

IFOAM Executive Board decides on new PGS logo and its use by PGS initiatives



In this issue, you can see The Global PGS Newsletter “revamped” and featuring the new IFOAM PGS Logo. During its last meeting a few weeks ago, the IFOAM Executive Board approved this new logo for PGS initiatives. The logo had been designed in the course of 2010, as part of the implementation of a strategic plan developed by the IFOAM PGS Committee during its 2010 meeting in Bhutan (The Global PGS Newsletter, July/August 2010, n.10, v.1, p.1). The idea behind this logo is to facilitate

identification of PGS programs around the world and help build a sense of belonging to one community of practices and one approach, under the IFOAM umbrella.

The use of this logo goes along with a quality review of PGS initiatives. IFOAM will grant permission to use the logo to all PGS initiatives that will be listed on the IFOAM online PGS database, once they have passed an assessment by the PGS committee to determine whether the initiative fulfills the key characteristics and principles of PGS laid down in the IFOAM PGS Self-Evaluation Form.

IFOAM membership is also a precondition for inclusion in the list on the online database and to use the logo. Listed PGS initiatives will be allowed to use the logo on their websites, flyers and other communication materials, but not on the organic products. Unlike other logos in the IFOAM Organic Guarantee System, the use of the PGS logo by listed PGS initiatives is free of charge.

The logo is solely the property of IFOAM and non-approved use of the logo is strictly forbidden. PGS Initiatives interested in using the logo should contact pgs@ifoam.org.



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Participatory Guarantee Systems SPG in Bogota: The challenge of the organizational process of Familia de la Tierra

By Andrés Ramírez¹ & Pedro Guzmán²



In Colombia, there are several organizations developing agro-ecological processes within the framework of territorial ownership, food sovereignty, fair trade and environmental and cultural heritage conservation. The goal of these rural, indigenous and urban farmers' organizations is to provide good quality food, as well as other products, both for local consumption and for consumption in urban centers.

Most of the small producers' social organizations believe that third-party certification is not well suited to validate their processes, since their activities involve more complex aspects of organic production: strengthening communities, recognition of a fair price, protection of biodiversity and cultural identity, among others. Therefore, some of these organizations prefer to implement their own systems, referring to them differently according to the region: participatory guarantee systems, participatory certification, life agreements – trust labels, community certification, and so on.

Colombian legislation recognizes third-party certification as the only valid procedure for certifying organic production and marketing. Therefore, organizations encounter serious difficulties trading their products, since they are not allowed to use the terms “*orgánico*”, “*ecológico*” or “*biológico*” on their products' label or packaging, unless they have been certified by a third party (resolution 187 of 2006). For many organizations, this effectively outlaws their products and delegitimizes the social processes that ensure quality. These policy restrictions are evident in marketing channels such as supermarkets, which maintain a constant fight to dominate the market as the main food providers in urban centers.

Indigenous peoples and farmers' organizations have been looking out for new channels where restrictions do not determine the purchase by the consumer: this

is where agro-ecological markets and fairs come into the picture, as well as direct sales in nearby production areas, and trade with consumers' organizations, among others. In some cases, the markets and fairs have received support from local and regional governments. While this phenomenon has enabled an important dynamic to emerge, social organizations should legitimately be able to venture into the markets of large cities, with products that are free from chemical pesticides and fertilizers, traded at a fair price and with participatory certification that guarantees product quality.

The Agroecological Movement of Latin America and the Caribbean (*Movimiento agroecológico de América latina y el Caribe* – MAELA) has been working in Colombia with various regional organizations, such as the Colombian network of organic farming (*Red colombiana de agricultura biológica*– RECAB) and, in particular, with some of its leaders such as Tarsicio Aguilar, who has been assigned the task of developing a proposal for an Andean PGS, as a strategy to promote this system in the continent. In the first phase of this strategy, an action plan for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru has been

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developed, based on the documented experiences of organizations that implement PGS in these countries. It is expected that the second phase will be implemented before the end of this year. In the same direction, two national campaigns highlight the importance of participatory mechanisms: SALSA, a campaign for food safety, security and sovereignty, promoted by Ecofondo, an environmental NGO in Colombia; and *Semillas de Identidad*, a campaign promoted by the Swiss Foundation for Development Cooperation (SWISSAID). Both campaigns, along with other organizational processes in this country, are part of the social dynamic shaping a national agro-ecological movement.

In Bogotá, an initiative called *Familia de la Tierra* has emerged. It brings together small organic producers, indigenous peoples, campesinos and urban farmers throughout the country, promoting marketing and

¹ Ecologist, member of *Familia de la Tierra*

² International trade, member of *Familia de la Tierra*

distribution of their products, offering quality organic products to consumers, in the framework of fair trade principles.



This year, in March, with the support of the Mayor of Bogota, MAELA and Swissaid, Familia de la Tierra convened several organizations representing different Colombian

regions, such as the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN), Producers Association for Community Development of the Ciénaga Grande del Bajo Sinú (ASPROCIG), the Agroecological “prosumers” Federation (AGROSOLIDARIA), the Association of Organic Coffee Growers of Colombia (ACOC), the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), the network of agro market’s, RECAR and RECAR, among others (see short news below). During the meeting, they shared experiences in the implementation of PGS, with emphasis on approaches, methodologies, tools and criteria used in each region. This national process aims at emphasizing the importance of setting some common minimum standards that may apply for organizations, in order to consolidate a national participatory certification scheme.

In order to promote organic production and consumption as well as fair trade with small producers, Familia de la Tierra has been approaching the government of Bogotá to advocate for official recognition of participatory certification systems. The government of Bogotá has been open to receiving a proposal on the subject, and to promote support for the indigenous and peasant economy. Familia de la Tierra believes that, through trust-building processes, responsible consumers are the ones who should decide whether or not to validate the seals and quality certification for smallholders. These processes will help accessing the country’s largest market, through collective distribution of products, reducing costs related to logistics and administration, using strategies such as addressing different marketing channels (i.e. responsible consumers’ networks, small organic shops in strategic parts of the city, direct sales, Restaurants, etc.) and obtaining validation of participatory certification processes directly from the consumers themselves.

Along with other organizations from the movement for food sovereignty, agro-ecology and right to land, Familia de la Tierra will pursue the task of implementing PGS, so that such systems become a reality at the policy level and receive institutional support from the Colombian government. Familia de la Tierra, together with partners, will seek to influence the Ministry of Agriculture, the national authority for organic farming policies, towards acknowledging the importance of strengthening small producers’ supply of organic products.

Two years of PGS in Argentina: PGS Bella Vista, Corrientes

By Flávia Castro



In 2010 the Bella Vista PGS initiative was featured on this newsletter (The Global PGS Newsletter, March, 2010, n.6 v.1, p.5) where we communicated about the first PGS developments in Argentina and the creation of Bella Vista’s PGS Council for agroecological products. The initiative developed and is consolidating.

On 17 March 2011, a meeting of the Council, which was aimed to develop the annual schedule of activities, assess the progress made in the last quarter of 2010, designate those responsible for managing legal procedures and technical tasks, and provide information on activities at the national, provincial and regional levels, included a very relevant stakeholder: the national authority on health and food quality (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria - SENASA).



PGS Council for agroecological products of Bella Vista, Corrientes, at a meeting.
Source: www.bellavista.gob.ar

This year, to celebrate the second anniversary of their organic fair, the PGS Council of Bella Vista and the group of organic farmers Las Tres Colonias are organizing a series of lectures and events to be held between 25

and 29 April, under the motto “Roads of Life between Country and City”.

Seminars in schools are scheduled for 26, 28 and 29 April. The main event will be held on 27 April, with the participation of institutions, farmers’ delegations and invited public officers. The event will include organic product tastings and cultural performances, as well as a visit to organic farms of producers from the group.

For more information on the PGS Bella Vista, Corrientes, please contact Paia Pereda: paiapereda67@yahoo.com.ar.

OFAI and SJI cooperation: promoting PGS in Bhutan

As we announced in an earlier issue of this newsletter (The Global PGS Newsletter February 2011, n.4, v.1, p.5), the Government of Bhutan has decided to promote organic agriculture and PGS as part of its “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) strategy. The Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) has been assisting the Bhutanese grassroots organization, Samdrup Jhonkar Initiative (SJI), in this plan.



OFAI representatives in Bhutan to promote organic agriculture and PGS.
Source: <http://kvfg.blogspot.com/>

On 18 February, 2011, SJI began a ten day program aimed at linking organic farmers to potential institutional and individual buyers, as well as building farming and marketing skills through collective action. Three members of OFAI, Ashish Gupta, Vikram Rawat and Miguel Braganza, contributed with their experience in organic farming at high altitudes, collection and marketing of organic products, as well as capacity building and networking for farmer groups. They shared their experiences in India, which could be easily adapted to the similar local context of the district of Samdrup, in Bhutan.

Tashi Coleman, from SJI facilitated the interaction with

farmers, traders and other stakeholders in the morning and afternoon sessions. Tashi stated that the main objective of SJI is to guarantee food security in every village while ensuring the health of soil and environment through organic agriculture, as well as value addition and collective marketing at local, district and national level.

Farmers were introduced to the OFAI network and its activities. They learned about the concept of PGS and became acquainted with the IFOAM definition of Organic Agriculture. Participants discussed and exchanged experiences. Pest and diseases were not a major concern; the most commonly expressed problem was the lack of infrastructure for product distribution. Marketing costs for individual farmers are high and there are neither collective marketing systems nor any value addition processes known to them.

There is, on the other hand, a substantial demand for vegetables by local institutions (schools and public canteens), as well as by traders supplying nearby urban areas. These stakeholders are willing to source their vegetables locally if prices are competitive, quality is better and the supply of required quantities is assured on a regular basis. Therefore, a series of necessary interventions emerged, such as: identifying and training farmers who can organize PGS Local Groups (LGs) in different villages, developing networks among PGS LGs for better production coordination and building up consumer awareness by communicating success stories or publishing reports in newspapers.

The OFAI representatives also met with the Bhutan Prime Minister, H.E. Jigme Y. Thinley, on 25 February, 2011. Speaking on behalf of the OFAI team, Miguel Braganza drew attention to the fact that organic agriculture is compatible with the Bhutanese objective of GNH. He reminded that organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soil, ecosystems and people, combining tradition, innovation and science, and promotes fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved. PGS provide a strategic approach to it.

For more information, contact Miguel Braganza: braganza.miguel@gmail.com.

Continental news: What's new in...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **France:** Nature & Progrès and a handful of organizations using PGS in other (non-agricultural) sectors have formed a working group to communicate the benefits of the PGS approach. The group is working to define the commonalities of these systems when applied in various sectors. The IFOAM self-evaluation tool for PGS initiatives is being adapted for this purpose. For more information, please contact Lise Guillermin at lise.guillermin@natureetprogres.org
- **Italy:** In Tuscany (Casentino – Poppi) on 5 April, 13 small producers and a representative of a consumers group (GAS Casentino) met to discuss participatory guarantee systems and decided to develop a local PGS within the project “*Garanzia Partecipata in Casentino*”. The next meeting is scheduled for April 30 and will be hosted by one of the farmers involved in the group, Ivana Fantoni. For more information on PGS developments in Tuscany: Marzio Carletti, lerocche.marzio@tin.it
- **USA:** Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) has created an online registry of local farmers’ networks. The registry will help isolated farmers connect with existing networks, provide a communication forum within networks and among network organizers, and showcase the different types of network activities, so they may serve as useful models to others. In addition, CNG has hired seven organizers to work developing stronger farmers’ networks in their own communities. CNG thanks IFOAM staff for their valuable assistance providing background articles to support these efforts. For more information, please contact Alice Varon: alice@naturallygrown.org.



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **South Korea:** South Korea: ICEA (Institute for Ethical and Environmental Certification) is organizing the workshop “Organic Agriculture for Development: What Works” during the 17th IFOAM World Congress in South Korea on 29 September. A call for initiatives to be presented during the workshop has been issued. If you have been involved in innovative, successful projects and would like to tell your stories, please read the instructions on [this page](#). The call is open to the organic movement and to all stakeholders engaged in international cooperation projects and initiatives. To submit a presentation of your initiatives for the selection, please download the questionnaire available online, fill it and send it to: cooperazione@icea.info. The deadline is 14 May 2011.



...LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil:** A meeting between the national office for Fair Trade (SENAES) and 12 organizations involved in PGS in the country (Fórum de Sistemas Participativos de Garantia) took place this month as part of the development of the National System for Fair trade, in Brasília. The Brazilian Government, on 17 November 2010, created a national system regulating Fair trade with the Decree 7.358/2010. The system is not yet fully implemented, and its structure is has been discussed during a national seminar held between 12-14 April. Due to its potential contribution to the development of this system, PGS has been included as a main topic in the program of the seminar. More updates on this process will be available soon.
- **Colombia:** The meeting “*Experiencias en la implementación de mecanismos de y sistemas de garantía y certificación participativos – SGP*” brought together farmers, indigenous peoples and agroecological organizations in Bogotá, on March 22, to discuss strategies to develop a national PGS plan. It was organized by the association Familia de la Tierra, with support from the office for economic development of Bogotá, Swissaid and Maela. A report is available and it includes the case studies that were presented during the event. For more information, please contact Pedro Guzmán: pguzper@gmail.com.

Imprint

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IFOAM Head Office

Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5
53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 10

Fax: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 99

Email: headoffice@ifoam.org

Web: www.ifoam.org

Trial Court Bonn, Association Register no. 8726

PGS Coordination at IFOAM

Joelle Katto-Andrighetto

Email: pgs@ifoam.org

Phone: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 24

IFOAM PGS Committee Members' contacts

Europe: Eva Torremocha (Spain), evatorremocha@hotmail.com

North America: Ron Khosla (USA), ronkhosla@gmail.com

Oceania: Chris May (New Zealand), biomays@clear.net.nz

Africa: Konrad Hauptfleisch (S. Africa), konrad@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za

South America: Janet Villanueva (Peru), jvillanuevaescudero@speedy.com.pe

Asia: Mathew John (India): mathew@keystone-foundation.org

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