

“PGS: A guide to Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture” video release!

By the PGS team of IFOAM – Organics International



The PGS team of IFOAM - Organics International is pleased to announce the release of “PGS: A Guide to Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture”. This is the first comprehensive educational video on PGS. It was produced by IFOAM – Organics International with financial support from the Centre Technique de Cooperation Agricole et Rurale (CTA).

For a PGS initiative to become a functional and credible quality assurance system, certain steps have to be accomplished. This is usually a lengthy process requiring considerable knowledge and access to external support or educational resources. Our video seeks to be a simple and attractive didactic tool, to guide the establishment of PGS initiatives based on examples from experiences of already existing PGS, at various levels of development, in different contexts.

Nature et Progrès, in France, *Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia* in Brazil, Bryanston Organic and Natural Market in South Africa and Sabeto Organic Producers Association, in Fiji are presented as well-established and recently developed PGS initiatives. Through interviews and images from their day-to-day functioning, we gain insight into how key PGS elements and features have been implemented. The 50-minute video addresses the entire process from setting up to sharing the benefits of PGS, while discussing

opportunities and challenges. The six key elements and ten key features of PGS emerge to guide the audience in the learning process on why and how to develop PGS.

This is the only comprehensive PGS educational video, showcasing such a wide set of real PGS experiences in very different areas of the world. It serves as a good starting point for PGS training and also provides excellent material for PGS advocacy and lobbying activities. It was a very challenging project but the outcome is exciting and will hopefully serve as an inspiration for PGS practitioners for many years to come.

You can **watch the video** online on our PGS Portal and our YouTube Channel. Interviews are shown in their original language with English and French subtitles. Spanish subtitles will be available soon. If you are interested in a free, off-line copy of the video, please contact us at pgs@ifoam.bio.

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PGS Pilipinas: advocating for recognition of PGS in the Philippines

By Rowena Buena, MASIPAG



Five years after its conceptualization, - a network of PGS and advocates consisting of farmer groups, NGOs, organic producers, members of the academia and local government units – convened in the city of Bacolod

in November 28-29 to further strengthen PGS in the Philippines. With the theme “PGS: securing market access for small organic farmers in the Philippines”, various PGS initiatives from across the country shared their experiences and success stories. PGS Pilipinas is now a duly registered non-profit organization with the Securities and Exchange Commission in the Philippines. The first GA was held with support from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) through the Green Action Week campaign to promote sustainable consumption, Action Solidarité Tiers Monde (ASTM) and MISEREOR. Representatives from the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards of the Department of Agriculture, local government units and agencies, non-government organization, farmers, consumers and PGS advocates were present.

The event, spearheaded by MASIPAG, aimed at consolidating the network’s membership, and strengthening the campaign for PGS recognition and the promotion of organic agriculture for rural development in the Philippines. Carmen Cabling, Chairperson of PGS Pilipinas also stressed that it was a call for policy makers to support PGS initiatives and to pave the way in making organic agriculture more viable, especially for small farmers.



Carmen Cabling, Chairperson of PGS Pilipinas

André Leu, President of IFOAM - Organics International, stated in a letter to the conference the importance of mainstreaming PGS, as the majority of the world’s farmers are smallholders, who cannot afford the costs of third-party certification. In the Philippines, an average farmer makes roughly P23,000 (480 USD) annually. With that income, there is no way to pay for third party certification, which amounts to more than P47,000 (1000 USD) per year. This reality is one of the reasons why the involvement of the local government units and agencies is such a unique feature of PGS in the Philippines.

In fact, many local government officials share the same belief as MASIPAG: that by recognizing PGS and alternative certification systems more farmers and producers will be able to benefit from organic agriculture, and eventually contribute to the nation’s food security. PGS initiatives in the provinces of Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya, Nueva Ecija, Negros Occidental, Lanao del Norte and Davao City were all developed and supported by their local government units, with some even allocating funds to support the initial operation, including training, committee meetings, and the development of standards and a manual of operations.

The highlight of the conference was the sharing of achievements of PGS initiatives, including the increased number of farmers, areas covered and experiences in the development and further improvement of PGS in their respective communities. As of November 2015, 11 non-government organizations and local government units established PGS initiatives and various others are currently under development.

Ramon Marañon, small farmer representative to the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB), the policy making body of the government’s organic agriculture program in the country, also attended the event. According to Mr. Marañon, PGS is now in the pipeline of NOAB priorities and they will seriously discuss this, as the NOAB is responsible for the review and amendment of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Organic Agriculture law.

Most organic producers documented by the Department of Agriculture are small scale. In the National Organic Agriculture Conference (NOAC) Report in 2013, the number of certified practitioners was 8980, translating to



Participants of PGS Pilipinas GA

around 101,278 ha of land or 0.8% of the total agricultural land in the country. The vast majority of these practitioners are first, second party and PGS certified, with only 127 of them being third party certified. Such a huge number of organic practitioners documented using alternatives to third party certification only confirms the need to revise the national regulation on organic agriculture, so that it may serve the growing number of small and rural poor farmers who are venturing into organic food production.

PGS and Organic 3.0: hot topics at the International CSA Symposium

By Cornelia Kirchner, IFOAM – Organics International



From 17 to 22 November 2015, the 6th International Symposium on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) was held in Beijing, China. URGENCI, the International Network for CSAs, organizes these symposiums every two years in conjunction with their General Assembly. The

Beijing conference was the biggest so far; it attracted more than 800 participants from 29 countries.

CSAs are local solidarity-based partnerships between farmers and a community of supporters. Supporters usually cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest and in some cases they assist with the farm work. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh organic produce. CSA are a successful and growing model that provides a way to maintain and develop small-scale organic farming and help archive local food sovereignty.

CSA and PGS share many key values and objectives. Both are successful as tools to provide support to local and small-scale farming and to build relationships between local stakeholders. URGENCI and IFOAM – Organics International have established a cooperation to promote these models, to build and support local food systems. Several representatives from PGS initiatives worldwide and from IFOAM – Organics International were invited by URGENCI to speak at the CSA conference in Beijing.

André Leu, president of IFOAM – Organics International presented one of the keynote speeches in the opening plenary. He talked about Organic 3.0 and the need to change the way we see organic agriculture, to move beyond the current mainstream system, which revolves mainly around standards and regulations (Organic 2.0). He presented Organic 3.0 as a new phase of organic where innovation and continuous improvement towards best practice are key elements. Organic 3.0 includes diverse ways to ensure integrity (e.g. PGS), builds on alliances with likeminded organizations and brings empowerment to farmers as well as true value and fair pricing. His contribution was very well received and the term Organic 3.0 was quoted repeatedly throughout the three days of the main conference.

It is not a surprise that the discussion about Organic 3.0 speaks to the hearts of people involved in the CSA movement. URGENCI and the CSA movement have been working for many years to achieve many of the ideas that Organic 3.0 brings up as the new phase of organic. They have been promoting an innovative model that addresses many of the challenges in the current food system. In this regard CSA has a lot in common with PGS. PGS fits well into the Organic 3.0 concept and offers concrete examples of how its ideas can be addressed in practice.

During the Beijing conference, PGS was widely discussed and many PGS experiences, such as those from India, Mexico and France, were presented. I participated in informal discussions with several people who are involved in CSA in Europe and they showed great interest in PGS. Many of them heard about PGS for the first time



Plenary | CSA Conference Beijing

and found it an interesting alternative to third party certification, suitable to local markets, which could also gain relevance in their contexts. The question remains whether or not and how PGS could expand in Europe, considering the unfavorable regulatory conditions.

The conference featured an extensive program in Chinese and also included many sessions on PGS: proof of the immense interest in this topic that has developed in China over the last years. In the closing plenary, the Rural Reconstruction PGS was officially launched. It was created

as an output of the Chinese National CSA Conference and founded with the main goal of raising awareness in China about PGS, its potential and benefits.

For more information on CSA visit [the URGENCI website](#) or see the [CSA section on the IFOAM – Organics International website](#). For more information on Organic 3.0, please have a look at the [Organic 3.0 booklet](#). For more information on the 6th CSA conference, including the program, please [click here](#).

My South African PGS experience and the way ahead

By Marc Lewis, exiting member of the IFOAM PGS Committee



The PGS movement in South Africa has come some way since its inception and early iterations, though quite ironically, it also has not. The pioneer Bryanston Natural and Organic Market (BONM) PGS is promoted as a model for PGS, owing to its market focused approach, and for the way that a market is able to regulate the organic quality of the food produce that is supplied to it. Internationally, it is also heralded as one of the models to replicate, pointing to a market led approach as the alternative to the more farmer led movements which are at the origins of PGS.

So, why is the BONM model deemed to be successful? An organic market is able to monitor farmer operations,

support assessment visits, thereby ensuring the organic integrity of products sold. And what is it that the PGS movement in South Africa is still missing? We are missing ground up groupings of farmers, who rally together to ensure the produce sold in their regions can be legitimately classed as organic.

The reality is that farmers often do not support each other to improve their production practices; they fail to benefit from the networking and sharing even within developing PGS experiences. There are many possible reasons for this, including the incredible inequality that separates neighbors and neighboring farming communities, and lack of trust that poisons many interactions.

A question I would like to pose to the South African PGS community is this: are there any other forms of implementing PGS that have made their way into our

space? Granted we may just not know that they are out there, this is what I expect to hear, in the next short while, through email correspondence or even snail mail: stories of the alternative for the alternative, in South Africa, not yet heard of and waiting to be told.

My PGS journey and my term as a member of the PGS Committee of IFOAM – Organics International have drastically opened my mind. Two international trips, one to Thailand in 2013 and one to China in 2015 have given me insight into how differently PGS participants see their (our) movements. The variation is what makes

our collective special. It allows for cultural interpretations, generation long practices, and adaptation. But it also pushes for a semblance of structure, with transparency and accountability being paramount.

If we are open to the possibility that we may not know everything, that there is always something to learn, that there are other ways of doing things right, and well, to the iterative process that is life, then we will make a success of this: making PGS accessible to ever more farmers. This is what our movement needs.

The new PGS Committee

By Flávia Castro, IFOAM – Organics International



The IFOAM Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) Committee was first appointed in July 2009. The Committee is defined and operates according to the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Rules of Procedures approved by the World Board in 2009, amended

by the World Board in April 2012 and amended by the Executive Director in 2015.

According to these TORs, the purpose of this committee is to assist the development of PGS, provide the Head Office with advice on how to develop, facilitate and encourage PGS around the world, participate in mid-term and long-term strategic planning for our activities on PGS, identify and systematize PGS concepts and tools appropriate for the facilitation and promotion of PGS. The PGS committee is composed of a regionally diverse pool of PGS experts appointed by the Executive Director.

In 2015 the terms of the current PGS Committee came to an end and we therefore launched a call in October 2015 inviting applications for the next term. We received more than 20 applications and three members from the current PGSC reapplied. We would like to

thank all the applicants for their interest in PGS and IFOAM - Organics International.

This was not an easy assessment and it took us longer than expected to process and review all applications. Finally, in February 2016, the new PGSC was approved. We have three new members and three re-appointed members, with a good gender balance (three women and three men) and a nice representation of PGS stakeholders. In fact, three members are directly involved in PGS initiatives while the remaining have a wealth of experience supporting PGS development all over the world. All of them are also experts on PGS in their specific regions, building a bridge between local initiatives and the global PGS movement.

We take this opportunity to thank exiting committee members Jannet Villanueva (Peru), Marc Lewis (South Africa) and Matthew John (India) for their commitment and support to the development of PGS all through their participation in PGSC in the past years. We are happy to welcome the new members of the PGSC: Alice Varon (USA), Ashish Gupta (India), Audrey Wainwright (South Africa), Chris May (New Zealand), Eva Torremocha (Spain), and Luiz Rebelatto (Brazil). The contact details for all members are available at the imprint of this newsletter, on the last page.



Continental News: What's new in...

ASIA

CAMBODIA AND LAO PDR: With the Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) "Small-Scale Farmer Inclusion in Organic Agriculture Development through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)" IFOAM-Organics International is supporting the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to assist Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar with their own efforts to promote organic agriculture. The project started in October 2015 with a regional workshop in Bangkok, followed by two national workshops, in Lao PDR and in Cambodia. PGS and ideas for its development in each country were presented and discussed by a broad group of stakeholders. Pilot PGS are now being selected and a regional training for trainers will take place in Bangkok from 2 to 9 March 2016. For more details, please contact Vitoon Panyakul (vitoon@greennet.or.th) and Michael Commons (michael@greennet.or.th).

INDIA: Vandana Shiva calls for PGS as a quality assurance mechanism for edible oils in India. In an article published in the Deccan Chronicle at the end of 2015, the executive director of the Navdanya Trust expresses concern about the food safety rules on processed edible oils, which create obstacles for small artisanal processors who adopt traditional cold press extraction processes for producing edible oils from locally

available seeds. "Food safety in the artisanal sector needs participatory systems where citizens who produce the oil and those who consume it set the standards of quality and reliability. Just as there are participatory guarantee systems for organic production, we need participatory systems for artisanal food processing", she affirmed. The original article can be found online, [here](#).

EUROPE:

GERMANY: PGS on the program of BIOFACH Congress. On February 11 the session "Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS): An Untold Opportunity of Organic 3.0" organized by IFOAM – Organics International took place in the framework of the world's largest trade fair for organic. The session brought to the BIOFACH public information on how PGS contribute to the development of domestic markets, while promoting better livelihoods and community empowerment. Organic 3.0 propounds inclusiveness and during the session we had the opportunity to shine a light on what PGS are, their potential and why we must support them. Laércio Meirelles from Centro Ecológico (Brazil) and Konrad Hauptfleisch (IFOAM – Organics International) shared their experiences and commented on the challenges that still lie ahead for further PGS development.





ITALY: INOFO present at the sixth meeting of the IFAD Farmers' Forum. From 13 to 18 February the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations (INOFO) counselors from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe attended the sixth world meeting of the Farmers' Forum at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in Rome. In addition to advocating for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology as a strategic focus for IFAD's resources, INOFO also managed to secure a permanent seat in the coordinating council of the Farmers' Forum. In the side events that took place on 18 February, INOFO hosted the workshop: "Participatory Guarantee Systems and its ability to facilitate access to markets, improved livelihoods and social capital." PGS cases from Brazil, the Philippines and Uganda, were presented in addition to a FAO study on the same theme. The IFAD report of the meeting is available for [download](#).

OCEANIA:

SOLOMON ISLANDS: The Baniata Community Organic Ngalinut-growers of Rendova Island, are a step closer to having their traditionally baked ngali nuts certified organic through PGS under the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETcom). Officers of POETcom initiated in June 2015 training on awareness of organic and PGS with over 20 registered farmers. The challenge is twofold: first in keeping the traditional Solomon Islands method of baking the nuts, while satisfying food safety requirements. And second: the fact that this will be the first attempt at developing "organic traditional processing standards and associated procedures" for "wild harvest" category under one of the POETcom organic production systems. For more details, see the article [online](#).

Imprint

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