

organic umbrella organization. It requires a democratic culture, as well as a culture of compromise to resolve conflicts. Even in countries that manage to overcome divergences and build such umbrella organization, a challenge will often be the lack of own resources, if members are not willing to commit resources to pay for open access common good services.

### **c. Build organic expertise within the public sector**

#### Political justification

When a government decides to implement a series of policy measures to promote organic and/or if the government is implementing an organic regulation, a competent authority will be appointed to oversee the resulting programs. The mere appointment of a “competent authority” does not ensure the actual competence of the government employees that will be working on organic topics (sometimes, they also work on many other topics in parallel). One key element of sound policy implementation is to ensure that government personnel who will be in charge of organic development understand very well what organic agriculture is, the national sector and its constraints, and the positions of the various stakeholders on technical organic matters. Building capacity of government staff is therefore a prerequisite for further policy design and implementation, particularly of the staff of the unit in charge of organic agriculture, but it can also be relevant for other staff that will have to deal with organic issues one way or another.

Beyond the fact that government staff working on organic should be knowledgeable on the topic, there is a value in creating specific organic expertise within a public institution (this could be public or semi-public), which can serve as the go-to institution for all national matters organic and coordinate between ministries and agencies. Such an institution can produce statistics, resources for the sector, policy recommendations, organize national events, etc. It can serve the role of public facilitator and knowledge hub for organic agriculture and ensure that government decisions will be informed by well-versed experts working with the public interest in mind. There are also many experts in the private sector but those might often have private interests at stake. The other advantage of having a public institution specialized in organic agriculture is that it can retain knowledge and carry out activities over many years, based on more or less permanent funding.

#### Suitable contexts

If government is going to intervene in favor of organic agriculture in any way (whether it is just to regulate it or also with supportive measures), it is important that some personnel in government institutions be knowledgeable about the organic sector. Regardless of the stage of development of the sector, of the culture of government intervention, of the regulatory framework or even of the policy objectives, building

expertise on organic agriculture within public institutions will be a suitable and relevant measure.

### *Possible modalities of implementation*

Governments can pursue a strategy to broadly increase organic agriculture literacy throughout its personnel, or to ensure that one or more of its employees have strong background and knowledge of the organic sector – or both. Formal teaching – learning programs are well-suited for both strategies. They can be packaged in several ways, ranging from in-person courses and workshops for staff to online learning. There are several options for further knowledge building. IFOAM – Organics International offers intensive Organic Leadership Courses to “students” from government and non-governmental backgrounds. The course includes 150 hours in-person sessions plus online learning sessions. Training for government staff may also be obtained through agreements with national or regional organizations. Experts within government agencies or hired as consultants are another option for design and delivery of customized organic training programs. Training programs can be part of an arrangement with an international development agency or intergovernmental cooperation project.

Another way for a government to gain expertise is to hire organic experts in governmental positions. This was the case in the United States, where the USDA hired the former manager of organic certification for the State of Washington to head its National Organic Program, and he subsequently hired other organic experts for key staff positions. Moldova hired an expert organic agricultural consultant to a high level position in the Agricultural Ministry. He was able to operate from a position of authority to develop strategy and an organic work program. Government employees may also be trained for organic-sector roles outside their formal employment, such as in conducting organic inspections for certification bodies.

There is value in setting-up a dedicated unit or agency to be in charge of the organic sector, and to build organic expertise within such a unit. A common way is to have an organic unit composed of a few personnel, within the Ministry of Agriculture. Another way is to set-up a dedicated separate agency, in charge of organic agriculture development in the country. See for example the case of the French Agence Bio in the best practices section.

While it is important that the public sector develops its own expertise in the field of organic agriculture, it continues to draw upon expertise in the sector and academia. To institutionalize such practice, the government can include organic experts from the private sector in their working groups or even in their delegations to international or regional meetings. For example, many countries have had private sector representatives in their delegations to the Codex Alimentarius’ labeling committee in charge of organic standards.

The government may also request advice on organic policy matters from national or international experts and organizations such as IFOAM-Organics International. This is

preferably done in the form of consultations, where the expert will work together with the government personnel on a given topic – perhaps one of the best way to build government staff capacity on the job.

### *Country examples*

In 2012, the **USA** Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched its first Organic Literacy Initiative, aimed to educate USDA staff, especially field offices, extension agencies and other field-based service providers about organic agriculture, including certification and regulation. This package of training and outreach materials covers a range of topics, including understanding organic agriculture and certification, and understanding the various government programs linked to it. The Organic 101 and 201 training modules, key to the initiative, provide learners with the building blocks to understand how the organic regulations work in practice. The modules are available publicly, as well as through the USDA's AgLearn internal training portal for employees. In October and November 2012, over 1,200 USDA employees completed the AgLearn training. Field office agencies have placed a strong emphasis on the training program.

In **Turkey**, the government engaged in 2011 in a bilateral technical cooperation project with Germany, through which FiBL provided capacity building to staff of competent authorities and government organic consultants. Multi-stakeholder dialogue and intensive training were the main pillars of the project. Expert modules were developed for all points of the supply chain. Then training courses and workshops were held for government and private sector consultants, competent authorities, control personnel, producers, and technical staff of processors/traders. Demonstration farms were also organized as a component of the training. In addition to the trainings there were intensive peer exchanges between staff of the German Office for Agriculture and Food, and the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture & Livestock. The project experienced success, as indicated by the decreasing incidence of quality problems in the organic supply chain from Turkey to Germany.

In **Tunisia**, the development of the organic sector was basically government-led, and started with the creation of four specialized central and regional level administrative government agencies and technical institutions, which have been and remain the driving force behind the impressive growth of the Tunisian organic sector.

The government of **France** created, in 2001, the Agence Bio, the French Agency for the development and promotion of organic agriculture. Agence Bio is a public interest group whose members are three government institutions and three representative sector organizations. See more information in the best practice textbox below.

**Mexico** invested EUR 27,000 in the year 2009 for capacity building of government staff on organic agriculture.

### Best practice example(s)

#### **Best Practice Example: The French Agence Bio**

In France, in complement to sections or task forces within the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, a public institution with organic expertise was created in 2001: Agence Bio, the French Agency for the development and promotion of organic agriculture. It is a public interest group (“Groupement d’Intérêt Public”), a status under French law for non-profit institutions that can include both public and private member organizations. The members of Agence Bio are on the public side, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food business and Forestry and the Ministry of Environment, Energy and the Sea and on the private side, the Permanent Assembly of Agricultural Chambers, the Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives, the National Federation of Organic Agriculture (representing organic farmers), and the National Syndicate of organic companies (representing organic processors).

Agence Bio is conceived as the national platform for information and action for the development of French organic agriculture. In practice, it is more than a coordination platform: it has a staff of 15 permanent employees and receives regular funding, primarily from the French government and through EU projects. Its missions are to communicate and inform about organic agriculture, including its products and its impact, to monitor national organic development (including organic statistics compilation), to develop the French organic market, to manage and promote the organic label “AB”, to support sector development and to facilitate stakeholder cooperation and joint planning within the sector. Agence Bio is tasked to manage the “Avenir Bio” public fund for structuring the organic sector.

Aside from its Board, composed of the 6 members of the institution under the supervision of a State Controller, Agence Bio functions with a large advisory council comprising the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in the organic sector including producers, processors and traders, public institutions, certifying bodies, consumer associations, research institutes, etc. It also has four specialized technical commissions to deal with its various areas of work.

The Agence Bio model is valuable in many ways: it allows for public-private co-management and ensures the continuity, specialization and independence necessary for the promotion of the organic sector. It has been particularly active in the promotion of organic food in public canteens and in providing online resources for consumers and professionals to identify organic operators and points of sale and to monitor the market.

### Pitfalls and challenges

While it is important that the government develops its own competence, there is a risk for the competent authority to think it represents or fully understands the interests of the organic sector even without proper consultations. It is therefore crucial that the government recognizes the expertise of the private sector and the need for broad consultations and for public-private partnerships in policy implementation. To enable the competent authority, organic agency or other government structure working on organic agriculture to have sufficient consultation with the private sector, funds should be set aside. This might include paying for travel costs for stakeholders to attend national meetings or having several regional meetings to ensure proper participation.

The mandate for an organic unit should be clear enough and have the backing from the higher level, to limit the risk that its efforts are obstructed by intra-ministerial posturing.

In some public services there is considerable rotation of staff, which is problematic for the development of expertise. The same applies to countries where a big proportion of the administration is changed when a new government comes in. In such cases, the creation of a special agency, separate from the ministry, can be a solution to increase staff continuity.

#### **d. Support to PGS development**

##### *Political justification*

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. PGS represent an alternative to third party certification, specially adapted to local markets and short supply chains. They are also sometimes referred to as ‘participatory certification’. Participatory Guarantee Systems share a common objective with third-party certification systems in providing a credible guarantee for consumers seeking organic products. The difference is in the path to accomplish this, with the emphasis being on stakeholder participation and transparency.

PGS offers numerous benefits, including improved access to organic markets through a guarantee system for small-scale producers (those systems are much more affordable than third party certification), increased education and awareness among consumers (by involving them in the guarantee process), promotion of short supply chains and local market development, and farmer capacity building and empowerment. In other words, supporting PGS development is a way to promote organic agriculture adoption, but also livelihood improvements through market access and empowerment of smaller farmers. As the concept of PGS is not yet widespread in all countries and regions, there is a need for public support in the initial stage of PGS development, to provide resources for investment in capacity building and organizational development, after which those systems can operate in self-sufficient ways.

##### *Suitable contexts*

Support to PGS development is a measure suitable to any context (all stages of development of the sector, absence or presence of a regulation or officially referenced OGS, different cultures of government intervention). The only context in which it will be difficult to obtain (at least from the central government) is the case where there is an organic regulation in place which excludes PGS, but examples from the Philippines or Peru shows that even then, it is possible to obtain support from PGS either from local