

# Revision of the IFOAM Global Online PGS Database

By IFOAM PGS Team



'IFOAM – Organics International' is the only organization collecting, compiling and publishing information and statistics

on the global development of Participatory Guarantee Systems in the organic sector. This information has been made accessible via the IFOAM PGS Map, where you can track the development of different PGS figures over time, as well as in the Global Online PGS Database, where you can find detailed information on each PGS initiative.

In the past, the Global Online PGS Database only depicted PGS initiatives that were officially endorsed by 'IFOAM – Organics International' and had obtained IFOAM PGS Recognition. In 2014, however, the IFOAM PGS Team decided, together with the IFOAM PGS Committee, to make the entire PGS database available to the public with the intention to intensify networking and knowledge sharing and to raise awareness around PGS. The concept and content of the Global Online PGS Database was extensively

**In the Global Online PGS Database you now find information on PGS initiatives in each country, including how to contact them.**

revised and a large amount of information was added to the website.

In the future we hope to provide a page for each PGS initiative with more detailed information, including, for example, photos or newsletter articles related to the PGS. Members and stakeholders of PGS initiatives are highly encouraged to check out their profile on the Global Online PGS Database and to submit further information, files, links and updates to the PGS Team under [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio). The provided materials will help to create a highly valuable and unique da-

tabase, facilitating knowledge exchange on PGS around the world.


Your PGS is not yet officially recognized by 'IFOAM – Organics International'? Initiate your application to the IFOAM PGS Recognition Program and obtain access to the IFOAM PGS Logo, which can be used in your communication materials, on websites, brochures and banners, just to name a few possibilities. The evaluation process and the use of the logo are free of charge! Any PGS may apply for IFOAM PGS Recognition if they are members of 'IFOAM – Organics International' and if their production standard is listed in the IFOAM Family of Standards. If you wish to initiate your evaluation process, please send your completed Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) to [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio). The SEF is available in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese on our website. Learn more about IFOAM Membership and how to list your production standard in the IFOAM Family of Standards by browsing through the 'IFOAM – Organics International' website, or feel free to contact us directly. We look forward to receiving your SEF and input for the Global Online PGS Database.

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# Developing livelihoods and vibrant local economies in South Africa through Kumnandi PGS

By Diane Pieters, Director of Siyavuna

 Siyavuna is a non-profit organization with the vision of empowering rural organic farmers. We are interested in the development of food security and livelihood of people in under-resourced, cash strapped communities.



*Diane Pieters with 2 farmers*

Siyavuna operates in ten under-resourced rural areas in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, where 604 smallholder farmers are registered as PGS members. On entry into the program, the majority of the farmers have no source of income apart from minor government support. Joining the program as a PGS member gives them the opportunity to earn a steady income by selling organic fresh produce. This lessens dependency on government grants and enables them to develop a livelihood based on the available resources – land, labor and agricultural know-how.

The PGS is implemented through collaborative efforts of Siyavuna's staff team, leaders of farmers associations and co-op board members. The registration and verification of new PGS members take place at local farmers association meetings.

One precondition for PGS registration is the successful completion of a three-day organic vegetable production training. Prior to the training, most people who are wanting to sell crops that are grown in a home garden, do not have any vegetable garden in place yet. After the training, they begin to develop their garden from scratch. Within the following months, they are encouraged to sign up to join the PGS and to attend the farmers meetings, sharing knowledge with other farmers and learning about organic production. Over half the people who are trained decide to sign up for PGS and join their local farmers groups and

associations or produce individually in home gardens. Once they have completed their registration and paid a nominal registration fee, they need to undergo a conversion period of several months before they may sell their produce via the Kumnandi PGS. During this conversion period, they are monitored and visited by the Siyavuna agri-trainers and mentors who verify that the farmers are implementing organic practices according to Kumnandi specifications.

After the successful completion of the conversion period, farmers are issued a PGS card that entitles them to sell to the farmer co-operative on a weekly basis, receiving cash for their produce. The PGS cards are printed by Siyavuna and then distributed to new entrants at the next monthly farmers association meeting. The cash payment procedure is an important component of our PGS model since PGS members usually spend their remuneration in local shops. This increases the amount of money circulating in marginalized rural communities and stimulates the local economy.

Siyavuna has organized smallholder farmers into local farmers associations. The elected leaderships of the farmers associations are represented on the board of farmer co-operatives. Once a week, the co-op buys fresh produce from the farmers at collection points that are located within walking distance of the farms. One of the regulations requires the farmers to harvest on the morning of sale to ensure maximum freshness. At the collection points, PGS members have to show their PGS card in order to sell their fresh produce. Their sales to the co-op are recorded and a compiled in a database of each PGS

*Smallholder farmer, Mr Lushaba, arriving at collection point ready to sell his produce*



member's transactions. Quality checks are conducted, the produce is weighed and farmers are paid cash. After visiting several collection points during one day, the co-op staff takes the produce to the agri-hub where it is kept in cold storage, labeled as Kumnandi (isiZulu for "delicious") and packed for delivery. The customer base includes organic shops, local retail outlets and restaurants. The produce is delivered as soon as possible after arrival in the hub, ensuring that customers will receive excellent fresh produce.

Inspection teams, which include a Siyavuna staff member, a representative from the local farmers association leadership and a local farmer, carry out annual site inspection



*PGS member, Mtobela Matola signing off her site inspection visit form. Also pictured are Siyavuna staff member Pearl Mqadi and chair of the local farmers association Mr Ndlovu*

visits. These inspections entail the check-up of the production area and the assessment of whether the farmers have deviated from organic standards. The inspection also provides evidence of the implementation of organic practices and ensures that there is no contamination risk.

Initially, we imagined that farmers would perceive the site inspections as negative policing. However, the more inspections we do, the more farmers express appreciation for being verified as an organic grower.

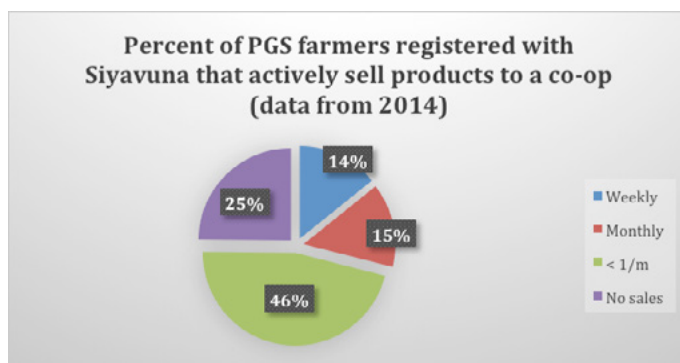
Peer-to-peer monitoring takes place all year round. If a smallholder farmer suspects another grower of any deviation, they report the case to the farmers association leadership and/or to a Siyavuna staff member. A team of farmers and Siyavuna staff is assigned to investigate the matter and a site visit to the farmer is arranged. The results of the investigation are reported to the next farmers association meeting with a recommendation for sanctions, if applicable. The farmers then discuss the case and come to a joint decision. Applied sanctions, such as suspension or dismissal, are recorded in the meeting minutes and communicated to co-op staff to ensure that no produce will be purchased from the respective farmer.

Siyavuna's main focus in terms of working with smallholder farmers is the provision of ongoing training, guidance

and support. At times, a team of agri-mentors visits the farms and provides technical expertise directly to the producer. In addition, training slots are regular agenda points during the monthly farmers association meetings, helping to keep farmers informed and up-to-date on current trends. Furthermore, entrepreneurship training is offered to farmers who show interest in developing a small business from their agricultural efforts. This has been effective and supports the farmers in planning ahead, setting personal production and income goals, keeping records and improving their productivity and yield.

In 2014, farmers who joined the PGS programme had increased their sales to their co-op by over 250 %. In total, 75 % of the PGS farmers sold produce to their co-op, of which 14 % sold their produce weekly, 15 % at least once per month and 46 % less than once per month.

A comparison of data over the last two years shows that 4 % of the smallholder farmers transitioned from occasional sellers to regular sellers and 8 % transitioned from "no sales" to occasional sellers.



As a non-profit organization, Siyavuna is dependent on funding support to continue its work. In 2015, we intend to launch an agro-processing component in the frame of this program. Please consider supporting our work through volunteering or donations to help farmers to earn a livelihood and improve the quality of their lives. For any feedback or questions, please contact Diane Pieters at [diane@siyavuna.org.za](mailto:diane@siyavuna.org.za). Also visit our website [www.siyavuna.org.za](http://www.siyavuna.org.za).





# Opinion article: Trust is long-term

By Aparna Pallavi, journalist at *Down to Earth* environmental magazine.

The original article was edited by the IFOAM PGS team

An official from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) walked into *Restore*, an organic food store in Chennai, India. He picked up a packet of rice off the shelf and noticed some bugs in it. “How can you sell groceries with bugs?” he asked. The staff told him their customers buy their goods precisely because of the bugs in them. The official was amused, but then asked to see the organic certificates of the farmers who supplied the store. The staff told him the supplying farmers did not have certification. Taken aback, the official asked, “How will your customers trust that your products are organic?”

**“We told him our customers trust our products precisely because our farmers don’t have certificates but are part of our trust-network. The kind of customers we have would rather trust people than institutions and would rather support small farmers than big landlords and industrialists,”**

says Sangeetha Shriram, one of the founders of the store. The incident ended with the bemused official handing them their license and buying a few products in the bargain.

One of the main bottlenecks in marketing organic food is certification – for all farmers it is a hassle, for small farmers it is an expensive task. And for customers, certified organic food means paying a high premium price.

But is third-party certification the best way to get trusted organic food? Many farmers, agriculture activists and those involved in marketing organic food think it is not and that is perhaps the reason why several cities in India are seeing the rise of community-supported organic food marketing endeavors. They believe the best way to get authentic, trusted organic food is to establish close contact between procurers, consumers and farmers. *Restore* relies on this practice. “Initially, we would visit every single farm we procured from, and spend a whole day there, getting to know the farmer, his philosophy and practices,” says Shriram. “We got cheated a few times, but with time we developed an intuitive check-list of what to look out for, including biodiversity on the farm and the process of preparing organic inputs.”

Some farmers on their part also feel that selling organic food on trust has more benefits than third-party certification. “Unless you are a really big producer company wanting to sell to corporates or go for exports, trust works better than third-party certification” Dheeraj Pipada comments. He is part of a group of 12 farmers who started their own organic shop *Rich & Fresh* two years ago. The group is certified under the government’s Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), which certifies all crops of the farm that are grown organically and provides each farmer with an individual certificate. Pipada says that big procurers often do not trust PGS and prefer third-party certification from private agencies, which costs up to Rs 30,000 per year.

Kavitha Kuruganti from the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture federation of organic farmer groups in India, says, while it is not possible to get realistic estimates of the number of farmer groups and endeavors involved in trust-based organic food marketing in the country, numbers of both farmers and consumers are certainly growing.

Read the full article [here](#).



# Trade for Development Centre's projects in Bolivia: Developing the local market for organic products through PGS

By Steven De Craen, Belgian Development Agency

Oftentimes, agricultural cooperatives and producer groups in the South have much in common: a genuine commitment and high growth potential on one hand, and a lack of resources and market insights on the other, impeding the development of commercial opportunities. This is where the Trade for Development Centre (TDC), a program of the Belgian Development Agency, intends to make a difference by providing them with financial support. TDC recognizes fair and sustainable trade as a powerful weapon against poverty and as a significant contribution to a viable development. The project supports 18 partner countries of the Belgian Development Cooperation in three target areas: strengthening the organizational power of small and medium-sized producer groups, improving the quality of their products and enhancing their knowledge of the local, regional or international market.

Within the framework of its program, TDC has been supporting the Bolivian organization AOPEB (Asociación de Organizaciones de Productores Ecológicos de Bolivia) since 2010. AOPEB represents and brings together organic farmer organizations and aims to increase the sales of organic products on the Bolivian domestic market through PGS.



*Bolivian farmers after receiving their organic certification*

Under most regulatory frameworks, organic certification requires the intervention of external certification agencies in the third-party certification model. Thus, getting organic production certified is expensive and only applicable when marketing relatively large volumes. However, there is potential in developing domestic organic markets

in the South on the basis of PGS, which provides consumers with a guarantee that the purchased products from certified producers comply with the principles of organic farming. The system is adapted to short supply chains and allows organic certification at a very low cost. As such, PGS open the door for smallholders to enter the domestic market of certified organic products.

The first AOPEB project that was financed by TDC focused on the technical training of producers and the implementation of the PGS in their organizations. Subsequently, commercial partnerships between the producer communities and processor or traders were established. To assure long-term sustainability, technical assistance was provided to the staff of municipalities, which are committed to support local organic production chains. The project was carried out in 20 producer organizations within five municipalities, including the urban centers of La Paz, Cochabamba and Tarija.

Despite all this support, the competition over a spot on the market turned out to be challenging. That is why TDC decided to emphasize this aspect in a follow-up project. AOPEB is fully focusing on short value chains, especially via the organization of municipal and local organic markets, so-called "bioferias". Another opportunity for PGS farmers to promote their produce is provided by the fact that Bolivia's government requires that children are provided a healthy breakfast at school. PGS-certified producer groups are currently negotiating with local authorities about which products they can offer for this purpose.

The AOPEB projects aim at enhancing the purchase and consumption of organic products at all levels within the Bolivian society. We believe that organic products are the commitment of a society in favor of sustainable economic and social development that is profitable for everyone. This is what TDC hopes to achieve through its support to AOPEB and PGS in Bolivia.



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*Steven De Craen*

# Continental News: What's new in....

## GLOBAL

In our last PGS Newsletter issue November/December 2014 we reported about the successful pre-conference “Building Food Communities” during the IFOAM Organic World Congress in Istanbul. Meanwhile, we have compiled the video material and published several clippings from the conference, including the opening speech given by IFOAM President Andre Leu. Check out the different presentations of PGS and CSA cases around the world on our [PGS Media Library](#) or go directly to playlist [Conference Building Food Communities 2014](#).

## AFRICA

**BENIN:** Stakeholders of the PGS Benin celebrate the handover of their first PGS certificate. Lazare Yombi, main facilitator of PGS Benin, emphasizes that “PGS in Benin should move to another stage, for a stronger cooperation of producers and consumers. This is one of our challenges in 2015.” Together with Evelyne Sissinto and Sébastien Dohou (HELVETAS) he has put together a video that was presented and very well received during the certificate ceremony, which was attended by the Minister of Agriculture among others. For more information, please visit the [PGS Benin facebook page](#) and check out the [video](#) (in French).

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**PERU:** The scientific institute of Latin America in Peru (Instituto Latinoamericano de Ciencias ILC) has launched an online graduate program in organic agriculture (agricultura ecológica) with a duration of 6 months and has included PGS as one of the 12 fixed course modules. The program addresses farmers, agricultural technicians and entrepreneurs as well as agronomists and farmer cooperatives. Participants are expected to dedicate a total of 400 hours to complete 12 modules, including “Principles of Organic Agriculture”, “Soil Fertility” and “PGS”. Moreover, they are required to deliver a final course project. At a cost of \$US 590, participants graduate as qualified and trained specialists with research abilities and the capacity to advise farms and companies in the organic sector. For more details on the course and the application procedure, please visit the [ILC website](#).

**ECUADOR:** On 13 November 2014, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), the Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador (CONGOPE) and the Trias Foundation implemented a workshop on “The Role of Agricultural Certifications and Participatory Guarantee Systems in Rural Territorial Development” in Quito, Ecuador. The workshop was open to the public and brought together producer organizations, government officials and policymakers, certification bodies and researchers to discuss different models of agricultural certification and systems of participatory guarantee in Ecuador as mechanisms to support sustainable rural development. The panel discussions generated a rich debate on different issues around agricultural certification and the role of public policies in relation to agricultural certification. Several provincial governments in Ecuador are developing systems of participatory guarantee and similar models of certification. The merits and challenges of these different models were discussed in depth. In the afternoon, the participants of the workshop split up in smaller roundtables comprising different stakeholders and came up with ideas and recommendations for public policies regarding agricultural certification and systems of participatory guarantee in Ecuador. For more information please contact [Patrick Clark](#).

## NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

**FRANCE:** The AMAP (Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne) federation Picardie in Northern France is currently recruiting university graduates with a master's degree in agriculture or rural development for a 5-month internship in Amiens (department Somme). The scope of the intern's work is the development of PGS with the AMAP federation. This includes the identification of existing PGS initiatives within AMAP and other networks as well as the set up and coordination of new initiatives among farmers who belong to the AMAP federation. The intern will receive a remuneration of about 435 € per month. More details and the full requirements can be found on [planetemploi.fr](#) (in French).

**USA:** In 2014, Certified Naturally Grown PGS received more than 375 applications for their CNG certification. Of these, 208 are now part of CNG. On top of that, CNG



is receiving a great deal of media attention, helping to raise public awareness of PGS. In mid-December, CNG was referenced on The Dr. Oz Show by Stefanie Sacks, Culinary Nutritionist and author of “What the Fork are you Eating?”. She heralded Certified Naturally Grown as one of the few meaningful labels in the USA that she recommended people to look for. The same week, Civil Eats ran an article about the importance of pesticide-free Christmas trees and suggested readers might get their tree from a CNG farmer. In addition, Lancaster Farming published a front-page article summarizing a webinar on FDA’s proposed food safety rules that was co-hosted by CNG. The new year brought some great exposure from Acres USA. The January issue contains a six-page article titled “Certified Naturally Grown: Grassroots Alternative to USDA Organic”. By the way, have you already checked out CNG’s remarkable map of CNG certified farmers? To find out if there are any CNG producers in your neighborhood and where the closest CNG farmer to you is located, consult the [searchable map](#).

## Find Farms Near You



Zip or City, State

Search radius  
100 miles

- Produce  
 Livestock  
 Apiaries  
 All

Search

## Imprint

The Global PGS Newsletter is published bimonthly. All PGS-related articles are welcome. Please send your articles for submission in English, French or Spanish to [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio).

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