

Updates on Participatory Guarantee Systems worldwide.

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Results of the IFOAM Global PGS Survey 2013

By Anne Thieme (IFOAM Value Chain Intern)



We have concluded the annual PGS survey of 2013 and want to thank all PGS stakeholders for their consideration and contribution! Only with your help were we able to become aware of 20 new PGS initiatives located mainly in Latin America and Asia. Out of these 20 initiatives, 10 are already fully operational and 10 are in the stage of development. Within the last years, IFOAM has identified in total 141 PGS initiatives in 56 countries. For the first time we offered our online survey

in four different languages, and received 30% more responses than last year. The majority of replies was submitted in English (58%) and Spanish (29%). However, we also received feedback in French (8%) and Portuguese (4%). Establishing new contacts is essential and important to the IFOAM network and we appreciate the help of all PGS stakeholders to make our network grow, enabling us to reach out to a broader audience, promoting, supporting and assisting with the implementation of organic agriculture and alternative certification tools.

Apart from the PGS online inquiry, which was addressed to all PGS stakeholders, our annual PGS survey also includes the collection of updates from PGS initiatives that had already been known to IFOAM.

Among other things, PGS initiatives were asked to send up-to-date information regarding the number of producers, the number and type of stakeholders involved in their PGS, as well as the area of PGS land. We understand that accessing and gathering this kind of data is not always easy for the PGS representatives, however we are confident that with the annual routine, the PGS survey will bring more updates every year.

IFOAM has identified in total 141 PGS initiatives in 56 countries

The compilation of the data received through the survey has almost been finalized. An article on the current stage of worldwide PGS development will be published in the IFOAM Statistics Book 2014 – The World of Organic Agriculture in February 2014. Furthermore, the updated [PGS Map](#) will soon be launched and the [Global PGS Database](#) is gradually being edited. We will keep you informed! I would like to point out that our PGS online Database comprises around 30 out of the 66 operational PGS initiatives that IFOAM is aware of. If you do not find your PGS in the table and would like to add your PGS profile to our website, all you need to do is send us the completed [Self Evaluation Form](#). If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#). We will also be happy to inform you about the

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IFOAM PGS Recognition Program. The next Global PGS survey will be conducted in September 2014 and we look forward to receiving your contributions.

International Conference on Advancing Institutionalization of PGS in Vietnam

By Mrs. Tu Thi Tuyet Nhung, Head of PGS.CC Vietnam



PGS Vietnam was founded in 2009 and through 5 years of operation, PGS has shown appropriateness for small-scale producers in Vietnam. With more than 80 percent of the Vietnamese farmers being small-scale producers, PGS holds the potential to be a highly viable

option for quality assurance in agricultural food products. Having started off with organic vegetable farming on 5 hectares of land, currently 29 groups with a total of 280 certified producers work on 23 hectares of PGS certified land, producing vegetables and longan. In 2012, approximately 230 tons of PGS organic vegetables were sold in the city of Hanoi.



Joy Daniel from the Institute of Integrated Rural Development

According to an assessment by the Center for Agrarian System Research and Development (CASRAD), PGS has helped to increase the economic efficiency of vegetable producers by up to 30 percent compared to conventional production. Furthermore, it has brought a stable income of about VND 35 to 40 million (US\$ 1750-2000) to family farmers per year¹.

For several years, international development organizations working in Vietnam have been promoting

1 Source: Nguyen Thi Ha. Ha Dung Minh. Dao The Anh. Food Safety Advocacy Program for Small-scale Vegetable Production. Study on Sustainability of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). Hanoi. July 31, 2013. CASRAD. VECO Vietnam.

and applying PGS in their programs, both for safe and organic food production, with encouraging results and success. ADDA² and VECO Vietnam³ have confirmed that PGS could work in the Vietnamese context and its scaling-up and institutionalization is a right direction to take in order to ensure that more producers, consumers and private actors benefit from this quality assurance system. To emphasize and implement this effort, the International Conference on Advancing Institutionalization of PGS in Vietnam was organized from September 25-26, 2013 in Hanoi by VECO and the VOAA⁴. The conference was followed by a national workshop Organic Vietnam, Situation and Orientation in Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh city on September 27 and organized by VOAA, DCP⁵ and VASS⁶.



From left to right: Truong Minh Hoang - PGS Vietnam Secretary, Prof. Dr. Pham Thi Thuy - VOAA Vice President, Andre Leu - IFOAM President, Tu Thi Tuyet Nhung - PGS Vietnam Coordinator, Dr Eduardo Sabio - VECO Regional Representative, Vu Le Yvoan - International Corporation of VNFU Deputy

The general objective of the conference was to consolidate the gains of partners and stakeholders in promoting and advocating PGS towards its institutionalization in Vietnam. IFOAM President Andre Leu gave a presentation about the organic movement and trends of PGS development worldwide. Additionally, he welcomed the VOAA as a new IFOAM member (since July 2013) and announced the official recognition and admission of the PGS Vietnam Standard to the IFOAM Family of Standards (August 2013). Representatives of IPSARD⁷, CASRAD, DCP, international organizations and local NGOs such as ADDA, Seed to Table, the New Zealand embassy, ACCD as well as producers and consumers were present at the conference. Joy Daniel (India), Roberto Gajo (The Philippines) and Chris May (New Zealand) provided

- 2 Agricultural Development Denmark Asia, Hanoi, Vietnam
- 3 Country program of Vredeseilanden – Belgium
- 4 Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association
- 5 Department of Crop Production
- 6 Vietnam Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- 7 Institute of Policy & strategy for Agriculture

inspiring overviews of the state of PGS in their respective countries, demonstrating some insightful differences and similarities in the approach. The conference also included working sessions in which the participants were divided into four working groups to review the benefits of PGS and the conditions for its progression. A field trip to organic farms in Thanh Xuan, Soc Son and other organic retail outlets was organized and followed by a reflection on the experience. As a closing session recommended actions across different stakeholders were discussed. The conference provided a platform for sharing and learning among practitioners, supporters, policy and decision makers, donors, consumers, private chain actors and other key PGS stakeholders. PGS was presented as a model, being relevant and applicable for the Vietnamese smallholder farmers and the policy makers in terms of food safety.



IFOAM President Andre Leu giving his presentation at the conference

The National workshop Organic Vietnam, Situation and Orientation which followed the conference focused on informing around 300 participants, including representatives from the government and the private sector as well as researchers, producers and NGOs about organic agriculture in Vietnam. It was the first event on organic agriculture that was co-organized by VOAA, VASS and DCP. PGS was pointed out as a world trend, providing multiple benefits. Furthermore, the need for PGS as a guarantee system for Vietnamese smallholder farmers was emphasized.

The events have positively impacted organic agriculture in Vietnam and the collaboration between VECO, VOAA, PGS and Vietnamese organic stakeholders. In addition, many people were successfully educated about the relevance of organic PGS and about the necessity of pushing for its recognition by the government. I believe PGS was successfully promoted to a wide range of stakeholders from farming organizations through local

to provincial and national levels of government.

For more information, please contact [Tu Thi Tuyet Nhung](#).

PGS opens new markets for female farmers in Tanzania

By Christi Huizenga, Africa Programs Officer, and Becky Rosaler, Marketing Coordinator for Plant With Purpose



A little over a year ago, Flora Mbega⁸ lost her husband—a tragic event that should have left her dependent on neighbors and family for support, with limited

options for raising her daughter. However, a few years prior, Flora partnered with Plant With Purpose in Tanzania. During this time, she began growing vegetables, joined a community-based microfinance group, and started raising goats to sell milk as a source of income.



Flora receiving PGS-certified organic produce from one of Floresta's partnering farmers at her market stall

Flora has been running an organic farm for six years and is now leading the movement to establish a locally managed Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). She is on a steering committee that consistently meets to strategize marketing and organizing the recently launched PGS. Flora's job is to run one of the three market stalls where the 60 pioneer PGS farmers are selling their produce.

So far, business has been steady. On a normal day, 20 to 30 people buy from Flora's PGS organic stall with sales doubling on a good day. Flora has counted about

⁸ Name changed to protect privacy

500 customers and notes that sales are starting to pick up.

This Participatory Guarantee System was initiated by Floresta Tanzania, a local partner of U.S.-based Plant With Purpose. Plant With Purpose has been working in the Kilimanjaro region since 2006, partnering with rural communities to provide tools and trainings so that resources are available for brighter futures. Community-based microfinance groups known as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) offer the structure for educating group members in financial management, sustainable agriculture practices, optimizing opportunities in local markets, and restoring the environment. Currently, 172 VSLA groups are practicing and promoting organic agriculture throughout the Kilimanjaro region.



Flora and her daughter standing in front of their compost-fed maize plot. Flora explains that after 6 years of practicing organic farming methods, her plot yields 3 times that of her neighbor

The desire for something like PGS came from within these groups. Over the past three years, Plant With Purpose has been facilitating market accessibility by connecting growers with supermarkets, export buyers, processing companies, and other market opportunities. However, these buyers tend to have little preference for organically grown produce. Plant With Purpose found that a large majority of female-led farming families were dropping out of the market access program to focus instead on building the value of organic in the local markets.

In an informal survey of participating farmers conducted by Plant With Purpose, female farmers said that they strongly preferred organic produce. Their reasons varied, but two consistent responses were the desire to feed their children healthy food and the need to reduce costs for external inputs like chemical fertilizers. Women have time and labor resources available to invest in building bio-intensive organic backyard gardens. Finally, women often mentioned

that they enjoyed the community aspect of local markets and community groups. These women are leading the organic movement in Tanzania, a country where rural women like Flora, depend on agriculture for survival.

In the fall of 2012, Plant With Purpose and Floresta Tanzania met with group leaders to discuss the idea of Participatory Guarantee Systems. A steering committee was formed in May 2013, composed of representatives from 27 VSLA groups whose focus was to plan and launch the Floresta PGS. The group looked into organic certification requirements and examples from other PGS systems. Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) then outlined and audited a system of internal controls and guidelines for certification.

Flora is seeing an increased interest in purchasing PGS-certified organic fruits and vegetables. However, during this first year, the plan for the Floresta PGS group is to remain small, to identify possible weaknesses and vulnerabilities in their system, and to do further research on market demand and opportunities. Following this trial period, the plan is to scale up the PGS program throughout the Kilimanjaro region with initial surveys showing that there are at least 1,000 qualifying farmers who could join. Thanks to the Participatory Guarantee System, Floresta Tanzania is venturing into new markets and allowing for mothers, like Flora, to dream of a different tomorrow.

For more information, please contact [Christi Huizenga](#) and [Becky Rosaler](#).

PGS Organic Council booth popular at Biofach India

By Mathew John, Keystone Foundation and IFOAM World Board member in India



Every year Biofach India comes around and though some of the PGS Organic Council members are there, visiting or holding fort at the IFOAM booth, this year was special as for the first time the PGS Organic Council got the opportunity to participate as exhibitor.

Getting everybody organized to come to the fair required a fair bit of logistical coordination as various organizations are part of the Organic Council and also the products being displayed were diverse. The organizations who put up their products at the



The PGS Organic Council booth

booth were Umang, Timbaktu Collective, Deccan Development Society, Institute for Integrated Rural Development and Last Forest Enterprises. Green Foundation, one of the other members was holding fort at its own booth.

The response to the booth space was phenomenal. People streamed in all the time and there was an estimated average of 300-400 people who stopped and enquired. There was interest from 3rd party certifiers and consumers wondering how this peer review system by farmers themselves, made sense. As part of the package, we had taken along the [new issue of the newsletter](#) - now in its 5th year, a [new brochure](#) and huge standees which attracted attention with their equal attention to farmers, markets and consumers. These standees were put up in a public area with the newsletter and brochure being available to all.



The PGS Organic Council booth was very popular

Even more interesting at the Biofach India was a whole session that was dedicated to alternative certification mechanisms. This session was chaired by Dr. A.K. Yadav, former Director of National Center for Organic Farming, India and presentations by Ashish Gupta from PGSOC/OFAI, Jennifer Chang on the Hansalim Coop in Korea and Dr. Zhou Zeijang from China on Community

Supported Agriculture (CSA).

For more information, please contact [Mathew John](#).

Vietnam PGS and MASIPAG: Official IFOAM PGS recognition

by *Cornelia Kirchner, IFOAM Value Chain and Programs Assistant*



Last month we published an article about the recognition of PGS Vietnam and MASIPAG Standards in the IFOAM Family of Standards. In the meantime both PGS initiatives were also officially recognized by IFOAM.

IFOAM PGS Recognition and the IFOAM PGS Logo: What for?

PGS initiatives formally recognized by IFOAM gain a special place in the [IFOAM PGS Database](#) and are allowed to use the official IFOAM PGS Logo on their information and advertising materials (not on the products). The logo was designed as a tool to create a



The PGS logo

common PGS identity, the official recognition by IFOAM can help PGS initiatives, which are often not recognized by their governments, to increase legitimacy and build trust. During the recognition process, the [IFOAM PGS Committee](#) conducts an evaluation based on the [self-evaluation](#) of the initiative. This process can be useful to initiatives as a tool to find out if they fit well with all [key elements and characteristics of PGS](#) and where improvements can be made.

The two latest PGS initiatives approved are geographically close to each other, in Vietnam and in the Philippines. The PGS systems they have been implementing show both their own characteristics.

Vietnam PGS – a project of organic agriculture development

The creation of Vietnam PGS (see also article by Mrs. Nhung above) was funded as an activity of the ADDA-VNFU Organic Agriculture Project and technically supported by Chris May and Koen den Braber (ADDA Technical Advisor).

The PGS currently certifies 280 producers and has a simple structure. The heads of the 29 producers groups are assembled in inter-groups whose responsibilities include the coordination of the review process and certification decisions. Inter-groups not only include farmers, but also consumers, traders, local officials, farmer-trainers or NGO staff working in the inter-group area. A PGS Coordinator Group whose members are elected at the annual meeting takes care of the overall coordination and oversight of the system. Before a new producer group can join Vietnam PGS they have to receive training (either from the ADDA Organic Project staff or through the PGS Inter-Group) in which the PGS procedures and standards are explained and discussed. Farmers wanting to join an existing group are usually trained by the group leader or by another Inter-Group member.

For more information visit the [PGS Vietnam online](#).

MASIPAG – by farmers for farmers

More than 10,000 farmers are involved in the MASIPAG's PGS network, which makes it the biggest PGS known. The PGS was set up by MASIPAG – a farmer-led network of people's organizations, NGOs and scientists from 2005 onwards.

Its characteristic is the strong involvement of farmers. The producers are the inspectors, quality control officers and the decision-makers at the approval committee. This fits well with the principle of self-reliance of farmers, followed by MASIPAG. Nevertheless, numerous other stakeholders are involved in the different activities and MASIPAG acts as an overall coordinator, keeps an oversight and provides guidance when needed (e.g. in the process of standard drafting). MASIPAG staff regularly visits the regional offices for monitoring, coaching and mentoring.

For more information, please visit the [MASIPAG website](#).

Continental news: What's new in...



...Asia and Oceania

- **Fiji:** In June 2013 Cicia Island was declared a fully certified organic island complying with Pacific Organic Standards. Cicia's farmers had stopped using chemicals and inorganic fertilizers for years and most traditional farming methods have always been organic. The decisive intervention is the certification enabling the islanders to have access to local niche markets and eventually further afield. To begin with, villagers including some high school students underwent a Participatory Guarantee System Concept Training conducted by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community. In cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) PGS farmer capacity was built and local market chains for organic produce, especially for organic virgin coconut oil, were developed. On the day of declaring Cicia organic Eroni Lauvanacala, Cicia Island Council Chairman said: "Today we are celebrating Cicia and the wishes of our elders to make Cicia a fully organic island." The PGS process will be guided forward by an appointed Cicia Management Committee.
- **Greater Mekong Subregion (Cambodia, P. R China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam):** In October 2013 IFOAM signed a contract with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to implement a project for PGS capacity building in the Greater Mekong Subregion. The project duration is 3 years, divided into 2 phases and the planned activities include field activities, the set up of PGS pilot projects in all target countries as well as capacity building for formulation of national and regional policy. For more information, please contact: pgs@ifoam.org.



...Latin America and the Caribbean

- **Peru:** The Asociación Nacional de Productores Ecológicos del Perú (ANPE-PERU), with the support of organizations such as the Instituto de Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente (IDMA) has been developing and promoting PGS for many years. A video commissioned by IDMA (only in Spanish) provides a good insight on how PGS is implemented in the country and it is available online [here](#).
- **Argentina:** The Argentinian Ministry of Economy and Production runs a Small Farmer Development Project (known by its Spanish acronym, PROINDER) to improve the livelihood of small-scale farmers in the country. In the framework of this program a video on PGS was released (in Spanish), explaining the history and relevance of PGS in Argentina. The video is available [here](#).



...North America and Europe

- **Turkey, Spain, Belgium:** IFOAM PGS Committee member Eva Torremocha is regularly participating in various events in Europe presenting PGS. This autumn she attended the [16th International Business Forum on Green and Inclusive Business. Exploring and developing markets for sustainable growth](#) in Istanbul/Turkey (23-24 October), a [congress on food sovereignty in Barcelona/Spain](#) (15-16 November) and a [symposium on peasant agriculture in Brussels/Belgium](#) (21 November). At all 3 events she introduced PGS and found that more and more bottom up initiatives in Europe are interested in the model, especially in Belgium and Luxembourg where few associations have demonstrated strong interest on PGS. For more information, please contact [Eva Torremocha](#).

Imprint

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