

Vice President of Peru submits a law to foster PGS for local markets

By Patricia Flores Escudero, IFOAM Latin America Regional Office



On April 10 2015, Marisol Espinoza-Cruz, Vice President and Congresswoman of Peru, submitted a bill to the Congress with the aim to foster organic certification with PGS in local markets for products from organized smallholders.

For the past 10 years, the Peruvian organic movement has been advocating at all levels for the need to build an enabling legal framework for alternative mechanisms for organic certified products aimed at the domestic market. Third party certification is the only approved scheme for certified organic products in Peru, excluding thousands of smallholders in remote areas who are willing to supply an increasing domestic organic market but cannot afford the costs of this scheme. IFOAM - Organics International, in line with the Principles of Organic Agriculture, has, together with its members, supported these advocacy activities, publicizing the steady efforts of member organizations such as the Asociación Nacional de Productores Ecológicos del Perú (ANPE Perú).

The main features of the proposed bill are:

- The creation of Participatory Certification Bodies (PCBs) within each formal organic farmers' organization: a committee composed of representatives of formal organic smallholders organizations with a clear and specific mandate to guarantee the integrity of organic products; consumer organizations; and other organizations related to the organic value chain.
- The Organic Agriculture Competent Authority (SENASA), together with the above mentioned organizations, will determine the requisites to qualify for authorization and registration by SENASA.

- Officially authorized and registered PCBs will offer organic certification services to other formal smallholders' organizations in their areas of operation.
- Among main requisites, the PCBs would have to comply with: permanent training of the PCB members, requisites established by the organic standard (DS 044-2006-AG), and following of the principles and values of PGS, as stated in their by-laws, and inspired by the key elements and features of PGS developed by the IFOAM PGS Committee.

The bill has been submitted for discussion to the Peruvian Parliament and a result is expected in the next months. If the bill is approved, the national competent authority will acknowledge regionally decentralized PGS initiatives (such as PGS in Huanuco, Junin, which are authorized by regional decrees). Moreover, social and economic inclusion of vulnerable rural families, producing mostly organic food, will be ensured, as they will have an effective and recognized tool to access markets and overcome food insecurity and poverty.

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Small is beautiful: PGS development in Taiwan

By Konrad Hauptfleisch, IFOAM – Organics International Academy and Programs



Perceptions and preconceptions tend to be misconstrued and often incorrect. My preconceptions of the island of Taiwan were no different. I expected a highly industrialized, crowded island where technology and industry dominated the landscape. While this might be true for some parts

of it, more than 60% of the small island is covered by mountain and forest. No wonder the Portuguese explorers named it Ilha Formosa – “beautiful island”.

And what is even more beautiful than the subtropical vegetation in the lowlands and the temperate forests in the highlands is the people of Taiwan – especially the PGS people. I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a week in Taiwan, conducting three PGS workshops. What I found was a keen interest in alternatives, a commitment to organic farming systems and an ability to get things done quickly.

Our first event was a two-day workshop, hosted by the National Taiwan University in Taipei. I was joined by Audrey Wainwright of [Bryanston Organic and Natural Market and PGS South Africa](#), and we were ably assisted by Dr. YueWen Wang, our local contact person and PGS enthusiast. I was really impressed by the level of interest for this event, with more than 150 people registering. The first day was spent introducing the concepts of organic guarantee systems, their history and evolution, ending with the models of PGS currently active in the world. The idea was to get a good understanding of the background and theory of PGS, bringing everyone on the “same page”, so to speak.

Taiwan has a history of technological development, with agriculture following the Green Revolution principles in the pursuit of productivity and food security. While this approach was very successful on the island, it is also interesting to see how many people are questioning it, and how many people, especially consumers, are ready to make a change in their consumption patterns and relationship

with farmers to consume in a different way. To them, PGS is a welcome innovation to fit their ideas around. I was also pleasantly surprised to learn that Taiwan already has at least one functioning PGS.

I met with Mag Chin of the Association of Taiwanese Indigenous People’s Development (ATIPD) – they founded a PGS group to support the development and market access of organic farming systems amongst tribal communities in Taiwan. In addition, Taipei also has various Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives and consumer co-ops developed along the lines of the famous [Hansalim](#) initiative in Korea – one such example is the Housewives League in Taipei. And these are not the only ones – this small island has a growing group of consumer and producer activists, all working for the development of alternative food and farming systems based on organic principles. This commitment to alternative systems was fertile ground for the PGS-seeds to sprout. What amazed me was the speed with which this sprouting took place.

On the second day, we organized everyone into four groups, each with a key topic relating to the first day’s theoretical input – the aim was for the groups to develop some ideas around which PGS could be launched and developed in Taiwan. The topics were based on the key features necessary for PGS to function. While group work is normal and expected in a participatory workshop, the Taiwanese did not expect us to turn this into a “World Café”, where each group had 45 minutes to develop concepts and ideas around their topic, and then had to get up, move to another table, and tackle a new topic left behind by the preceding group. The rotational nature of World Café ensures a high level of participation, and allows a fairly large group the opportunity to engage with more than one problem in relatively short time.

After the first few minutes of staring at each other and a blank sheet of paper, the workshop really came to life, and an hour later, we had people on top of tables, drawing, gesticulating, debating and developing – participatory development in



Participants at the PGS Workshop in Taiwan



Konrad Hauptfleisch during the workshop

motion. We ended the day with valuable feedback from each thematic group – the topics of documentation, verification, objectivity, trust, sustainability, branding and marketing were all dissected and reassembled, and the final outputs shared in a concluding plenary session.

It was clear to the group that PGS is a definite solution to the challenges of the emerging local organic food sector, and the fact that this workshop was attended by farmers, NGOs, academics and consumers ensured that a diversity of voices on the topic were heard and included in the feedback.

Apart from the valuable group work output on PGS in Taiwan, the most significant development of the Taipei workshop was the networking that took place, and the decision to formalize this network. After the first day, Dr. Wang summarised the day and invited stakeholders to join him in developing a network for PGS in Taiwan. By day two, the energy in the room was palpable, and it was clear that we struck the right chord with the participants, and the room was unanimous in their decision to develop a PGS network in Taiwan. The output of the workshop showed a deepened understanding of PGS concepts, and while all the conversations were in Mandarin, the positive energy and smiling faces told the story even better than our very capable translators could.

We spent the following two days travelling around the island, visiting farms and conducting two shorter seminars on PGS in Taidung and Yunlin cities respectively. The same

energy, and even some of the participants from Taipei followed us in this journey.

One particular and memorable event was the visit to the “Story House”, run by the Yunlin Storyteller Association under the able and wonderful leadership of Li-fang Tang, whose business card says simply: “storyteller”. This group finds, develops, records and shares folk tales and stories from around Taiwan and the world with communities on the island. What makes these stories so special is the fact that they include the stories of farmers and organic farming. We were honored to meet one farmer who had a wonderful story to tell about how he saved his crop from being destroyed by rats by establishing a balance between food, hunter and prey. He did this through keen observation, some good common sense and an understanding of systems. By growing a trap crop (sweet potatoes), which was more attractive to the rats than potatoes, he fed them to the point where their numbers in turn became attractive to their hunters – the snakes – they ensured that the rats either fled or became food themselves. This story was written down and illustrated in a beautiful children’s book and is now shared by the storytellers across the island.

I often get tired when travelling and training across the world – but one or two chance meetings with storytellers like Li-fang Tang and experiencing the shared vision of communities like this new PGS network in Taiwan, makes it all worthwhile - and gives me the energy to continue carrying the PGS flag from continent to continent.

Call for candidates: Renewal of the IFOAM PGS Committee

IFOAM - Organics International’s technical committees are composed of experts appointed by the World Board for a defined term period, to advise the Head Office on the development of norms, references and tools related to guarantee systems. The IFOAM Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) Committee is a permanent technical committee that assists the development of PGS, provides advice on how to develop, facilitate and encourage PGS around the world.

Members of this committee are appointed according to their practical experience with PGS, taking into account geographic, gender and professional balance. The Terms

of Reference of the Committee, including detailed requirements, member responsibilities and procedures can be found [here](#).

In 2015, the terms of the current PGS Committee are coming to an end. It is time to appoint a new committee. Therefore we are calling for candidates, PGS practitioners and experts, who are interested in becoming a member of the PGS Committee. Candidates can apply until 30 September 2015 by sending an e-mail with their CV and a motivation letter attached, explaining the candidate’s PGS background and vision on IFOAM – Organic International’s role to support and promote PGS, to: f.castro@ifoam.bio.



Indian Ministry of Agriculture launches a very unique PGS online portal

By Flávia Castro, IFOAM – Organics International PGS Coordinator



The Ministry of Agriculture in India has launched in July 2015 three online portals for three corresponding government programs: **Soil Health Card**, **Fertiliser Quality Control System** and **Participatory Guarantee System**. According to **Radha Mohan Singh**, Minister of

Agriculture, “the three agricultural portals will bring more transparency and accountability. This will help the farming community.” In particular, he said, “the PGS portal has been launched to promote domestic organic market growth and enable small and marginal farmer to have easy access to organic certification, a decentralised organic farming certification system”. **This is the first PGS online portal run by a government that not only presents detailed information on producers, local groups and institutional structures participating in the program, but also provides product-to-farmer traceability for consumers.**

PGS-India is a government program for organic certification for the domestic market, promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC). According to its operational manual (available for download on the online portal in **English** and **Hindi**), PGS-India is based on a participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency and trust, in line with IFOAM – Organics International’s definition, key elements and features of PGS. The National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF) is running this program, with the aim to provide the PGS movement with national recognition and institutional structure. The institutional structure builds up from local farmers groups under a

common umbrella, through various facilitating agencies, to Regional Councils and Zonal Councils, with oversight by the NCOF.

The PGS-India online portal launched in July hosts a database of organic producers under the program, and of the area under PGS certification. PGS groups are able to register via the portal, share their documentation and records of inspection and certification. The database can be consulted for specific information such as local groups per state and district, and details on crops with area for farmers certified in a specific year. This information can be downloaded as a report generated automatically and saved for off-line use. The NCOF, as the Secretariat of PGS-India, maintains the data, defines policies and guidelines and has the oversight through field monitoring and product testing for residues. Regional councils and facilitating agencies support local groups in capacity building, training, knowledge and technology dissemination, but also by uploading data on the PGS website, if the local groups do not have access to computers and internet.

PGS-India is a voluntary, government-run program for farmers’ groups, not applicable to exports. It is based on the Indian National Standards for Organic Production, which is included in the **IFOAM Family of Standards**. Farmers who join the program and start the conversion period are granted access to the logo “PGS-Green”. Once the full conversion period is completed and no major or serious non-compliances exist, the farmer can be declared “PGS-Organic” and use the corresponding logo on labels and products. Along with the logo, a unique identification code is provided. This code can be used for example by consumers, to verify information about the product, the producers, and the local groups via the PGS online portal, ensuring traceability and contributing to the transparency of the process.



Continental News: What's new in ...

ASIA

CHINA 1: From 15 to 22 November URGENCI, the International Network for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) will hold its 6th International Symposium in Beijing, China. The diverse program of the event with many international speakers includes also a session "PGS meets CSA - do direct sales need certification?". For more information, including the draft program, please consult the URGENCI website.

CHINA 2: Organized by IFOAM Organics Asia with sponsorship from Sunshine Inc., the "International Conference on PGS" will take place Chengdu from 24 to 26 November, 2015. The goal of this event is to promote increased awareness on the values and importance of PGS and short-value chains in China. This will be an opportunity to share successful case studies and solutions to the challenges faced by PGS and short value-chain initiatives such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). This is also an opportunity to join forces and work together more closely. During the event, the IFOAM Asia board will hold meetings, with members from various countries joining to discuss their strategy to support PGS development in Asia. The IFOAM PGS Committee will also join the event, with all members contributing their experiences and insights. For more information, please contact Jennifer Chang, (IFOAM Organics Asia, Executive Director).

INDIA: Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council (PGSOC-India) held its Management Committee meeting on the 4th of July 2015 followed by its Annual General Body meeting on the 5th of July at Indian Social Institute in Bangalore. The meeting was attended by members of 12 organizations that are part of the Facilitation Council. Ashish Gupta stepped down as Secretary and P. B. Murali replaced him as Secretary and representative of Organic Farmers Association of India (OFAI). Mathew John stepped down as Treasurer and was replaced by T. Samraj who also represents Keystone Foundation. The important decision taken in the meeting is to work with the National Centre for Organic Farming (NCOF) which is running the PGS program promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture (see article on this issue, page 4), without compromising the sovereignty of PGS Organic Council, run by Civil Society Organizations. The two-day meeting was concluded with a decision to have the next Management Committee meeting in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

AFRICA

NAMIBIA: The approach to organic guarantee adopted by the Namibian Organic Association (NOA) is gaining international attention thanks to a study undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA), together with NOA. "This study is one of 15 cases selected for publication in a volume that explores how markets can drive the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices", said Babagana Ahmadu, FAO representative in Namibia. Through NOA's PGS for organic products, Namibia has been able "to ensure that the market drives the adoption of sustainable agricultural products". For more information, please see [here](#).

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL – 1: From 24 to 24 June, the Regional Seminar on Agroecology in Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Brasilia. The seminar was sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the Ministry of Agrarian Development of Brazil (MDA), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (ECLAC), the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of MERCOSUR (REAF / MERCOSUR) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Latin America and the Caribbean (Alliance). The final document produced by the participants in the seminary includes a series of recommendations. **Recommendation 9 in the final document** calls upon governments and integration organizations of the region to "Create mechanisms which enable the reciprocity of participatory guarantee systems among the countries of the Latin American region by promoting the link between the producer and consumer".

BRAZIL - 2: The June 2015 issue of Farming Matters looks at some existing experiences with strengthened rural-urban linkages and the lessons about improving food systems for both consumers and agroecological farmers. Along with various featured initiatives, PGS in Brazil is highlighted in an article focusing on how PGS makes it possible for farmers to claim their identity as agroecological producers, for which they receive greater recognition and support. The magazine is available for download [here](#).

COLOMBIA: Participants from 20 countries from all continents joined in Colombia from 23 to 25 June for

the “Innovative Approaches to linking sustainable and agroecological production with markets in developing countries – a workshop for practitioners and researchers”, organized by FAO INRA, from June 23 – 25, 2015. PGS was an important component and the following PGS initiatives and their presented their stories: Manjo Smith, (Namibian Organic Association - NOA), Julie Matovu and Irene Kugonza (FreshVeggies PGS Uganda,) Ashish Gupta (PGSOC India), Eduardo Lopez (PGS Bolivia), Carmen Cabling (Quezon Province PGS Philippines), Oscar Nieto (Familia de la Tierra Colombia) and Marcelo Passos (Ecovida Brazil). This meant a strong participation by IFOAM - Organics International and also by the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations (INOFO). The main PGS session facilitated by Patricia Flores (IFOAM - Organics International) provided a good opportunity for reflection and interaction. For more details, please see the online portal for the project [Capacity Building for the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organizations \(INOFO\)](#), where the latest issue of the INOFO Conveners Bulletin will be soon published.

EUROPE & NORTH AMERICA

SPAIN: “SPG-Ecollaures (Sistema Participativo de Garantía-Ecollaures) is a small initiative in Valencia focusing on self-management of production, distribution and consumption of organic produce”. In an interview by Fernando Bellon

Perez published by Redacción en Agroecología (in Spanish), Xavier Luján Estellés explains why he decided to become an organic farmer and the process he went through until his involvement in PGS-Ecollaures. Self-management is at the core of this initiative, he says. There are challenges: collective decision-making can be a lengthy process and farmers have little time for meetings, keeping documents and carrying out visits for peer review. But the group feels ownership over the results, farmers learn to farm better and consumers become aware of their important role. PGS-Ecollaures started its activities four years ago and it now gathers about 20 stakeholders, from farmers, to consumers’ groups, and NGOs.

OCEANIA:

SOLOMON ISLANDS: In June, a team comprising officials from the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), the Ministry of Agriculture of the Solomon Islands, Kastom Gaden Association and Zai Na Tina, visited Baniata (Rendova Island) for the set-up of a new PGS initiative. In this region, the ngali nuts grow wild and the potential for developing the value chain and exporting this product is promising. Linkages with New Caledonian enterprises could be established so, through this initiative, farmers will have the necessary support and the opportunity for improving their livelihoods.



The 2015 PGS Survey is open: please share your information on PGS!

IFOAM – Organics International is the only organization compiling global data about PGS. The Annual PGS Survey is an important tool in this task!

The data we collect can be consulted via the [Global Online PGS Database](#), the most comprehensive and up-to-date collection on PGS available online. It is not only a list of PGS initiatives, it also provides the possibility for PGS initiatives to display and share information.

By taking part in this survey, not only can you support us in maintaining this database, but also in facilitating information sharing and networking within and beyond the PGS community.

This is the information we are looking for:

1. The most recent data on one (or more) of the PGS already listed in the [Global Online PGS Database](#), for example:
 - How many producers have received certification in your PGS?
 - What market channels are you using?
2. Any information about a PGS that is not yet listed in the [Global Online PGS Database](#), such as:
 - What is the name of the PGS?
 - Where is the PGS operating (country, area, city, etc)?

The survey will be open until September 30, 2015. You can access and fill the survey as many times as necessary, using the links below. Please choose your preferred language and start the survey:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PGSSurvey2015>

Español: <https://es.surveymonkey.com/s/SPGEncuesta2015>

Thank you very much for taking the time to share information and please share the survey with your network!

Imprint

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