

Is the new Chinese organic regulation unintentionally setting the stage for PGS?

By Joelle Katto-Andrighetto



It is the first time that we hear comments and opinions that a government might be involuntarily encouraging PGS by tightening the rules of its organic regulation.

In the past few months, the Chinese government has been taking very seriously the fraud cases and scandals occurring in the domestic organic market in China. In an attempt to discipline its organic certification sector, China has drastically revised its organic regulation, making it probably the strictest control system in the world. The government added to the organic regulation a number of additional or stricter control requirements that are now imposed on all producers wanting to use the word “Organic” (or its Chinese equivalent) for sales on the Chinese market, and on all certifiers certifying them. Notable changes e.g. the prohibition of group certification, the prohibition to certify organic crops that are not listed on the national list of “organically-certifiable crops”, zero tolerance for pesticide residues, and the compulsory inspection and pesticide testing of each crop, each season for each farm. Compliance with all requirements in the new regulation, whether production requirement or control requirements, is also imposed on all organic products imported into China.

Fortunately, it seems that this regulation will not be fully compulsory for organic products intended for export only. The impact will therefore be on the Chinese domestic market itself. Experts from the Chinese organic private sector and from certification bodies have expressed concerns that the private sector was not consulted in this revision process, and that the new rules will affect very negatively the emerging domestic organic market, and reduce it to a very small niche of exclusive products unaffordable to the regular consumer.

Last year, before the new rules were even communicated, and as the Chinese media paid a lot of attention to the integrity problems of the domestic organic certification system, PGS started to be mentioned as a more credible solution for consumers who really want to be sure about the organic quality of their food. An example of such a message delivered by the organizer of the Beijing Organic Farmers’ Market on the China Central Television news can be seen [online in this video](#).

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In the past few weeks, it has been interesting to see the reaction of the Chinese stakeholders to this, and to note that a number of them, including certification body representatives, begin to think that CSAs and PGS will be the new realistic approaches to build the trust between producers and consumers in China, under the new regulatory context. So far, the rules do not apply to products which may be marketed with other terms than “organic”, e.g. “Bio” or “Eco” or similar Chinese concepts. Hence we may see a trend for PGS to develop in China, with the use of alternative concepts, to convey the organic message.



Chang Tianle, Beijing Organic Farmer's Market interviewed on CCTV

IFOAM supports Indonesia Organic Alliance for the recognition of PGS in the Indonesian Organic Regulations

By *Mathew John*



The Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia is currently developing organic regulations that would define the certification system applicable for Indonesia. The first draft of the organic regulation was published in October 2009 and it allowed for

the development of an alternative certification system that would be highly acceptable to the consumers. At that time, the Indonesian competent authority on organic food (OKPO) invited the Indonesia Organic Alliance (AOI) to give comments on how this system could be developed.

In the second and current draft of the regulations, issued in April 2011, the contents are nearly the same: national organic standard plus regulation on inspection, certification and labeling. However, only third party certification is accepted in this draft of the regulation. Negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture have been carried out since then and the Ministry has been open to the idea of PGS being included before the final document is approved.

On Friday March 9 2012, representatives AOI met with Dr. Ir. Zaenal Bachruddin, head of OKPO and the Director General of the Directorate of Processing & Marketing of Agricultural Products of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture. Dr. Ir. Gardjita Budi, Director of Quality & Standardization of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture and a crucial person in the Ministry also joined the meeting.

IFOAM provided a letter of support to AOI (a member of IFOAM since 2004) and an excellent meeting led to a better understanding of the advantages of providing space for PGS in organic regulations. Mathew John (Member of the IFOAM World Board and the IFOAM PGS Committee) participated in the meeting and was able to provide a global perspective on PGS and on the efforts being made by the civil society, governments and other stakeholders to promote it.

A former head of the National Standards Authority in Indonesia pointed out at the meeting that self-declaration was allowed under the National Standards. Under ISO 17050, there are requirements for suppliers to meet when they make formal claims that products, services, systems, processes or materials conform to relevant standards, regulations or other specifications and that this was a possible reference for PGS development in Indonesia. The Indonesian government would like to adopt a single Indonesia Organic logo for both third party certification and PGS, so as not to confuse the consumers. This is something similar to what has been done in Brazil, where the same principle is being applied.

IFOAM PGS Committee - my experiences and reflections.

By *Konrad Hauptfleisch*



A member of the IFOAM PGS Committee until February 2012, Konrad Hauptfleisch is now leaving the committee to take on the role of IFOAM Academy Manager. The IFOAM PGS Team is thankful for his great support and contagious enthusiasm! We are also happy to share with our readers another

one of his inspiring articles, hopefully not his last contribution to the PGS Newsletter.

It was in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2007 that I first had the opportunity to share my PGS experiences with members of the global organic movement. In a workshop focused on integrating the PGS concept in the East African Organic sector, I was given the chance to present our South African experience for the first time. It was also the first connection with people like Chris May, Gunnar Rundgren, Anne Boor and a whole group of fellow Africans who have since become colleagues, connections and friends.

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Through PGS, my personal growth and skills were honed to a place where I can now share these skills with a wider audience from within the IFAOM Academy. It is, however, with a heavy heart that I say goodbye to the Committee that also helped hone me as a contributor in the movement.

The IFOAM PGS Committee grew from strength to strength, finding its way thanks to the pioneering work done by the PGS Task Force that preceded it. When we met for our first meeting in 2010 in Thimphu, Bhutan, it was an amazing experience to share ideas, formulate vision and create systems for one of the most creative and energetic initiatives coming out of the organic world in the last few years.

PGS was not our creation: in fact, PGS is and should remain what it has always been – a real and vibrant creative urge coming from the grassroots of organic producers and marketers. PGS is a system that exists because the ground swell of small and sometimes marginalized farmers are organizing themselves into networks, where they take ownership of their destiny by creating assurance for their consumers, by involving themselves and their consumers into something truly special – a participatory, horizontal and transparent system that sometimes defies logic, and at other time creates its own.

The IFOAM PGS Committee has worked hard to

formulate and define systems to ensure that PGS is recognized as a valid and valuable cog in the big machine of organic assurance, but it constantly had to remind itself that it was not a body to enforce compliance, or to regulate adherence, but to facilitate growth and development, and to suggest and co-create guidelines for a system that has to continue to be owned by its stakeholders.

And striking the balance between setting a level of achievement for a system to “qualify” as a PGS while encouraging innovation – a cornerstone of PGS and organics in general – has been the challenging task of this Committee. The outcomes – in publications, resources as well as the resulting growth of PGS worldwide – speak for itself if one wants to assess the success of the Committee as well as its supporters throughout IFOAM and the wider sector.

By the time our second face to face meeting took place during the World Congress/GA in Korea, the success of PGS as well as the Committee was clear for all to see: PGS featured prominently in workshops and presentations. PGS was mentioned by many



PGS Committee meeting in Thimphu, Bhutan, January 2010

presenters and participants outside of the “normal” PGS stakeholder groups, and PGS was well and truly on the map. The Global PGS database on the website, the self-evaluation questionnaire and the IFOAM PGS Logo are all tangible outputs emerging from the work of the committee. Next to this stands a powerful Policy Brief adopted by IFOAM to guide governments and policymakers to recognize and develop PGS.

I am proud to have served on this Committee, and will carry only positive memories into my new role within this sector from the people I met, and the work we achieved.

It is true that PGS is a living initiative. It is true that it will still evolve as it matures. It is true that it has a major role to play in the organic sector. It is true that it will keep on doing that because it has a life of its own, given to it by the people in the fields.

But it is also true that it has grown even stronger by having the support of a keen, creative and innovative group of volunteers known as the IFOAM PGS Committee. I was honored to have served with this group of individuals, and extremely aware of the hard work put in by the IFOAM Head Office staff to keep this show on the road. As a fellow member of that staff now, I hope to continue supporting PGS wherever I can – and so should every person in our sector!

Call for a member of the IFOAM Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) Committee

The IFOAM PGS Committee is a permanent IFOAM committee. It plays a key role in advising IFOAM on PGS-related issues and works closely with the IFOAM Head Office. Members of this committee are appointed according to their practical experience with PGS, taking into account geographic, gender and professional balance.

IFOAM is now calling for one volunteer to replace the outgoing PGS Committee member Konrad Hauptfleisch from South Africa. Candidates from African countries are especially encouraged to apply.

Candidates should apply by sending their CV and a motivation letter, explaining the candidate's PGS background and vision on IFOAM's role to support and promote PGS to f.castro@ifoam.org, before April 30, 2012.

The TORs of the IFOAM PGS Committee including detailed requirements, member responsibilities and procedure can be found [here](#).

PGS Basics



IFOAM has recently published an introductory brochure on Organic Agriculture and Participatory Guarantee Systems. This is a good starting point for those who are new to the

concept including the definition of PGS, its key elements and key characteristics, a brief description of how it works and who it is aimed at, and some information about the IFOAM PGS logo. The brochure is available for download for free on the [IFOAM PGS Portal](#) and could be used by PGS initiatives, NGOs and PGS stakeholders as a tool for advocating, promoting and strengthening PGS worldwide.

Continental news: What's new in...



...Africa

South Africa: IFOAM has started to prepare the series of videos „Participatory Guarantee Systems Around the Globe“. The series will aim at showcasing successful PGS experiences from different parts of the world, collecting impressions and inspiring messages to strengthen the PGS community. The first video of the series has been recently released and features Konrad Hauptfleisch and the [Bryanston Organic and Natural Market](#).

The video was shot by Hervé Bouagnimbeck, IFOAM Africa Coordinator, during his visit to South Africa which took place early this year in the framework of the global comparative study that IFOAM is conducting on interactions between PGS and social processes.

To watch the video, please follow [this link](#). And of course, don't forget to share it!

Zimbabwe: The Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Promoters Association (ZOPPA) carried out the “Organic Standards Training and Compliance Programme for Mashonaland East Province”. The training aimed at standardizing organic farming in the province and developing a local guarantee system. A few hundreds of farmers, both men and women, participated in the 4-day trainings that took place in different areas of the province. ZOPPA provided basic training on organic standards, compliance guidelines and guidance for the set-up of a PGS. The Zimbabwe Organic Standard was used as reference. The demand for organic products in the region is growing gradually and the PGS system is well received. For more information contact Fortunate H. Nyakanda: fortunate@zoppa.org.zw



...Asia and Oceania

Nepal: From March till December 2011 the HASERA Agriculture Research & Training Center implemented the “Seed for Life Program” in Patalekhet, Nepal. The project addressed food security, health and local livelihoods through the empowerment of women subsistence farmers. The program was focused on training in organic agriculture for women, and it included the set-up of a PGS system. There are currently 30 farmers in transition to organic farming. Linkages to the local market have also been established and the women are delivering their produce to the Dhulikhel Hospital twice a week. For more information contact Eva Capozzola & Govinda Sharma: jibika.seed.for.life@gmail.com

New Caledonia: PGS guaranteed organic pineapples and mangoes are now available for consumers at supermarket shelves in Greater Nouméa. Implementing PGS since 2009, Bio Caledonia counts now more 20 producers involved in the initiative, some already applying the Bio Pasifika logo to their products and others going through the conversion period. For more information, please visit <http://www.biocalledonia.nc/> and contact Geroges Tieya

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