

Impressions from the Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development Conference in Montpellier

By Julie Nakalanda Matovu, Freshveggies PGS, Uganda & Mathew John, Keystone Foundation, India.



Mathew John



Julie Matovu

As society continues the struggle to preserve mother earth, many initiatives, programs and projects are aiming for sustainable development and try to achieve a balance

between the three sustainability pillars: economy, environment and social justice. In December 2016 more than 250 participants coming from 41 different countries gathered in France at the conference on Agri-Chains and Sustainable Development (AC&SD), organized by CIRAD to discuss the role of agricultural value chains in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

IFOAM – Organics International, together with INRA, FAO, Urgenci and IIED organized a session about institutional innovations in agri-food chains, with PGS as a core topic. Allison Loconto, INRA, France, and Anne-Sophie Poisot, FAO, Italy, chaired the session and 5 panelists shared their experiences.

Mathew John (Keystone Foundation, India, and member of the World Board of IFOAM – Organics International) talked about the process of evolution of PGS within India. He described how in India key institutions such as FAO, IFOAM – Organics International and the government worked with the civil society to promote PGS to reach a larger stake of smallholder farmers. What is unique in India is the existence of two PGS structures within the country – one led by the civil society as well as one by the government. Currently over 80,000 farmers are under the PGS system and an increase to 200,000 by the end of 2017 is foreseen.

Julie Nakalanda Matovu (founder and coordinator of Freshveggies PGS, Uganda, and convener of INOFO¹ for East Africa) explained why flexibility is a key component of the Freshveggies PGS. This flexibility is found in different operations of the PGS such as in the inclusive production and marketing planning, the focus on crop diversity, the logistic and products delivery and also the price flexibility to ensure affordability and attract more consumers towards organic.

Judith Hitchman (URGECI) emphasized how CSA² involves consumers in taking their stake also during the production phase, by sharing initial investments and risks with the producer. This partnership is characterized by a mutual commitment to supply, by producers, and purchase, by consumers.

Krystyna Swiderska from IIED talked about the attempts to develop a Biocultural Heritage Indication Labelling system, alternative to the Geographical Indications (GI), which would protect products derived from biological and culturally diverse production systems.

1 Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations

2 Community Supported Agriculture

Table of Contents

Impressions from the Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development Conference in Montpellier

Fostering inclusion through PGS: Pro Ratatouille program, Hungary.

Testing PGS in Burkina Faso: the experience of CNABio.

Continental news: What's new in...

Special communication



Ann-Sophie Poisot, Allison Loconto, Mathew John, Julie Matovu at the Agri-Chains and Sustainable Development Conference

Dr Yiching Song (Centre for Chinese Agricultural Policy), from China, shared her experience being part of a participatory plant breeding program which links poor ethnic mountain farmers with crop scientists at the national and provincial levels. Slowly, a CSA network developed which was then formalized into the Farmers Seed Network. Due to the increasing demand for quality products, they are also trying to adopt a Biocultural Heritage Indication Labelling System and to develop a PGS.

A second session of the event was dedicated entirely to PGS as value-chain innovation to boost smallholder quality management. This session was filled with different Vietnamese experiences (5 out of 6 presentations).

Tu Thi Tuyet Nhung, INOFO convener for Southeast Asia, presented an initiative that is implementing a collaborative short food supply chain to create inclusive markets for smallholder farmers.

From the conference discussions, it can be concluded that valuable innovations exist around the world that have the capability to change the food system to make it more sustainable. They can contribute substantially to achieving the SDGs. The participants have stressed in several occasions during presentations and debate the necessity to obtain formal recognition and political and financial support from public and private actors, which is important in order to spread innovation at a wider scale.

Fostering inclusion through PGS: Pro Ratatouille program, Hungary

By Melinda Kassai and Katalin Rethy, Pro-Cserehat Association



Melinda Kassai



Katalin Rethy

The **Pro-Cserehat Association** is a Hungarian NGO founded in 2009. In 2012, our organization started a community based organic agricultural program for disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma people aiming at spreading sustainable developmental models among small village communities.

This project, funded by the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary and the ERSTE Foundation, is called Pro Ratatouille and is currently running in three villages in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county in the east of Hungary.

In practice, the program includes adult education, employment, nutritional and community building activities. Those activities have led to the development of community gardens, which are farmed by participants in our program who have acquired basic knowledge about organic vegetable production during the trainings. A cooperative community of producers has developed, participants are currently eating their self-produced vegetable throughout the year and they can sell a surplus on local markets improving their income.

In 2015 and at the beginning of 2016 a framework for implementing a “Participatory Guarantee System” (PGS) was started aiming to enable certification of participating communities and individual gardens and help them in marketing their produce through a communal PGS logo.

During 2016, the PGS system was developed and tested with several participating communities and it started to be integrated into the long-term development plans of the villages.



Part of the products harvested are processed

PGS is a well fitted tool for the Pro Ratatouille project, as it provides a cheap, accessible solution to verify organic production and fair-trade aspects of production and sales, thus providing an alternative to external organic certification.

Participation means that all stakeholders - producers, supervisors and consumers - participate in the verification process, so it is well fitted to the sense of community Pro Ratatouille represents.

The focus of the work in 2016 was to develop the system according to the needs of producer groups and international guidelines. Production guidelines, system structures and background documents were developed, while training was provided to stakeholders and feedback from producers who will be direct beneficiaries of the certification was collected. The first draft of the production guidelines was a Hungarian translation of the IFOAM organic standards. During the pilot testing and development phase in 2016, producer communities,

consumers and trainer-educators from 4 villages participated in developing our standards both in content and language.

Each group of producers is represented in the certification groups of the PGS. Each certification group consists of one trainer-educator from one of the Pro Ratatouille communities and producer representatives from 2 different producer groups and might include also local consumers. The representatives from the producer groups are responsible for carrying out farmer interviews and for filling out the questionnaire based on their observations as described in the farm visitation protocol. A garden visitation protocol was established together with the producers, it takes around 1,5 - 2 hours to fill it during a farm visit. Certification groups visit each certified farm once a year during the late growing season (late summer- early autumn).

The Pro Ratatouille PGS system was introduced to the public and promoted during the Pro Ratatouille market in Sajókeresztúr in September 2016. Currently, a brand for the Pro Ratatouille products is under development together with the participating communities and a label will soon be designed. 6 villages will be participating in the PGS system in 2017.

The Pro Ratatouille PGS system aims at developing either direct marketing channels (delivery, CSA, markets) or creating relationships with trusted partners for building short-value chains such as restaurants or small retailers. We hope that in the future, the PGS system can help the Pro-Ratatouille gardens to be financially profitable for the participants.

Producers during a farm review



Testing PGS in Burkina Faso: the experience of CNABio

Federica Varini, PGS team at IFOAM - Organics International.



René Emmenegger

From a chat with René Emmenegger working for CNABio we learned about their program to implement PGS in Burkina Faso. The process is still in its dawn but has already disclosed some very important strengths and challenges of PGS implementation in the country.

Organic farming in Burkina Faso

Organic farming has been performed in Burkina Faso for more than 20 years. It follows modern approaches and achieves interesting results. CNABio, founded in 2011, is the national council for organic agriculture of Burkina Faso promoting organic farming and agroecological practices to ensure a better life for smallholders. CNABio, with its 42 members, works as an umbrella organization for the national organic movement and creates the space for exchange and consultations between all stakeholders concerned.

With the support of IFOAM – Organics International, CNABio worked on the elaboration of a **National Standard** for organic farming adapted to the local farming context starting in 2011. The Standard was validated in 2013 by several ministries including the agriculture one. The organic Burkinabe' standard included PGS as the favorite verification system for the national market, rather than third party certification. PGS is seen as a tool to strengthen the supply of certified organic products. Today in Burkina Faso, almost all products certified through third party certification, such as mango, sesame or shea butter, are exported to Europe. Access to third party certification is expensive and in general small producers have difficulties to afford it.

Until now organic products for the local market were sold irregularly through direct-sale channels based on trust. Nevertheless, in cities like Ouagadougou an increasing number of consumers are becoming aware of the benefits of eating organic products and hence they are willing to pay premium prices for that. Despite the fact that a certain internal demand exists, the supply of products on the local market is still quite low and one of the challenges for CNABio is to better organize organic producers so that organic outlets can be well supplied throughout the year.

The PGS test project

In 2015, CNABio began a project to test the implementation of PGS in the country. This test phase represented an occasion also to assess the quality of the National Standard and of the **PGS guide** developed at the same time. The activities were funded through a partnership between CNABio and **Action Solidarité Tiers-Monde** (ASTM). This partnership resulted in a 3-year project entitled: Improvement of Income for smallholders through the promotion of organic production (2016-2018). The pilot phase started in July 2015 with 6 selected members of CNABio that involve 126 farmers producing vegetables on a total of 16 ha. The members selected were rural and agricultural NGOs involved in supporting producers in agroecological and organic practices.

How is the PGS organized?

The PGS designed by CNABio and its members works on three different levels: Local Certification Groups, Operators Certification Offices (BCO) and the Central Certification Committee.

There are several Local Control Groups formed by farmers, processors and ideally consumers, which carry out joint visits on the production sites of other local groups, assessing production methods and discussing possible challenges. Based on the results of this review, the group provides its opinion to the Operators Certification Office. This body organizes the activities of several producer groups in one area and it is usually coordinated by an employee of the NGO working with these farmers. The BCO also collects the documentation necessary for the certification procedure from the Local Control Groups. It deals also with cases of non-compliance and transmits all the relevant communication to the Central Certification Committee. This body is an organ of the CNABio, but autonomous in its decision-making. At the moment, it is composed of 4 volunteers with previous experience in third party certification. They verify the consistency of the documentation provided and check its compliance with the standard and the PGS guide. They can also perform monitoring visits and finally give the approval for the certification. CNABio has an operational and strategic role since it supports and facilitates the works of all these different groups.



Onion production in one of the PGS locations, Burkina Faso

The implementation of the test system described above has been set up thanks to the consultation of the different stakeholders and a great effort was put into training and capacity building for participatory certification processes. Also the development and the adoption of certification tools such as farm review forms and the building of a database has been an important part of the project.

At the end of the test phase, 4 PGS groups, out of 6, were certified for a total of 74 women and 30 men.

Moving forward

The project is now entering a second phase where the certification will be open to all types of agricultural production, not only vegetables. One key component of focus will be the elaboration of a marketing and communication strategy to spread awareness about the CNABio-PGS label (registered in 2016). More work is also

needed in order to increase the participation of farmers and consumers as well as to conduct more training about participatory processes inside a PGS. Also the economic sustainability of the system will need to be addressed: during the test phase farmers did not pay to join the PGS, however, in the near future, the introduction of a small fee is foreseen, to cover, at least partially, the organizational costs.

CNABio is aware that this is only at the starting point of a long journey. Many things will need to be re-tuned and new challenges will pop up. Nevertheless, the National Standard is solid and the interest in organic farming is rising. CNABio is confident that PGS will help farmers in valorizing their products and improve their livelihood.

For more information contact René Emmenegger: rene.emmenegger@cnabio.net

Continental News: What's new in...

AMERICA

PERU: On the 26th of January in the city of Pucallpa the project “Frutos de la Tierra: Promoting agroecological production systems and inclusive businesses for small family agriculture on the coast, sierra and jungle of Peru”, was presented. The Project is carried out by ANPE Peru, Terra Nuova and the Universidad Agraria La Molina with the support of the European Union.

The project began with training workshops in marketing of organic products through PGS. For ANPE Peru the official start of this project is a very important step to further consolidate their work in representing the small agroecological producers of Peru. Read the original article in Spanish [here](#).

ASIA

VIETNAM: Watch the short documentary, [Feeding Hanoi](#), which tells the story of Ms. Yen, a proud farmer from Trac Van, Ha Nam province, who made the switch to organic farming to increase her income and protect her family's health. Ms. Yen is a member of the Trac Van Collaborative Group, a farmer organization composed of 26 farmers that pioneered a PGS supported by **VECO** organization. Currently, about 90% of their production is sold to organic and safe food supermarkets in Hanoi, while 10% is consumed locally.

AFRICA

BENIN AND ETHIOPIA: Two parallel PGS training sessions were organized in Benin and Ethiopia early December, as part of a GIZ project implemented by IFOAM-Organics International. The training sessions were 5 day-long training of trainers, and trained participants from various (mostly African) countries. The Benin training session was for French-speaking participants, while the Ethiopian one was for English-speaking participants. International PGS experts from IFOAM - Organics International delivered the trainings, assisted by a local PGS consultant, Lazare Yombi, in the case of Benin.. The GIZ office in Benin made a short video about the French-speaking training. You can watch it [here](#).

EUROPE

ITALY: The Peasant Activism Project (2016-2018) is a major ethnographic study of neo-rural activism in Italy financed by the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) in the UK, hosted by Queen's University Belfast and carried out in cooperation with University of Perugia, Italy. In the framework of this project the documentary, [An Experimental Path](#), was realized. The group of Italian producers demonstrate with the documentary how "participatory guarantee" can become an alternative model to conceive food production and consumption, and is able to bring together independent small-scale farmers, producers and consumers in Italy in new forms of exchange and community. To get more information and watch the movie contact Fabrizio: info@peasantproject.org.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: FOOD SYSTEMS 3.0 – A PRE-CONFERENCE EVENT AT THE 19TH ORGANIC WORLD CONGRESS

Join us on 8 November 2017 in New Delhi, India for a full day of intensely enriching and inspiring experiences.

Organic 3.0 is not just a good idea – it is happening on the ground. In a 3.0 world, food chains are succeeded by food systems – inclusive societies continually improving toward best practice based on organic principles and practices – allowing producers better livelihoods, healthier diets for consumers, and cleaner more sustainable ecosystems. Sustainability works from the farm and local ecosystem outward, rejuvenating communities and strengthening the connection between rural and urban areas, and fostering the mutual support and interdependence of value chains.

Join us for a showcase and discussion of best practice examples and leading thought from around the globe – come and participate: present, share, learn, and network.

We would very much welcome the participation of the PGS movement and we hope you will help us spreading the word about this event.

There are many ways to participate in this event:

- Showcase a food system
- Present a paper
- Be part of a panel
- Submit a poster, slides, or video
- Attend to learn and exchange, share ideas and ask questions, and make connections.

You can find [more information here](#), or contact David Gould, IFOAM – Organics International, d.gould@ifoam.bio.

Several pre-conferences will take place the day before the official launch of the Organic World Congress 2017, to learn more about them click [here](#).

Imprint

The **Global PGS Newsletter** is published bimonthly by IFOAM - Organics International. It is a free electronic publication. For a subscription to the newsletter, please write to pgs@ifoam.bio. You can find out more about PGS [here](#) on our website.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome at any time. Please send your PGS-related articles in English, French or Spanish to pgs@ifoam.bio.

Editing: Cornelia Kirchner & Federica Varini, IFOAM - Organics International
Layout: Patrick German, IFOAM - Organics International

IFOAM - ORGANICS INTERNATIONAL
Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5
53113 Bonn, Germany
Phone: +49-228-92650-10 **Fax:** +49-228-92650-99
Email: headoffice@ifoam.bio **Web:** www.ifoam.bio

Trial Court Bonn, Association Register no. 8726

PGS COORDINATION AT IFOAM - ORGANICS INTERNATIONAL

Cornelia Kirchner
Email: pgs@ifoam.bio
Phone: +49-228-92650-14

PGS COMMITTEE MEMBERS' CONTACTS

Africa: Audrey Wainwright (S. Africa), audrey@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za
Asia: Ashish Gupta (India), ashishg2dec@gmail.com
Europe: Eva Torremocha (Spain), evatorremocha@hotmail.com
North America: Alice Varon (USA), alice@naturallygrown.org
Oceania: Chris May (New Zealand), biomays@clear.net.nz
South America: Luiz Rebelatto (Brazil), luizcarlos.rebelatto@gmail.com