cooperation in Agriculture 2006-2010 was formally endorsed by the GMS Agriculture Ministers in 2007.

To improve regional cooperation, CASP Phase II (2011-2015) proposes a vision for GMS agriculture in which the region is recognized as the leading producer of safe food, using climate-friendly agricultural practices and is integrated into global markets through regional economic corridors. The purpose of the WGA is to promote and facilitate agriculture development in the GMS countries, with particular emphasis on smallholder agriculture. The government representatives are drawn mostly from Ministries of Agriculture and Trade.

In October 2011, the WGA 8 was held in Cambodia, with the overall theme focused around exploring various approaches to strengthening smallholder product supply chain, as it applies to agricultural production and other rural based activities, such as ecotourism. At the previous WGA (Hanoi, 2010), Chris May had presented a background paper on PGS. This year, during the WGA-8,

Chris May, presented a paper that promoted the idea of *'PGS as an option for small holder farmers to build capacity to address market needs for food safety and quality assurance'*.

The paper described various ways in which PGS could be applied to help smallholder farmers better access local markets and improve their overall livelihoods. To demonstrate this theme, the paper drew on various examples from established PGS such as Keystone (India), ADDA (Vietnam) and Ecovida (Brazil), and broadened the discussion to other situations, to include examples from organic group internal control systems (ICS).

PGS are clearly mentioned in CASP II, described as "procedures and systems that operate at the community level, with producers monitoring each other to prevent the use of bad agricultural practices". Under the first pillar of the program, "Food Security", it is foreseen that "alternative certification system, including ICT-based assurance systems and participatory certification and guarantee systems will be promoted" and also that "networks of certified organizations will be established to support eco-friendly supply chains that are founded on community and participatory certification and that lead to increased trust among GMS trading partners".

The engagement of PGS at the WGA is an interesting development for PGS, as it is now being explored as a process that can be applied and adapted to various community development situations within the GMS. The aim is to move PGS beyond a guarantee for organic products, and to embrace other smallholder activities, such as ecotourism and handicrafts, providing the opportunity to gain recognition in the wider market place for various products and services.

Continental news: What's new in...



...LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil:** A new PGS initiative is currently under development in Amazonas, Brazil. The TIPITI network, formed by producers, consumers, NGOs and governmental organizations, was launched in October 2011 and its aim is to promote agroecology and community development by gathering different stakeholders to create new strategies for the improvement of organic and wild collection products value chain. The network includes more than 20 organizations and it is now developing strategies in order to obtain government accreditation, in the near future. For more information, please contact Márcio Menezes (mzmarcio@yahoo.com).
- **Peru:** The annual National PGS meeting in Peru took place in November this year, promoted by the national association of organic producers from Peru (Asociación Nacional de Productores Ecológicos del Perú- ANPE) and the Instituto de Desarrollo del Medio Ambiente- IDMA. The meeting gathered about 300 organic producers and many representatives from governmental institutions as well as from the civil society. The participants agreed that it is necessary to focus on including government authorities in the process for developing PGS, in order to achieve recognition and formality through a multi-institutional approach. For more information, please contact: Janet Villanueva (jvillanuevaescudero@speedy.com.pe).



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Italy:** The PGS initiative in Tuscany has decided that it will soon publish on the [website](#) a list of the farmers involved in the initiative, with a data sheet for each of them. Their next regional meeting, gathering farmers and consumers, is scheduled to take place on January 20, 2012. A consumer network of north Italy ("rete di GAS di Brianza") is planning to implement a PGS during 2012. For more info, contact Giuseppe Vergani (giuseppegvergani@fastwebnet.it).



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **Turkey:** The Tohum Izi Association (Traces of Seed Association) is a Turkish organization founded in 2010 operating to promote food sovereignty. It works in close collaboration with CIFTCI-SEN- the Farmers' Union Confederation in the country. These organizations have been developing a PGS initiative in Turkey. The experience has established a direct sale system and their objective for 2012 is to better define the principles that will guide their PGS. A two-day workshop is planned for the first quarter of 2012. Currently, they are collecting information from different experiences around the world, to learn from them and to compare them with their reality. For more information, please contact: Nejat Dink nejatdinc@gmail.com.

Dear subscribers, readers and followers of the IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter,
Thank you for your support during 2011.
We look forward to keeping you updated about all that refers to PGS worldwide also in 2012.
All the best,
The IFOAM PGS Team

To all **IFOAM** Friends, the very best wishes for a happy,
prosperous Year 2012 !



Allen IFOAM Freunden, die besten Wünsche für ein glückliches und erfolgreiches Jahr 2012 !
À tous les Amis d'IFOAM, les meilleurs vœux pour une année 2012 heureuse et prospère !
A todos los Amigos de la IFOAM, los mejores votos de felicidad y prosperidad para el año 2012 !
有机农业运动联盟 (IFOAM) 在此衷心祝愿全体中国同仁在新的一年里祥和美满, 事业兴旺 !
A todos os Amigos da IFOAM, os melhores votos para um ano 2012 feliz e próspero !
IFOAM 회원님, 새해 복 많이 받으세요!
Tüm IFOAM Dostlarına 2012 yılının mutluluk ve başarı getirmesini dileriz !

Imprint

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