

The Global PGS Newsletter

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Greetings from Bhutan!



Dear readers of The Global PGS Newsletter,

The whole IFOAM PGS committee is currently in Bhutan where it has held its first meeting. Although the program is busy and the location remote, we managed to put together a few global PGS news items for you in January. I hope you will enjoy this issue of the newsletter

and appreciate the good news that the government of Bhutan is taking organic agriculture ambitiously and PGS seriously. Thanks to the work of IFOAM and others, the concept of PGS which did not exist as such a few years ago has reached with a positive image even the most isolated countries like Bhutan. The PGS movement and all the people and organizations supporting it can be proud of such developments. With continued efforts, there are huge opportunities ahead!

IFOAM PGS Committee holds its first meeting in Bhutan

The IFOAM PGS Committee, composed of 6 members appointed by the IFOAM World Board in July 2009 (see first issue of The Global PGS newsletter), held its first meeting on the 15th and 16th of January in Thimphu, Bhutan. IFOAM World Board member Vanaja Ramprasad also participated in the meeting as IFOAM World Board counterpart to the PGS committee. Vanaja is directly involved in the India Organic PGS, with her organization, the Green Foundation, acting as regional facilitator within the Indian PGS structure. Among the important outcomes of the meeting are:

- The elaboration of a new 3-year strategic plan on PGS for IFOAM
- The decision to develop a global PGS logo, which will be featured on The Global PGS Newsletter and other IFOAM PGS-related documents, but which will also be available for all PGS to use, provided that they are registered on the IFOAM PGS online database.
- The elaboration of a detailed recommendation to the IFOAM World Board regarding the OGS revision.

It will now be up to the IFOAM Head Office to find the funding necessary to implement the ambitious (7 objectives) strategic plan. Any information on potential donors is of course very welcome.



PGS committee meeting, Bhutan, January 2010

After the committee meeting, 3 of the committee members, as well as ex-IFOAM president Gunnar Rundgren and IFOAM PGS coordinator Joelle Katto-Andrighetto participated in a workshop organized by the Department of Agriculture of the Royal Government of Bhutan and aimed at further developing the country's organic agriculture strategy and standards and certification systems. PGS was an important part of the agenda of that meeting, as the government has included the development of PGS in its national framework for organic agriculture. According to this framework, "Bhutan envisions to become 'Organic' by 2020". With such an ambitious vision, there is no doubt that PGS will have to play an important role in building capacities of farmers to adopt, maintain and improve organic practices.



PGS committee members, IFOAM World Board member Vanaja Ramprasad, IFOAM Program Manager Joelle Katto-Andrighetto and consultant Gunnar Rundgren in Thimphu, Bhutan, January 2010.

PGS Training and Strategy Workshop in Southern Africa leads to the creation of a regional PGS association

"A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living" – Rudolf Steiner



On January 8 and 9, 2010, 20 participants were introduced to this quote from one of the fathers of organic agriculture when they sat down for a workshop co-hosted by Bryanston Organic & Natural Market and IFOAM. The workshop was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, and representatives included the national organic movements of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia, 14 members of the South African organic sector and two members of the interim body representing organics in South Africa (SAOSO). Forming part of IFOAM's PGS activities in early 2010, this workshop aimed to inform delegates on the principles of organic agriculture and PGS, and to explore the possibilities of regional cross-border co-operation.

It was a gathering of new initiates to the world of PGS, as well as a few experienced operators. The first day was spent getting everyone on the same page: sharing information on PGS, comparing case studies from around the world and looking at new proposals to develop and co-ordinate PGS in the Southern African region. While there are two operational PGS in the region, the market demand for products, integrity and assurance makes the development of new initiatives a priority. Coupled with the development of standards and regulations in the region, as well as the formation of an organic agriculture movement in Namibia, the time for this intervention was ripe.

On the second day, three breakaway groups worked through the proposals in order to assess the viability of more integrated regional co-operation. Focus was given to a common baseline standard for assessment, training and farmer development and integrated marketing and retail strategies.

The exciting outcome of the workshop was that a re-

gional association for PGS was born! The representatives from Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa agreed to constitute a voluntary association, which would promote organic agriculture and PGS, develop and register a common mark for PGS and operate according to a common baseline standard of assessment. The underlying vision for this association is to support the development of emerging farmers as well as promote responsible co-operative retailing, supporting small farmers and producers.

The workshop was held in the true spirit of PGS: mutual recognition, respect, a passion for organic agriculture and a willingness to find solutions. The work-

shop ended not just with the above agreement, but with all delegates reading the opening verse together, as a symbol of togetherness and mutual respect. PGS is truly a process of building relationships apart from being just an assurance system, and for that reason it is set for success!

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Strategic committee of the newly formed regional PGS association

Sri Lanka sets up its PGS structure with the help of the Organic India PGS council



A meeting was held in Piliyandala, Sri Lanka from 16th to 18th Dec, 2009 to facilitate the process of discussion to set up a PGS in Sri Lanka. This meeting was at the initiative of IFOAM-PGSOIC-LOAM (Lanka Organic Agriculture Movement). At the end of 3 days, it was decided to set up a PGS structure

with an interim PGS Council which will take responsibility for the preparation of draft bylaws and peer appraisals. This structure at 4 levels is similar to the Indian PGS but adds the Provincial Council which will do the regional implementation of the National Council.

The PGS National Council will consist of representatives of farmers, the government, LOAM, the Local Facilitation Council [PGS-OFC] and group conveners. It will be the governing council for the policies and implementation of PGS in Sri Lanka. Its role and functions will include:

- Set PGS standards
- Formulate Appraisal forms
- Build market linkages
- Devise awareness programs
- Organize training programs in Organic Agriculture & PGS

The Facilitation Councils will undertake the formation of Local Groups and training of their members. The Local Groups are the foundation of the PGS set-up and will consist of five to twenty farmers, committed to use only organic practices and inputs on all their farms. They will share information and skills and will be trained, where needed, in better production, processing and marketing techniques.

Each Local Group will be linked to a Facilitation Council [PGS-OFC] for hand-holding, enabling and empowering in order to promote a better quality of life through eco-friendly, biodiversity supporting organic farming practices. The number of Facilitation Councils in each Province will be as per need and conditions.

The interaction was facilitated by Mr. Thilak Kariyawasam, Coordinator of Sri Lanka Nature Forum (SLNF), Miguel & Mathew from PGSOIC and assisted by Robert Leo (from Keystone).



Sri Lanka PGS meeting

Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Italy:** AIAB is going to work on a project in 2010 about new patterns of certification in the EU, including group certification and PGS. The project is funded by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture in the framework of the Italian Action Plan for Organic Farming. Andrea Ferrante will be responsible for the project. The PGS component will include setting-up pilot PGS groups in Italy and studying ways by which PGS could be included in the EU organic regulation.
- **EU:** The IFOAM EU group has put PGS (and group certification) on their work agenda for the first time at their December board meeting in Brussels. A first discussion will take place in their Malta meeting in March 2010. The group plans to have a letter sent to the EU commission by the end of the year to start raising awareness about the existence of PGS.



...LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil:** The Ministry of agriculture has published 3 very didactic booklets to inform producers and other interested stakeholders about "social control" (direct sale without certification), control mechanisms for organic quality guarantee and PGS.
- **Andean PGS:** The project coordinator will visit Bolivia in January. In February, the coordinators from the 4 countries will meet in Loja, Ecuador, to evaluate progress and visit the organic fairs in the region.



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **India:** The 2nd North India Organic Farming Conference [NIOFC-2] which will be held at Indore [Madhya Pradesh] on the 7th to the 9th of February, 2010 will be the occasion for a Nepalese delegation interested in developing PGS in Nepal to meet with the PGS Organic India Council representatives and to visit a group of Indian PGS-certified farmers.
- **Indonesia:** The Indonesian PGS initiative called PAMOR has registered on the IFOAM PGS online database. PAMOR is managed by the Indonesian Organic Alliance (an IFOAM member). Pilot PGS projects have been set-up in 4 provinces for rice and vegetable producers.
- **Japan:** The 4th URGENCI International Symposium will be held in Kobe, Japan, from the 18th to 21st of February. This symposium, whose theme is Community Supported Food and Farming, will include discussions on PGS. Joy Daniel from the PGS Organic India Council will be sharing his experience of the Organic Bazaar PGS with participants.



...AFRICA

- **Senegal:** Agrecol Afrique is initiating a 2-year PGS project with women farmers surrounding the town of Thies, as well as women consumers within the town.

Imprint

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