

Updates on Participatory Guarantee Systems worldwide

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Not to be Missed!: Building Food Communities - OWC Pre-Conference on 11 October

By IFOAM PGS Team



International and long-distance trade of organic products has its benefits and offers invaluable opportunities for many farmers, especially for those operating in developing organic markets. At the same time regional food and local consumption are considered more desirable, not only with regard to the carbon footprint. Short and local value chains

are also more likely to ensure local food security and establish close relationships between consumers and producers. These personal relationships and the community “ownership” of the food system often enable better internalization of agricultural externalities, thereby addressing a common sustainability challenge of food production systems. PGS and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) are among the frontrunners facilitating this by offering concrete concepts and tools to farmers and consumers and therefore supporting them with the regional marketing of their produce. Both movements are closely connected to the grassroots of the organic movement and center on local production and consumption.

On 11 October 2014, PGS and CSA will meet in Istanbul at a joint conference titled “Building Food Communities”. The event is jointly organized by the [Buğday Association](#), a Turkish NGO and organizer of the [18th IFOAM Organic World Congress](#), with [URGENCI](#), the International Network of Community Supported Agriculture, [DBB](#), a PGS initiative based in Ankara, and IFOAM.

The diverse program will include presentations of inspiring PGS and CSA experiences from all around the world, including local experiences presented by Turkish stakeholders. Burning issues will be discussed in a round table format.

To register for the event, please follow the [link to registration](#). Do not hesitate to [contact us](#) if you have questions. The draft program can be found [here](#).

We look forward to seeing you there!!

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“The beehive that says yes”: a new short marketing concept that combines producer-consumer contact with high-efficiency Internet-based logistic

By Joelle Katto-Andrighetto, IFOAM Value Chain Manager



“The beehive that says yes” (“La ruche qui dit oui” in French) is a new concept that was launched by a start-up company in 2011 in France. Since then, it has experienced sharp growth, with already 400 “beehives” throughout France and Belgium, linking 2,500 producers to 75,000 clients. The concept is based on an online software that every new “beehive” can use to manage the logistics of local food delivery and consumer-producer linkages. According to “The beehive that says yes”, their concept is starting to define what “Short market channels 2.0” will look like: digital, local and participatory. An idea, which could also be of interest to many PGS groups.

This is how it works, in summary:

1. To establish a new group, one volunteer beehive coordinator (which can be a person or an organization) needs to find premises to where deliveries can be made.
2. The coordinator contacts producers in the region who can offer fruits, vegetables, meat, cheese and dairy, bread, honey, wine, etc. He/She also mobilizes consumers wanting to buy local products. When at least 50 consumers are registered, the process can start.
3. Every week, the coordinator circulates information via the internet to the members, about which products available that week, and at what price (price is decided by the producers). Producers also decide the minimum amount of produce they are willing to deliver.
4. Consumers have 6 days to make their orders online by clicking on the desired products. They have no obligation to order.
5. Once the orders are completed, if the producer has reached his desired minimum amount, he will come to deliver, if not, he will not come that week.
6. On delivery day (one fixed day in the week), consumers who have placed an order come to the premise to pick up their orders from the various producers, and will also meet the producers who have to be on-site.

“Short market channels 2.0” will look like: digital, local and participatory.



The staff of “La ruche qui dit oui” start-up company.

The concept is named as a reference to the democratic and effective decision-making process of bees, as described in Thomas Seeley's book "Honeybee Democracy". It makes use of an e-commerce system through the Internet to make sure that producers only make the delivery trip when it is worthwhile. At the same time, consumers can monitor and top-up their orders if they see that just a bit is lacking for the producer to come. There is no waste, and payments are automatized through the online system that debits consumers automatically and also produces automatic bills.

The system does not involve any membership fee for consumers or producers. No intermediaries are involved, since producers sell directly to consumers. However, the system takes around 16 % commission on all sales, to support the administrative costs, which are:

- the work of the beehive coordinator (8 %),
- the administration of the system by the start-up company (8 %), including the management of the website and software, bank fees, etc.

30 people work on the management and development of the online platform used by all the beehive groups.

Social networking on the internet plays an important role in the beehive concept. Their Facebook page has 38,000 followers and there is a daily exchange of ideas and information through the website, on which producers also upload details about their farms. But the contact is also direct, during the deliveries and when the group decides to organize social events such as dinners, visits to the producers, workshops, etc.

It seems as if the combination of such system with PGS would be a perfect match: the beehive concept would ensure efficient and trendy local marketing, and the PGS would provide an affordable organic guarantee that could also take advantage of the consumer group dynamics created by the beehive.

The concept is in the process of being exported to Spain, Germany and the UK, under the name "The Food Assembly". For more information, please visit <https://thefoodassembly.com/en>.

The Green Road Project - a future for real food

by Konrad Hauptfleisch, IFOAM Academy and Program Manager



Early August in Cape Town, South Africa can be cool, grey and dreary. If you happen to be stuck in the rainy Southern Cape winter, that is.

But when you are part of a group of PGS and CSA enthusiasts and advocates, designing their vision for a new food supply chain, it is warm, toasty and definitely worth braving the wet days.

The Green Road short food supply chain initiative managed to secure EU funding to make their pilot project a full-fledged enterprise, and to replicate the concept at least once during the project term. So what IS the Green Road? As their logo says, it is a future for real food. The

consumers and producers in this initiative are looking to develop and establish a secure, sustainable and equitable supply chain system where participation and transparency will be the underpinning values, supported by organic and biodynamic principles not only in the food production, but also in the economic model.

The Green Road has taken inspiration from both the CSA models of production and marketing as well as the PGS concept of locally relevant guarantee. While CSA/PGS hybrids or fusions are not unique, the Green Road is trying to embed an economic model that is inspired by social businesses such as Sekem in Egypt and Hansalim Co-operative in Korea. Green Road will take inspiration from these models in order to make organic food available to the Green Road community of consumers on a sustainable platform supported by committed and engaged farmers.

All this sounds good, but how will it be possible?

By setting up a complete system of technical support and extension services, working closely with the Green Road PGS to ensure that farmers are well-resourced and capacitated to produce organic food that complies with



a high standard. In addition, all farms will be mapped and concluded in a web-based software program that will give crop information to both the consumers and the coordinating hub, and combining this with a quick information feedback system, ensure that planting and harvesting will replenish the supply chain without



creating inordinate waste in the system – food waste is one of the main challenges of the current supply chain models, and drives the cost and price bubble skywards.

Minimizing waste and keeping organic food waste on-farm, giving quick feedback to consumers on what is available and when it will be in the weekly basket, supporting farmers through a CSA-type support system that links consumers and producer directly through a co-owned distribution hub and ensuring that farmers and consumers talk and share regularly, Green Road aims to be a replicable concept that can support a new food paradigm for the whole region in the future.

During my last visit, the Green Road spent 3 days defining its PGS: first by agreeing on developing a standard that will be based on the IFOAM Standard, with specific best practice recommendations on fertility management, biodiversity, social systems and integrated farming. This standard will be developed by PGS stakeholders themselves, and the current documentation of the PGS



will be amended to integrate the new standard. The group doing this work will consist of consumers, farmers and Green Road PGS administration.

The PGS coordinator will then work with the Green Road extension officer to ensure that the grower community of the Green Road are first capacitated to grow according to the standards, to “test” the standard on-farm and to support the farmers on the road to PGS assessments and endorsement.

This process has already started, and if the first few days are anything to go by, I believe that Green Road and the Green Road PGS will become a successful and inspiring case study for other initiatives in the region to follow.

More information on the Green Road Project will soon be available on the IFOAM Programs webpage, while the current development of the Green Road itself can be checked out at www.greenroad.co.za

For more information on the Green Road PGS developments, email Janet at pgs@greenroad.co.za



Photos Courtesy: Greenroad

PGS India - PGS operated by the government of India

By Dr. Krishan Chandra, Director, National Centre of Organic Farming, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, India



In India, the dominant means of guarantee for organic agricultural products are third-party certification systems, of which Indian producers have twenty accredited agencies to choose from. Third-party certification is a rather complicated multi-level system. For farmers, the process of becoming certified is expensive and handling the paperwork requires a lot of time. Therefore, many small organic producers are discouraged to obtain a third-party certification for their produce. Often, the certification is based on foreign standards that may not be suitable for the region and production is export oriented. Taking all this into account it can be observed that in the Indian context third-party certification has limitations in regards to local and domestic trade and is not very supportive for the growth of organic markets on a domestic level.

For the local market, and for the promotion of the organic movement, PGS has been initiated and become popular as a locally focused alternative method for organic quality assurance. At the moment, two parallel PGS systems have been established in the country: The PGS Organic Council (PGSOC), operated by civil society organizations, i.e. the Integrated Institute of Rural Development, OFAI, Keystone Foundation etc. and PGS India, which is led by the Government of India.



Logos used in PGS India certificates



The organizational structure of PGS India

The Indian Government initiated its PGS India program in 2010; officially, the program was launched in March 2011. PGS India is a well-knit institutional network that provides a common platform to PGS groups across the country to share experience for better implementation of PGS and Organic Agriculture. To ensure consistent quality and to strengthen consumer trust, residue testing is carried out randomly. For transparency, PGS India has made its entire database available to consumers online. The government supports PGS India by bearing the cost of institutional networking, surveillance and monitoring as well as data management, turning organic certification through PGS into a low cost intervention for organic farmers.

PGS India provides two types of organic certificates: the PGS Organic Certificate is granted to those, who have successfully completed the conversion period and fully achieved the level of organic production; the PGS Green Certificate is granted to those initiatives producing crops in compliance with the PGS standards, but are still undergoing conversion.

The PGS India program is operated by a sub-ordinate office of the Indian Ministry of Agriculture, namely the National Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF), which also serves as the PGS India secretariat. Subordinated Zonal Councils coordinate between three to seven states, supporting 20 so called Regional Councils. The regional and local administration is carried out by six so called NCOF Regional

PGS India is based on the principles of participation, transparency and trust. Through the program, PGS initiatives may obtain national recognition and support for building their institutional structure without affecting the PGS spirit. The PGS India



PGS promotion during International farmer fair at UAS Bangalore, Karnataka

Councils, located in Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Panchkula, Imphal, Jabalpur and Nagpur, that are in direct contact with Local Groups.

The Local Groups (408 in total) are the main operating units within the program, being responsible for all activities, inspections and the management. Regional Councils support the local groups in their capacity building and decision-making. Zonal Councils conduct monitoring and surveillance of the units and do not play any role in decision-making processes. The PGS India Secretariat is the custodian of data, policy making and the overall program operation unit.

Currently, the PGS India program is involving a total number of 5809 farmers that are undergoing conversion within an area of over 6000 ha and with a production capacity of about 23,600 t of organic crops a year that are sold with the PGS Green Certificate. Farmers who follow the guidelines of PGS India continuously for three years are awarded the PGS India Organic Certificate.

The government of India introduced various financial assistance schemes for the promotion of PGS. Farmers who join the PGS India program and adopt Organic Farming may receive an annual amount of Rs. 20,000 per ha (maximum of Rs. 40,000 per beneficiary) for 3 years. The operation of the online PGS system is supported with Rs. 200 per farmer (maximum of Rs. 5,000 per group/year and a maximum of Rs. 100,000 per Regional Council) for data management and for the conduction of residue analysis of the soils. The state governments receive special support as a Grant-in-aid from the central government to enable them to assist the Regional Councils with the data management of the groups registered. These schemes are available to all PGS registered in the PGS India program. For more details visit the website: <http://ncof.dacnet.nic.in> or www.agricoop.nic.in.

Participatory Guarantee Systems are based on recognized and publicly available standards for organic practice. The Indian PGS system with its cost-efficiency is expected to create a good organic market at a domestic level for smallholder farmers. The system is specific to individual communities, geographic areas, cultural environments, and markets. Participatory Guarantee Systems can be used as a tool for improving local socio-economic and ecological conditions by encouraging small-scale production and product processing units. The system also encourages producer groups to work together and to improve their farming practices through the sharing of knowledge and experiences. Networks between consumers and smallholders are enhanced and the impetus for smallholders to expand their production base is reinforced. The PGS system is going to encourage more farmers to convert their land to organic, which in turn increases organic production and the sale of organic products to the domestic market. Ultimately, the PGS system will grow the organic movement in the country.

Enhancement of Organic Farming in Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines through PGS

by Johnny Laurence S. Gilo, Associate Professor, Nueva Vizcaya State University (NVSU)



The Philippines has more than 10,00 PGS farmers making it the leading PGS country. PGS was launched in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, in 2012 thanks to the efforts of Global Link Management Institute (GLMi) of Japan in partnership with the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) as well as Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (MASIPAG) and with the technical and extension support of the Nueva Vizcaya State University (NVSU). The initiative organizing the Vizcaya Fresh Participatory Guarantee System (VFPGS) emerged during the project “Support to Improve Livelihood of Farmers through Production of Organic & Reduced-Chemical Produce in Nueva Vizcaya (SILFOR–NV)” funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Japan from Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects.

The VFPGS in Nueva Vizcaya is composed of farmer representatives (POs), private consumers and companies¹, academies², non-government organizations³ (NGOs), local government units⁴ (LGUs), the provincial Agriculture Office⁵

1 MGSK Health Food Products

2 Nueva Vizcaya State University (NVSU)

3 Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) @ <http://www.prrm.org/>

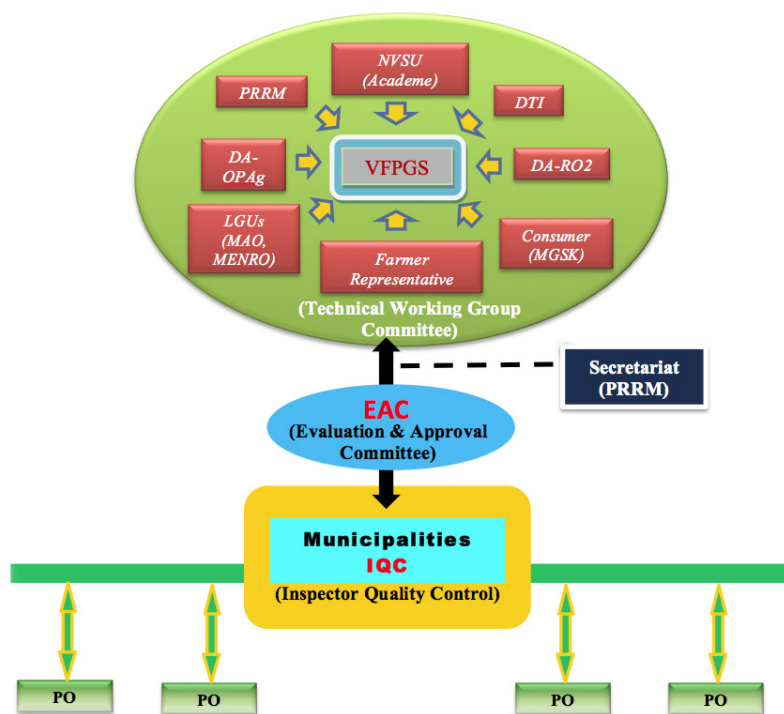
4 Municipal Agriculture Offices (MAO) and Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Offices (MENRO)

5 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Agriculture (DA-R02)

(OPAg) and the Philippine Government. It is headed by a chairperson and representatives from the different stakeholder groups and geared towards building structures within the different implementing bodies that will oversee and take responsibility in protecting the integrity of organic products in the province of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines.

Mainly, VFPGS is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analyzing experiences of certified organic farmers
- Planning, fund sourcing activities and devising common strategies for marketing organic products
- Implementing the strategies in areas of scope
- Facilitating formulation, finalization and harmonization of VFPGS Organic Standards and Manual of Operations
- Overseeing VFPGS installation and implementation
- Regular planning and assessing VFPGS objectives and activities; and
- Programming capacity building activities of the certified organic farmers.



Conceptual Framework of the project



Farmers Market at Centro, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya

The 64 farmers selected for the project are now in the last year of their conversion period and will soon be certified organic through the PGS. A main challenge and priority area for future work is the improvement of market access and the increase of consumer awareness regarding organic and PGS. For more information please contact Johnny Laurence S. Gilo: jls_gilo@yahoo.com.

Continental news: What's new...



...in Africa

Benin: From 27 - 29 August, the third West African Organic Conference will take place in Cotonou, Benin. One part of the event will focus on PGS. Presenters include IFOAM World Board member Manjo Smith who will present the PGS of the Namibia Organic Association. For more information please follow this [link](#).



...in Asia and Oceania

Laos: The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is promoting PGS as part of their support of the implementation of Organic Agriculture in Laos. Through local partners, UNCTAD organized PGS capacity building for Luang Prabang producer groups. Read more on UNCTAD activities and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 – 2020 in the progress report, published on 14 July 2014: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb61d8_en.pdf

Bangladesh: Stakeholders in Bangladesh started communication with the PGS Organic Council India to learn about PGS and evaluate the option of launching PGS in their country. Two representatives from the PGSOC India (Mr. T. Gowder Samraj and Mr. Robert Leo of Keystone Foundation) will visit organic fields in Sylhet division, North-eastern part of Bangladesh from 15 to 19 September 2014 and discuss with the organic farmers groups. A PGS workshop will be organized by Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB), a national NGO from Bangladesh where public representatives, government extension officials, local elites, researchers, academics, NGOs, farmers and supermarket representatives will attend. For more information please contact Dr. Shaikh Tanveer Hossain (Sustainable Agriculture Advisor, FIVDB and Board Member, IFOAM Asia): tanveer107@yahoo.com.



...in North America and Europe

Spain: In recent months, PGS was discussed at several events organized in different provinces of Spain, including Extremadura, Castilla La Mancha and Valencia. Organizers were mostly local organizations involved in topics like regional food, consumer-producer cooperation and food sovereignty. This shows a high interest and growing awareness about the PGS concept in the country. In Andalucía and Grenada, PGS has been implemented for several years already. Now, organizations in other provinces of Spain that have been debating PGS are moving towards implementation. In Spain, many groups using or interested in PGS prefer to work in a close circuit around their organization and with a proximate group of consumers, similar to a kind of AMAP or CSA. For more information on PGS in Spain please contact Eva Torremocha: evatorramocha@hotmail.com.

From 26 to 29 September, a meeting will be organized in Galicia by Sindicato Labrego Galego, a farmers Union affiliated to La Via Campesina. The topic is: Collaboration between producers and consumers, particularly through Participatory Guarantee Systems and Distribution Short Circuits. Please contact URGENCI at contact@urgenci.net if you are interested to attend this event.

Belgium: After hosting a PGS workshop in April this year (see PGS Newsletter, March/April 2014 issue) the Belgian farmer-consumer network Voedselteams made the decision to go forward with PGS and officially launch it in spring 2015. Becoming more transparent and participatory and creating an environment of learning and knowledge building are the main objectives that the network wants to address with PGS. One step that has already been completed is the development of a questionnaire, designed in collaboration with the farmers that will be used during the visits. For more information, please send a message to: info@voedselteams.be.

Imprint

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