



PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS IN EAST AFRICA

CASE STUDIES FROM KENYA, TANZANIA AND UGANDA



Participatory Guarantee Systems in East Africa

Case Studies from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

Report commissioned by

IFOAM
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
www.ifoam.org

Authored by

Joelle Katto-Andrighetto
Value Chain Manager, IFOAM, Germany

Published by

IFOAM in Germany, 2013
Die Deutsche Bibliothek
CIP Cataloguing-in-Publication-Data
A catalogue record for this publication is available
from Die Deutsche Bibliothek
ISBN 978-3-944372-05-1

This report was commissioned by the IFOAM “Regional cooperation for organic standards and certification capacity in East Africa” (OSEA) Project. The OSEA Project was undertaken with support from the Swedish Development Cooperation. The project is the sole owner of the production, and the publisher is responsible for the content.

The OSEA project was implemented by IFOAM in close cooperation with the National Organic Agriculture Movements in Burundi (BOAM), Kenya (KOAN), Rwanda (ROAM), Tanzania (TOAM) and Uganda (NOGAMU).

More information: www.ifoam.org

Free electronic copies of this publication can be downloaded via the IFOAM website at www.ifoam.org/en/pgs-publications-english

Table of Contents

- Acknowledgements..... v
- 1 Introduction: PGS Development in East Africa1
 - 1.1 What are Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)?1
 - 1.2 PGS development in East Africa.....1
 - 1.3 A 2013 picture of PGS in East Africa3
- 2 Maendeleo, Tanzania5
 - 2.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS5
 - 2.2 The PGS process.....6
 - 2.3 The use of the organic guarantee7
 - 2.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee7
 - 2.5 Challenges and lessons learned7
- 3 Ngong Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), Kenya.....9
 - 3.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS9
 - 3.2 The PGS process.....9
 - 3.3 The use of the organic guarantee12
 - 3.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee12
 - 3.5 Challenges and lessons learned12
- 4 Freshveggies, Uganda14
 - 4.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS14
 - 4.2 The PGS process.....15
 - 4.3 The use of the organic guarantee17
 - 4.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee17
 - 4.5 Challenges and lessons learned17
- 5 Chigweje, Tanzania19
 - 5.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS19
 - 5.2 The PGS process.....19
 - 5.3 The use of the organic guarantee21
 - 5.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee21
 - 5.5 Challenges and lessons learned21
- 6 YETANA Women Group, Kenya.....22
 - 6.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS22
 - 6.2 The PGS process.....22
 - 6.3 The use of the organic guarantee24
 - 6.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee24
 - 6.5 Challenges and lessons learned24
- Annex I. East African Criteria for PGS approval (2013 version) A
- Annex II. East African Procedure for PGS approval (2013 version).....C

Acknowledgements

This publication was produced in the framework of the OSEA II project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The information was collected by the following persons at the National Organic Agriculture Movements: Noel Kwai (TOAM, Tanzania), Irene Kugonza (NOGAMU, Uganda), and Jack Juma (KOAN, Kenya). Coordinators from the various PGS initiatives provided information about their group (see contact details at the bottom of each case). The publication was written by Joelle Katto-Andrighetto (IFOAM) and edited by Konrad Hauptfleisch (IFOAM). Anne Thieme (IFOAM) did the layout.

1 Introduction: PGS Development in East Africa

1.1 What are Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)?

IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, which has been working actively since 2005 on the development and promotion of PGS around the world, defines PGS as follows: “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.” (IFOAM, 2008).

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are an alternative to third party certification, which are increasingly being used to offer an affordable and participatory guarantee, particularly in developing countries. PGS are systems for certification that emphasize the participation of stakeholders, particularly the producers. Consumers are sometimes involved, although in countries with an emerging organic market there are many challenges to consumer involvement in the actual guarantee process. In developing countries, PGS usually involve supporting organizations that typically work with producer groups, such as NGOs, government agencies, or sometimes buyers of the products produced by the group.



In contrast to the “objective and independent” approach favored under international norms, PGS emphasize participation and ownership. Participatory Guarantee Systems share a common goal with third-party certification systems in providing a credible guarantee for consumers seeking organic produce. The difference is in the approach. As the name suggests, direct participation of farmers and other stakeholders in the certification process is not only encouraged but also often required. Active participation on the part of the stakeholders results in greater empowerment but also greater responsibility. This requires PGS programs to place a high priority on knowledge and capacity building. In the East African context, the guarantee function of PGS is often coupled with joint marketing. Groups that implement PGS train their members on organic production, influence their production plans to some extent, organize the marketing of their produce, and sometimes carry on other social “welfare” and community services, including micro-finance. Because of that, there is often no clear distinction in the terminology between the producer group, and the PGS. Participatory Guarantee Systems, originally focused on the guarantee process, end up meaning much more in East Africa.

1.2 PGS development in East Africa

In the first half of the 2000s, Africa lagged considerably behind Latin America and Asia in terms of PGS development. However, the OSEA project (Regional Cooperation for Organic Standards and Certification Capacity in East Africa) implemented in the East Africa region from 2005 to 2007 generated the impetus to develop PGS in the region. Prior to that, there were a high number of producers organically certified, particularly in Uganda, but they were all certified through third party

certification and for exports (mostly to the EU market). Certification was based on the EU organic regulation or standards compliant with it.



The OSEA project, implemented by IFOAM in partnership with the National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs) in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, concluded with the adoption in 2007, by the East Africa Community, of a regional organic standard: the East Africa Organic Product Standard (EAOPS). The idea of the partners was that this standard could, amongst other things, be used to certify products for the local (regional) organic market, which was at a very early stage of development. The NOAMs started to support PGS development in their region, and in particular NOGAMU in Uganda and KOAN in Kenya started

designing systems to offer a simplified guarantee to groups of small producers that they were coaching. The systems involved several groups (up to 18 producer groups in Uganda in mid-2007) but were rather externally designed (by the NOAMs) and still looked somewhat like hybrids of PGS and ICS (Internal Control Systems for group certification in third party certification). Farmers' role in the guarantee process was weak or inexistent, the objective being to bring organic produce to the local market quickly with minimum hassle as far as guarantee was concerned. This strategy probably made sense in the context of an emerging market, where organic products needed to be available in at least some organic outlets, before the organic concept could be promoted to local consumers.

Another project followed: the OSEA II project, which put the emphasis on promoting the uptake of the EAOPS and its associated organic Kilimohai mark (the East African Organic Mark or EAOM), developed conformity assessment systems (including PGS) and raised consumer awareness in the region. The objective was to increase the local and regional trade in organic products, and bring associated benefits to organic producers in the region. The project was implemented from 2010 to the end of 2013.



As for PGS, the core activity in the OSEA II project for the NOAMs from each of the 3 countries was to coach groups to develop and implement PGS. The overall project coordination and capacity building was provided by IFOAM. The project funded several PGS training and knowledge exchange opportunities for NOAM staff and other stakeholders working on PGS in the region. IFOAM experts also visited some of the groups at several points during the project implementation and provided advice to the NOAMs.

The NOAMs had been positive towards PGS from the beginning of the OSEA project and an agreement was reached that the East African Organic Mark (EAOM) could also be used on products guaranteed through PGS. The NOAMs in the three countries being the legal owners of the mark had to agree on a procedure whereby they could recognize PGS in their respective countries to enable them to use the EAOM on their products. It was important to have a common approach in the region, since products bearing the EAOM would sooner or later be traded in the entire region, so the mark should reflect a consistent level of guarantee offered to local consumers.



The OSEA II project facilitated the development of regional PGS approval criteria and a procedure for PGS to be approved for the use of the regional organic mark. The basis is compliance of producers to the East African Organic Product Standard. NOAMs review and assess the extent to which PGS in their countries are effectively ensuring this through an approach that is in line with the general PGS characteristics and features as elaborated by IFOAM. The NOAMs adapted the IFOAM “criteria” for PGS and developed their own regional

PGS approval criteria (see Annex 1). The PGS approval procedure (see Annex II) includes an on-site assessment visit of the PGS by the respective NOAM or an assessor appointed by them, a review by an approval committee appointed by the NOAM, the signing of an agreement between the PGS and the NOAM for use of the mark, and a presentation of the final case to a regional body, the Joint Management Committee of the EAOM, for final validation. The Joint Management Committee of the mark is composed of representatives of the various NOAMs.

It is worth noting that, because the EAOPS is a voluntary standard and governments have not developed organic regulations in those countries, the entire organic guarantee system is managed by the NOAMs. The NOAMs are the umbrella associations for the organic movement in those countries. A PGS can exist and even make organic claims without the involvement or the approval of the NOAMs, but the use of the regional organic mark is only granted to PGS that have been approved by the NOAMs and their joint regional body.

NOAMs deliver a special certificate to the PGS groups that they approved. They also register the PGS groups as “operators” in their system (similar to the way that groups in group certification are considered operators). The status of PGS in the region is therefore somewhere between being recognized as conformity assessment bodies and being considered a collective operator. This has implications on the ability for individual producers engaged in PGS to market their products individually with the mark: in most cases, the PGS group manages the use of the mark and the mark is only being used on products which are sold through the group. This however may vary in the future, as the structure of the organic market in East Africa and the capacity of individual producers to manage their own market channels evolves.

1.3 A 2013 picture of PGS in East Africa

Increasing recognition of the East African Organic Mark (EAOM) and its usability by approved PGS makes PGS increasingly appealing in the region. The 3 NOAMs have been effectively coaching a number of groups, and the level of understanding and experience with PGS in the region has grown drastically since 2010. As a result of those efforts, by the end of 2013, there were a total of 15 functional PGS in the region (6 in Uganda, 5 in Kenya and 4 in Tanzania), representing a total of 5,100 farmers. There are many more groups still in the process of developing PGS, both linked and not linked with their respective NOAMs.



In October 2013, 10 of those 15 PGS were approved by the Joint Management Committee for use of the Mark. This represented a total of 4,622 producers gaining access to the certified organic market.

The reception of PGS-certified products by traders and buyers in the regional market is also very good, showing that they have managed to preserve trust despite the fast rate of expansion of the systems. Thanks to PGS, local markets for organic products are developing not only in the capital cities, but also throughout the countries in much smaller towns. Consumer perception of those products is very good, in an environment where excessive and unregulated use of chemicals is known to be a real threat to health. The consumer base is therefore expanding, from originally a core of expatriates in the capital cities to middle-class households in various areas of the countries. The premium for organic products varies greatly. Sometimes the premium price is less important to producers than the ability of products to sell quickly.

In this publication, we present a collection of 5 case studies of functioning PGS in East Africa: 2 from Kenya, 1 from Uganda and 2 from Tanzania. They represent a variety of set-ups in terms of stakeholder involvement, marketing channels and group organization. Many of these examples can be replicable in other regions of Africa and even beyond, with the inevitable local adaptations that are inherent to PGS. We encourage any interested person to contact those groups for further details and to follow up on their progress.

2 Maendeleo, Tanzania

2.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS

The Maendeleo Group is located in Towelo village in the Morogoro Municipality, Eastern Tanzania (about 4 hours drive from Dar es Salaam). The group gathers very small producers located on the slopes of the Morogoro hills. They produce mostly vegetables.

The group started in 2010, under the leadership of the NGO SAT (Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania) as two groups with 50 members. The main objective of SAT was to encourage the adoption of sustainable agronomic practices to limit soil erosion in these newly cultivated areas (population growth and pressure on land resources had lead households to leave the plains and start cultivating the slopes, which they did not do a few generations ago). From the beginning, the core idea of sustainable organic agriculture production meant that each group member was required to construct terraces. This requirement caused some members to drop out because they felt it was too time consuming. The number dropped to 23, and this led them to merge the two groups and make one group called Maendeleo.



Mountains

The group is now well consolidated: it is formally organized, with a bank account and registered with the district council in the Community Development Department. The group is implementing a PGS to certify the production of vegetables including tomatoes, carrots, eggplants, cabbages, as well as bananas. Thus far, their market destination is Morogoro (where SAT has opened a specialized organic shop) and Dar es Salaam. They have also started selling carrots to Mwanza, a distant city in Northern Tanzania.

After 3 years of development, the group has recently been approved by the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) for use of the East Africa Organic Mark on vegetables. They are also in the process to integrate livestock production into the PGS.

The idea to develop a PGS originated from SAT who learned about PGS in 2010 during a training organized by the International Training Course for Organic Agriculture (ITCOA). Seeing that the farmers that SAT was coaching were doing well with organic agriculture, and knowing the cost of third party certification, SAT contacted TOAM in 2011 to request PGS training. TOAM provided the training (costs were born by SAT). The logic was to offer a guarantee that would enable sustainable continuation of the organic practices, as well as to change the mind of local stakeholders and buyers, where organic products are too often considered to be for export only. The PGS developed prior to the formalization of the East African PGS approval criteria, but nevertheless received the first certificate issued by TOAM (August 2012). When the East African PGS criteria were agreed upon in 2013, SAT worked to adjust the PGS to the new criteria and got a new license and certificate.

There was no explicit demand from the side of consumers for a PGS guarantee, but there is growing awareness amongst Tanzanian consumers that vegetables are particularly sprayed with toxic chemicals. Hence consumers start to demand natural products. With some consumer education, it is therefore possible to create a real interest in organic products as being “chemical free”, provided that the premium price is not too high. SAT has set-up an organic shop to motivate production and consumption in Morogoro town. Fruits and vegetables are sold in the shop at no premium price but demand is high from the local population for products free of pesticides, which are considered to be extremely toxic. The organic production is currently enough only to supply the shop for 2 days a week.



*SAT staff at the
Morogoro Organic Shop*

The initial support for PGS development came from SAT, which used to train farmers in sustainable farming practices. The development of the PGS was a way to qualify sustainable practices, focusing on compliance with organic standards. The main elements of concerns for SAT and therefore for the group are the implementation of terraces and the maintenance of biodiversity on the farms.

2.2 The PGS process

The group’s highest decision-making body is the general assembly of its members. It involves all producers of the PGS group, and every producer has equal right during the general assembly. Decisions are taken democratically. During the general assembly, other stakeholders such as SAT or TOAM can be invited as observers, but they will not have any decision power.

The PGS group has three committees with a role in the PGS: a Training Committee, a Standard and Inspection Committee, and a Marketing Committee. All members of the committees are appointed during the general assembly and are accountable to the Management committee/Secretariat. Each committee has 2 members except the Secretariat that has 4 members i.e. the chairperson, the Deputy chair, the Secretary and the Treasurer. The Training Committee is responsible for all training needs by members and arrange for training either by themselves or from SAT. The Standard and Inspection Committee is responsible for internal inspections and this is done once per production cycle, i.e. once every 3 months. The Marketing Committee is responsible for collection, grading, packaging and selling products on behalf of the group. The Secretariat has the overall overview of the group activities. They meet regularly (every Thursday), and on ad-hoc basis for emergency issues. The PGS activities are coordinated by the Secretariat on behalf of the general assembly.

Running the PGS activities involves essentially voluntary time. There are costs for the group assessment whenever an external facilitator is involved. Currently, the PGS group is getting support from SAT to cover those costs. It is however developing arrangement to introduce fees based on sales, but this has not started yet.

The group uses the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS). However, it has simplified the standard in the form of an internal standard that each member has to comply with.

Producers make a pledge in the form of a contract between each member and the group (the contract is witnessed by other group members). The Standard and Inspection Committee conducts the inspections. They are done once in three month for each farm. They use a checklist where the most important requirements such as terraces, biodiversity, soil fertility, and pest management are noted.

The decision on certification (approval) of each producer is taken by the Secretariat. They usually meet each Thursday in the Farmer Field School, and such decisions have been taken during this meeting. In case of any appeal, the decision goes to the generally assembly. In case of sanctions, the decision is taken collectively in the general assembly. The Secretariat is allowed to give 3 warnings, and if the mistake is repeated, the issue has to be taken to the general assembly for a decision on sanctions (possibly up to exclusion from the group).

In cases where the group faces a dilemma with regards to the interpretation of the standard, they get advice from SAT.



*Maendeleo
group members*

TOAM and SAT are currently the main external stakeholders playing a role in the PGS, in the form of capacity building to the group, and verification and endorsement of the PGS guarantee process. There is however a hotel owner who buys products from the group and has the plan to go to the village to verify the practices.

2.3 The use of the organic guarantee

Producers do not get their own certificate: they currently have one certificate as group, delivered by TOAM. This certificate allows the group to use the East African Organic Mark (EAOM). So far, there are only two outlets where the EAOM has been used on the products from the group, i.e. at SAT shop in Mororogo and in the Bioshop in Dar es Salaam. The staff of SAT has played a role to make sure that there is proper use of the EAOM. Group members are allowed to sell their products individually and to label them as organic, but not to use the EAOM on them, since the use of the EAOM is managed by the group as a whole.

2.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee

The PGS conducts capacity building through a Farmer Field School (FFS). Members meet every week on Thursday to participate in the FFS. Each member shares the challenge of his/her farm with other group members, and if they face any difficulty to resolve the identified challenges, SAT assists them. The PGS group plays a critical role in the marketing of the products: it collects products from members; the marketing committee supervises grading and organizes transport to the organic shop in Morogoro and to Dar es Salaam. They document the quantities from each individual member. The group manages the money from the sales through its bank account, from where the money is transferred back to each group member.

2.5 Challenges and lessons learned

The main difficulty faced by the PGS currently is around record keeping and documentation, which

are still new to the farmers. In terms of sustainability of the PGS, the group needs to set up a collection of fees to pay for some expenses in the future. With regards to the expansion of the PGS, the major challenge is about the construction of terraces and biodiversity management, which require time for uptake by new members. It takes time for farmers to understand the importance of these aspects.

The establishment of the PGS took 3 years. Throughout the process to establish the PGS, the main difficulty was to change the mindset and make people realize that PGS is a viable alternative to third party certification. In Tanzania people used to think that organic products can only be guaranteed through third party certification.

The work around PGS and the techniques promoted by SAT has successfully convinced people that organic practices can both increase yield and are very effective in pest and diseases management.

In the future, the group envisions the following developments:

- Integrating livestock into the verified organic farming system (compliance with the EAOPS requirements for livestock).
- Building capacity of a new emerging group that requested to join the existing Maendeleo group, but Maendeleo refused and asked them to form a new group.

Contact: janetmaro@gmail.com (Janet Maro, Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania)

3 Ngong Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), Kenya

3.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS

Ngong Organic Farmers Association (NOFA) is registered as a CBO-Community Based Organization with the ministry of culture and social services. NOFA was started in 2008 by 6 groups of smallholder farmers who had been trained on organic production methods and were working with the NGO Community Sustainable Agriculture and Healthy Environmental Programme (CSHEP) based in Kajiado North District, not far from Nairobi. The groups included: Accacia, NADOPA, NALEPO, Upper Matasia, Olonana and PUAN and had a membership of 47 members. The group is composed of very small farmers (almost “urban farms”) for whom third-party certification would not be economically viable. They however have the potential to sell organic products to the nearby markets of Nairobi, hence the choice of developing the PGS. The groups came together to foster joint activities and seek for marketing opportunities for their organic products. The groups currently operate individually but have joint activities at the CBO level including organizing trainings, field days, exchange tours and field visits. The farmers are within a radius of 20 kilometers and produce vegetables, fruits and cereals that are marketed through organic and local markets such as organic farmers’ markets, organic shops, organic restaurants and local open air markets in Kiserian and Rongai. The products covered under organic production are being verified through PGS for marketing under the NOFA PGS brand.



*A member of the group
in her organic shop*

The decision to engage the group into PGS was taken by the chairperson of the group, Mr. Peter Melonyie, in 2010. The group had tried doing third party certification with the certification body Encert, which specializes in certification for the local organic market. However, the price of third party certification, amounting to Kes. 3,000 per farmer (25 Euros), was still too costly for some of the farmers and caused them to drop out. There was a demand by buyers (traders) so see an organic certificate, hence the need to find an alternative certification approach.

KOAN, the Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network, provided the initial training and guidance on PGS documentation. KOAN invited other stakeholders at the initial PGS training, such as CSHEP, the Ministry of agriculture, and the restaurant Bridges. Bridges is now buying from the PGS group.

3.2 The PGS process

Members of NOFA are at the centre of the PGS. They were involved in the development of procedures, regulations, and PGS documentation. They also participate in all the PGS activities through the committees or during the annual general meeting held every year, and are involved in the approval of new members. Members participate in peer reviews, which are done every six months. Within the committees, decisions are taken through general consensus or through voting. This is also the case during annual general meetings.

The group has an executive committee that is composed of the Chairman, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and 2 other members. All the members of the executive committee are members. The executive committee is answerable to the annual general meeting/assembly and has a responsibility of hearing and determining appeals, providing leadership to the network and approving plans and budgets. Apart from executive committee, there are 5 other functional committees, whose members are appointed during the annual general meeting. This includes: Welfare, Marketing, Inspection, Production, Sanctions and Products committees. Apart from the Sanctions Committee, the other committees are composed of a representation from the members of the group. The Sanctions Committee includes representatives from the farmers, the staff of the NGO CSHEP and the Ministry of Agriculture. The committees meet every three months or when they have an issue to discuss. The Marketing Committee performs several activities including:

- Maintaining register of members approved in liaison with the Sanctions Committee and the markets they are selling to,
- Managing the NOFA PGS Brand including maintaining a list of licensed users,
- Scouting for markets on behalf of the group,
- Providing market information to the group members,
- Liaising with potential markets and organizing tours to potential and existing markets,
- Organizing market related trainings, and
- Quality control of products being marketed.

The Marketing committee is monitored through sending quarterly reports to the Executive Committee.

The inspection committee is responsible for undertaking peer reviews for all the group members preferably in September-October every year. The committee writes a peer review report and submits it to the Approval Committee annually. The sanction committee on the other hand is composed of 3 members and is responsible for attributing sanctions to non-complying members. NOFA has 9 standing Products Committee formed by members with common interest and are lead by committee leaders in the areas of: Poultry, Rabbit production, Livestock, Vegetables, Piggery, Game animals and Apiculture. The production committee organizes capacity building of individual members in the different fields aimed at improving production and marketing.

The NOFA PGS is managed on a daily basis by group members, without any paid staff. Members are in charge of developing the regulations, approving members and ensuring the regulations are followed through conducting peer reviews. The group has however been extensively relying on coordination work by a female volunteer with higher education, whose husband had a good job in Nairobi and who could afford to work for the group at no charge.

The main costs of running the PGS include: trainings, documentation, transport and food during peer reviews, developing of PGS brand, market intelligence, monitoring marketing of members and conducting learning visits including group field days. NOFA raises most of its money through membership contributions, which are gathered monthly through the groups. Initially, the members of the group contributed each 300 KSh. to facilitate transport for the peer review team. Now the contribution is usually 100 KSh per member every month. Since this money is not enough to run the affairs of NOFA, the association also raises money from partners such as KOAN, local banks and

through the Ministry of Agriculture. Most of the support from partners goes to activities like trainings, exchange visits, and organizing field days.

The group uses the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS) as a basis. It has however developed a simplified version of it, which consists of 10 requirements. This may not provide sufficient guidance to ensure full compliance with the EAOPS, which may become a challenge in the future. Producers take a pledge to follow the PGS internal regulations. This pledge is made by all the members together during the annual general meeting during which the internal regulations are read out and the members sign their commitments. The pledge is kept by the secretary and is open for scrutiny by the general public.



A member of the group showing crops

The Inspection Committee usually plans for peer reviews every 6 months. The plan is ratified by the members who are also free to participate during the visits. The Inspection Committee team, composed of 9 members, is divided into 3 sub-teams with each of the sub-teams allocated an area for peer review. The PGS inspection team members do not inspect their own farms or their group members. Using a checklist, the team holds farm visits to check whether members are following the group internal standard. The filled in checklists, signed by the committee members, are forwarded to the sanction committee for approval.

Approval of each member is done by the 3-member Sanction Committee, which studies the filled in checklists forwarded by the Inspection Committee. After going through them and checking the compliance level for each member, the committee writes a report that is presented during the general assembly meetings. The non-complying members are usually sanctioned as per the established set of sanctions. The sanctions range from fines, written warning to more severe ones such as expulsion from the group. In case a member is not satisfied with the decision of the Sanction Committee, he or she is allowed to appeal the decision through the Executive Committee. In case a non-compliance is detected for a member that sits on the Sanction Committee, he is obviously excluded from taking decision regarding the sanction.

In cases where the PGS faces questions with regards to the use of certain inputs, advice is sought from KOAN.

The involvement of “external” stakeholders into the PGS currently takes place at the level of the Sanction Committee where the NGO and the Ministry have a representative. KOAN’s involvement consists in capacity building for the group, support to the group activities such as field days and marketing, and assessment of the PGS for approval. There is a plan to involve buyers in the peer reviews in the future. The main challenge with regards to the involvement of stakeholders is their lack of time/interest: buyers and consumers usually say that they do not have time for the peer review activities or group meetings. The NGO and the Ministry of Agriculture officials sometimes they ask for remuneration for their involvement.

3.3 The use of the organic guarantee

The group as a whole gets an organic certificate from KOAN, which is a collective certificate, enabling the group to use the East African Organic Mark (EAOM) on their products. Members use the EAOM and/or the PGS NOFA brand, even when they sell products individually. They send a list of the products they are marketing monthly to the Marketing Committee for verification. Only members who are approved by the Sanction Committee are allowed to use the mark and the brand.

3.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee

Capacity building is an important activity of the PGS. The trainings are conducted on a need basis. The executive committee gets request from individual members and contacts KOAN for the training. This activity takes place at least twice in a year. The trainings are compulsory for members and are part of the requirement in the internal regulations.

Marketing is the other core service of the group to its members. The Marketing Committee usually provides marketing advice to members. They conduct market visits to potential marketing partners such as shops, hotels and restaurants. After collecting market requirements they usually provide this information to individual members who respond by supplying the products. Interested farmers for a specific supply chain are required to liaise with the committee to create harmony and order during supplies.

The welfare committee of the group is responsible for more social issues including bereavement, sickness, graduation, babies, revival and other welfare related issues.

3.5 Challenges and lessons learned

The simplification of the standard into 10 rules leaves aside some of the detailed requirements in the EAOPS, which may escape the attention of the internal inspectors during the peer review. Awareness of the full content of the standard is still quite low. Establishing a clear structure for the PGS (with the various committees and a clear role for each of them) has also been challenging, with originally quite some internal confusion about the different committees, as the structure was not written down.

The costs associated with ensuring compliance are high compared to what the members are contributing. This means that the Inspection Committee members work as volunteers and usually get only part of the reimbursements. The Sanction Committee members especially from the Ministry of Agriculture and from the NGO require reimbursement of their costs, which sometimes is out of what the association can afford. This, in the future, may compromise the integrity or involvement of the partners in the implementation of PGS. For now, the implementation of the regulations is not very strict to avoid discouraging current members and potential new members. The lack of involvement of traders and consumers is also an issue that may make the PGS not popular with potential markets.

Originally, participation of members especially in training was a challenge since only 50% of the members participated. As a result, the requirement to attend meetings and trainings was made compulsory as part of the internal regulation.

It took about 3 years from the decision to start a PGS, until the PGS was approved by KOAN for use of the EAOM. Internal reviews/inspections worked very well due to the leadership provided by the chair of the Inspection Committee. His mobilization skills enabled proper planning and undertaking of the peer reviews.

Generally speaking, the capacity of group members to take part in the PGS daily work is comparatively high for regional standards. Indeed, the level of education of the group members is higher than for average farmers, due to the proximity to Nairobi and the fact that some of the producers had other business occupations (farming is a side activity). Such a set-up may not be so easily transposable to more remote areas.

Marketing is developing successfully. Some of the members of the PGS have started developing their own organic outlets. With the NOFA PGS brand being developed, and the fact that the farmers are in close proximity to Nairobi city, the potential for expanding production and marketing is unlimited. They intend to create their own strong brand, which will help in marketing activities.

Contact: peterkaipei@yahoo.com (Peter Melonyie, Ngong Organic Farmers Association)

4 Freshveggies, Uganda

4.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS

Freshveggies is a group of vegetable and staple food producers located in the vicinity of Kampala, the capital of Uganda. Freshveggies started as a way of bringing farmers together to generate a unified pool of resources, such as knowledge and skills in organic farming, creating innovative social networks to popularize the growing of healthy and safe fresh organic vegetables and fruits, and finally to market them as a means of improving and sustaining household incomes.

The members are located in two districts near Kampala, Wakiso (about 15km north of Kampala) and Buikwe (about 38km south of Kampala). The group has a total of 200 members who expressed an interest in participating in the Freshveggies activities. Currently about 88 members are actively involved in growing organic food crops for their own home consumption and/or for sale. The members are organized in smaller groups at Parish level. They are less than 1km apart and are able to meet at least once a month. The farmers are involved in producing local and exotic fresh vegetables, staple food crops such as beans, maize, matooke, or apple bananas. These are for both home consumption and for sale.

It is generally accepted that all the crops are grown following organic principles and members within the smaller groups at parish level ensure this through informally “policing” each other. The products are sold locally on-farm to interested neighbors but also weekly (for those with products required in the market for a given period) to consumers (including staff from foreign embassies) in Kampala city center and in the city suburbs, and in addition, to some supermarkets and stores. Sales are targeted mainly at “elite” shoppers. The group is undergoing registration to have a legal status.

The founder of the group, Julie Matovu, learned about PGS through an internal inspector training offered by NOGAMU in 2009. There was initially no demand for PGS from the buyers’ side. It was Julie’s idea to initiate a PGS. The decision to engage the group in PGS was taken by the group’s members, interested to create added value for their products through the use of the East Africa Organic Mark. Freshveggies requested support from NOGAMU, the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda, to facilitate the development of their PGS. Later on, NOGAMU brought visitors from the donor organization SSNC (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation) to visit the group, and they agreed to support the PGS activities related to capacity building, its approval process, and the documentation of good practices. They provided support flyers and package materials, but no financial support.



Julie after harvesting carrots from her garden in Gombe Wakiso District in Central Uganda

The group works on PGS in a spirit of mutual trust and teamwork. Mutual trust developed from the geographic proximity of group members, who know each other (“we are not dealing with strangers”, as they put it). The team work is derived from the fact that group members have similar challenges in their day-to-day lives as smallholder farmers: as individuals, they have very limited capacity to supply volume to meet market demands, but collectively, they can manage this challenge better. Group members believe in organic farming as a healthy, compatible and affordable farming approach that is safe for today’s generation and those to come.

4.2 The PGS process

Freshveggies is still a rather loose network, where the role of the coordinator, Julie Matovu, is very important in the sharing of information and to coordinate the production and marketing. The network is at the moment completely dependent on volunteer work. Freshveggies holds a General Assembly of all its members (producers) once a year. However, in those meetings, producers are mostly represented by their own elected representatives. Additionally, the members of the PGS meet more regularly (monthly, or in certain cases weekly) within smaller groups in each location or parish.

Although members are not proactively determining the prices of their produce, they are given opportunity to participate or share information from the periodic market surveys conducted by the marketing team each season (twice a year) in the local markets selling conventional foodstuffs, supermarkets and stores in and around Kampala and from the organic trade point bulletin. This



Members of Freshveggies after a workshop related to PGS establishment

enables all producers to appreciate the prices offered for their produce since they are fair and usually higher than those in ordinary markets. It should be noted that farmers still lack the capacity to determine their own farm gate prices or appreciate farm economics. Nevertheless, they appreciate the service they receive from Freshveggies compared with the alternative of dealing with middlemen or selling on their own as conventional farmers.

The producers are admitted to Freshveggies by virtue of being members of the smaller parish groups. The members of these groups approve these new entries. Then the entrant is given the PGS form to complete, visited by the internal inspection team at that level and applies for the seeds/seedling varieties determined by the soil types and acreage the member has available for this form of production.

The PGS is responsible for marketing (sorting, cleaning, packing, labeling and delivering) the farmers' produce and also ensure that the farmers are paid for their supplies.

Each parish-level group has an executive committee responsible for the usual administration of group activities. It also has a three-member inspection committee, a three-member production committee and a three-member marketing committee. Other committees are not yet constituted. These committees report their activities (if any) during the routine meetings. However, their capacity is still limited to enable them to accomplish their roles as required.

Julie, the founder of the PGS, also acts as the PGS coordinator. She took a lead role in mobilizing farmers and together came up with the different roles such as marketing, logistics, communication, seed sourcing and agronomy which PGS members jointly manage to benefit from this organic group marketing scheme. It is in the future plans that the PGS hires staff (driver, delivery staff & an administrator) to support the scheme activities. But for now the coordinator and the PGS members serve on a voluntary basis. The coordinator is engaged in Agribusiness Consultancy and runs a small private firm (not financially connected to the PGS). Her work for the PGS is purely voluntary, but she

grows vegetables herself and benefits from the PGS as one of its members. Some of the other PGS members have different roles as key farmer trainers, food safety specialists, storytellers, and mainly farmers.

The main costs encountered for the functioning of the PGS are:

- Costs related to the facilitation of capacity building on-farm/meeting/training sessions.
- Costs related to marketing logistics: transportation of goods, communication costs to clients & producers, staffing of delivery team.
- The annual EAOM license fees
- On farm exchange visits and mentoring costs for the PGS representatives.

At the moment members do not pay money to the PGS, but are willing to produce and sell in the PGS initiative. They regularly contribute to seed purchases. Some PGS members supply their colleagues with seed from their gardens each season, as a means of motivation. In a recent PGS meeting, members have agreed that they will contribute to seed purchase by deducting a little commission from their sales of produce in the collective PGS market. The PGS has no support from any NGO but at times it receives some capacity building support from NOGAMU targeting mainly the PGS farmer representatives.

All PGS activities are aligned towards meeting the requirements of the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS) in order to qualify for PGS approval by NOGAMU. Copies of the simplified version (Illustration charts) of the EAOPS have been shared among PGS group members. In addition, the farmers in each cluster have their own rules and regulations, but these usually do not go beyond the requirement of the EAOPS.



Producers are required to take a pledge in the form of a public declaration to abide by the EAOPS and to take part in the regular PGS group activities. Internal inspections are done annually by a three-member team at each small group level. These have to be done for all members who show interest in joining the PGS and can be done at group level following the PGS assessment criteria provided by NOGAMU. The decision to approve each producer is done during the monthly general meetings through consensus and under the guidance of NOGAMU and the group PGS coordinator. Special approval teams could be put in place, but members are not at the same level of appreciation of the PGS procedure and this would create challenges. In the future, the approval process will be gradually improved through forming more specific committees. If there are dilemmas with regards to the interpretation of the standard, the PGS always refers to the Standards Officer of NOGAMU for technical advice. So far, no non-compliance has been detected.

The PGS encourages transparency and participation as much as possible. As a result, they have currently not yet constituted all the subcommittees, as they work towards building the capacity of all members during the general meetings to allow members to learn as they do.

The main “external” stakeholder having a key role currently in the PGS is NOGAMU. It plays a role of guiding the PGS towards compliance with the East African PGS approval criteria. Consumers do not play a formal role in the guarantee process, but their feedback related to the desired quality or quantity of produce is of crucial importance for the marketing of the products from the PGS.

Consumers also receive information from the PGS Marketing team so that they are able and willing to pay a good price to support the farmers. The main challenge with a possible inclusion of other stakeholders in the PGS (e.g. seed providers) is conflicting mandates of the other organizations, which could compromise on the PGS core values.

4.3 The use of the organic guarantee

Producers in the PGS do not receive individual certificates, since organic sales are managed solely by Freshveggies, who is the certificate holder approved by NOGAMU. Producers are allowed to sell at farm-gate, but currently do so without the use of the EAOM.

The group has just been approved by NOGAMU for the use of the East African Organic Mark. It took 2 years to establish a functional PGS. According to the NOGAMU guidelines for the use of the mark, the group is required to submit a list of suppliers who are approved to use the mark and are required to keep it as up to date as possible.

4.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee

Currently a few members have been trained by the coordinator, who herself had received training from NOGAMU. A few members have been trained directly by NOGAMU, although more training on PGS is still required.

The group plays a decisive role in organizing the marketing of its members' product. The group has collection points, where the marketing team headed by the PGS coordinator collects fresh produce weekly and delivers weekly to consumers. Deliveries are based on the specific weekly orders that consumers do by email or phone to the PGS. Payments to the farmers are also made on weekly basis to the producers who may have supplied during that week. They are made either using mobile money payment schemes on the farmers cell phones, or direct cash payments through their farmer representatives.

4.5 Challenges and lessons learned

There is still limited knowledge about organic produce on the local market. This is a challenge that the PGS, like other PGS and NOGAMU in Uganda, is working to address.

Reliance on volunteer work is a main challenge in terms of PGS expansion. The PGS is run on free will of the members, and the coordination of all its activities is done voluntarily by the leaders and is limited by their ability (in terms of logistics) to reach out to all members. This limits further development in terms of capacity building by all members, new and old, and market stability.

The PGS has now taken on an approach of having a commercial component that will invest in the logistical requirements and become a conduit to the bigger markets (away from the farmers' villages). Members of the PGS have realized that there is a lot of potential for growth, but which cannot be adequately addressed with a sole volunteer work basis. They envision to create a company to take care of the marketing and logistic. It could be staffed with 2 or 3 persons (one of them could be Julie Matovu).

One aspect that has worked well in the PGS development process is the aspect of starting with meeting household nutritional needs. This is cherished by all members and it has kept the group going. Then later introducing the commercial aspect also excited members and attracted many more new members. Buying seed together to minimize costs and poor quality seeds is an important basis for the group.

In the future, the group envisions the following developments:

- Complete the ongoing new legal registration process for the farmers association and the commercial marketing component with the government of Uganda.
- Expand the market niche to uphold the business so that each member can earn at least \$50 per week from organic sales.
- Start or strengthen existing Village Saving & Loan Schemes at parish level.
- Roll out a plan to equip members with facilities such as simple irrigation kits, simple green houses, etc., that can support all year production using loan schemes and development grants where possible.
- Develop a business plan for the next five years.

Contact: matovujuls@gmail.com (Julie Matovu, Freshveggies PGS)

5 Chigweje, Tanzania

5.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS

The group, known as Chigweje Kilimo Hai, was established in 2012. It is based in Chigweje village, Nanyumbu District in the Mtwara region (South East Tanzania). The group has 90 producer members. Members of the group must produce organically, and the group aims to organize marketing on behalf of its members in order to improve their negotiation power. In total, the group has 270 acres located in six different hamlets. On average each individual owns 3 acres. Members produce maize, Bambara groundnuts, peanuts, pigeon peas, and green grams.

The group has contract with a buyer based in Dar es Salaam: the Chakula Trading Agency. The group organizes the collection of products, while the buyer organizes the transport to bring them into the market. The decision to engage the group into PGS actually came from the trader buying the products, in collaboration with LIMAS (the Lindi and Mtwara Agribusiness Support project). The buyer has been involved in the business since 2006 and was selling the products as natural products. He wanted to have the PGS set up in order for it to be possible to sell the products as organic and not just as natural products. The initial financial support came from the LIMAS



Noel Kwai, buyer and group members during a field follow up

project and from Chakula Trading Agency (CTA). The initial technical support for PGS development came from TOAM (the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement) and ROSDO (Rural Oriented Sustainable Development Organization, a local organization in Mtwara). Workshops, training and field visits were organized involving different stakeholders, such as TOAM, ROSDO, CTA, LIMAS, farmers' representatives and later on all farmers. The initial step started by organizing training of farmers' representatives, then training the "field officers" (selected farmers representatives). Subsequently, meetings in all villages were organized and plans for field follow-up were developed.

5.2 The PGS process

Since the group comprises 90 members, this PGS group has sub-divided itself into small groups ranging from 8 to 15 members, which has resulted into 8 groups. Each small group has its own leadership in form of a Management Committee. Meetings gathering all members of the group are held at least once a month. The General Assembly, where all members come together, is twice a year, and receives an agenda from the small groups. Usually, issues are solved at the small group level. During the General Assembly, other stakeholders such as ROSDO, CTA, LIMAS or TOAM can be invited as observers, but do not have decision power. The group has developed code numbers for each individual - indicating the location of the farm and the producer name.

The PGS group as a whole has a Secretariat consisting of 3 people (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) and three committees: the Production and Training Committee, the Standards and Inspection Committee and the Marketing Committee. All members of the committees are appointed

during the management meetings where the members of the Secretariat and representatives from the committees come together.

The overall coordination of the PGS is carried out by the Secretariat. The Training and Production Committee is responsible for all training needs by members and arranges for training either by themselves or from ROSDO. The Standards and Inspection Committee is responsible for internal inspections, which are conducted each production cycle for all members. The Marketing Committee is in charge of collection, grading, packaging and selling products on behalf of the group.

The main costs associated with running the PGS are related to training and backstopping which the group still needs, and to the PGS assessment for which an external evaluator from TOAM is needed (long travel distance from Dar es Salaam to the group). Currently, the financial support comes mainly from the LIMAS project and the technical support comes from ROSDO. The group raises an annual individual fee from its members totaling 10,000 TSh., (6 USD) which is clearly not enough to sustain the group activities. The group also got a loan from the bank.



f.l.t.r.: PGS local trainer, PGS Group Secretary and group member showing organic certificates

The PGS is based on the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS). However, the group has developed a simplified version of it in the form of an internal standard. Producers take a pledge in the form of a contract between each producer and the group. The Standard and Inspection Committee organizes the internal inspections. Each small group has two people who are doing inspection in each farm. The reports are submitted to the management meetings. The Standard and Inspection Committee can also do ad-hoc inspections and write reports. Inspections are conducted 3 times in 6 months, from farm preparation to harvest. Each farm is inspected at least 2 times per production season. The major emphasis is on the prohibition of using fire as tool for farm preparation.

The decision of approving producers after the inspection is taken at the level of the sub-groups. In case there is disagreement on the decision, an appeal has to be made at the umbrella group level. Sanctions include warnings, and in the case of repeated non-compliances, dismissal from the group.

When questions arise with regards to the interpretation of the standard or to allowed inputs, the group seeks advice from ROSDO and sometimes from TOAM.

The “external” stakeholders involved in the PGS so far include a number of NGO-type of actors, namely: the LIMAS project, which has supported PGS establishment through financing some training. ROSDO has been playing a role as technical facilitator TOAM has conducted backstopping to the PGS groups around quality management and how to establish a system for standard compliance. The trader, CTA, who is the buyer of the products, is also closely involved. The company has been participating in different activities including monitoring progress and sometimes doing advance payment to producers.

There are plans to involve other stakeholders in the near future, particularly the government authority that could play a role with extension services through their officers based in the village.

There is however a risk in this approach, whereby the extension officers could be delivering contradictory (non-organic) messages to the farmers in the PGS. There is also a plan to link the PGS group to the Aghacan Foundation for support on how to develop saving and credit schemes.

5.3 The use of the organic guarantee

The group gets a certificate from TOAM as a group (collective certificate). The products of the group bear the East African Organic Mark (EAOM) through an arrangement with the buyer (CTA) who is the one who applied for the use of the mark. The buyer manages the transport of produce to the warehouse for storage and processing. It is strictly prohibited for members to use the EAOM individually.

5.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee

Capacity building is an important aspect of the group work. The group trained 8 farmer representatives, and later on 2 farmers got intensive training so that they can be able to address training needs in the group. These two farmers are now providing training as group extension officers.

Marketing is managed collectively. The group arranges sales to the buyer (CTA). The major task of the group is to manage product collection and documentation, arrange for transportation and when needed take loans on behalf of its members. This role has been performed by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Marketing Committee.

5.5 Challenges and lessons learned

There remain challenges in terms of full compliance with the PGS approval criteria: the sanctions procedure is not yet well developed, and there is relatively poor record keeping and documentation, especially at the level of the sub-groups.

At the start of the PGS development, the main difficulty was to educate people to the acceptability of PGS in the market place (where third party certification was traditionally more recognized). From the practice point of view, the culture of using fire for land preparation has been the main challenge towards compliance with the EAOPS. Temporarily excluding members that were undergoing the conversion period was also a challenge. However, the conversion period could often be reduced to 1 year as many producers were farming virgin land (shifting cultivation).

In terms of sustainability, this PGS needs to improve on the collection of fees to pay for some expenses in the future, as they are currently reliant on financial support from the LIMAS project. The emphasis currently is not on expansion but rather on consolidating the existing group and PGS. The ambition is to have a stronger group, to establish relationship with a bank to access funds, and to convert the cashew farms to organic production.

Contact: noelkwai@gmail.com (Noel Kwai, TOAM)

6 YETANA Women Group, Kenya

6.1 The group and their decision to engage in PGS

Yetana women group is a producer group formed in 2007 and registered with the ministry of social services. The group focuses on improvements to food security and income generation. The group is located in Chebukwabi, Kimilili District, and Bungoma County in Western Kenya almost to the border of Uganda. Members consist of 27 small-scale farmers, 22 women and 5 men. Currently the group grows a variety of crops, which includes bananas, soya beans, groundnuts, butternut, passion fruits, amaranths, sweet potatoes, avocados. Many of those crops are processed. Animals kept include dairy cows, chicken, and goats. Other crops that are grown conventionally include maize, sorghum, millet, beans, yellow grams and coffee. Besides practicing organic production the group is also involved in other activities which includes table banking, village saving, welfare activities and agro-forestry.

The organic products are being sold to mostly to local schools for their school feeding program and also to the local neighbors. The group is however streamlining the marketing through opening a local outlet and hiring a stall in the local market.

The group decided to engage in PGS after awareness was created by the Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) and a local NGO: DECESE. The group, wanting to expand their market, had done an initial market survey in the local markets, and one of the questions they were asked was “How would you prove that your product is organic?” PGS offers a response to this question and a way to differentiate the products as organic in the local market place.

The main support for PGS development came through the OSEA II project implemented by KOAN in Kenya. Prior to that, the group had been receiving technical support on organic production from a local NGO. As part of OSEA II, the group received coaching by KOAN for the development of their PGS.

The groups name “YETANA”, which means “pulling together”, reflects their philosophy to achieve through collective actions a better farming environment, food security and income generation.

6.2 The PGS process

All members have the right and are encouraged to participate in the group activities either directly as members or as leaders or through the various committees. The top-level organ of the group is its General Assembly, which elects an Executive Committee, composed of 5 members (farmer representatives). The General Assembly takes the decision to approve new members, and to sanction members for non-compliances. The Executive Committee supervises all committees, keeps documents through the secretary, signs relevant documents, handles the appeals, and liaises with other stakeholders.

Additionally, there are four committees, which are responsible for various aspects of the PGS: the Marketing Committee, the Farm/Production Committee, the Monitoring Committee and the Sanction Committee. Members appoint the committees, but some also have representatives of local

stakeholders. The Farm/Production Committee takes the lead in farmer-to-farmer extension, manages the purchase of farm inputs, plans for group farm work, and organizes training. The Monitoring Committee does the peer reviews and produces the peer review reports that are passed on to the Executive Committee. The Sanction Committee ensures that members follow the internal regulations, issues sanctions, and resolves disputes. The Marketing Committee looks for new market opportunities, promotes the group products, coordinates the value addition activities, manages market linkages, and promotes the Yetana PGS brand.

The PGS is coordinated by the Executive Committee who delegates specific responsibilities to the various committees. There is no staff employed by the group. The main costs associated with running the PGS include: capacity building of PGS stakeholders, development of the system, peer reviews, documentation, market linkages and brand development. The members make both annual financial contributions and sometimes activity-based contributions. However the members' contribution is minimal. DECESE, a local NGO, is currently supporting production training through their organic agriculture programme, but does not provide direct funding.

The group is using the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS) as a basis, but has developed their own internal standard in local language. Members sign the pledge form in public. The pledge list is available in the group documentation through the secretary.



*Members of the
Yetana Women Group*

The inspection is done once per cropping season: in many cases twice a year. The Monitoring committee is responsible for inspections in consultation with the Executive Committee and the DECESE representative. The inspection is based on a checklist corresponding to the internal standards. The committee plans the inspection, informs all the members about the dates and divides themselves into two groups. Each groups inspects some members. Allocation tries to avoid major conflicts of interest. The peer review members (members of the Monitoring Committee) do not do reciprocal inspections. After the inspection, they give a report to the Sanction Committee. The Sanction Committee reviews the peer review reports, endorses compliant members and assigns penalties to non-compliant members. Sanctions range from obligation to attend relevant training, written warning, fines, suspension for one season or one year, to expulsion from the group. The Sanction Committee reports to the membership on approved and sanctioned members, for validation of the decision. The membership makes the final approval. Any of the sanctioned members have a right to appeal through the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then does its own independent investigation and then brings its report back to the general assembly for consideration and final decision.

In cases where the group is facing a question regarding the interpretation of the standard or allowed inputs, they turn to KOAN for advice.

The “external” stakeholders currently involved in the PGS are the NGO DECESE, which provides training and extension, assists with market linkages, and participates in peer review and approval of

members, and KOAN, which does capacity building for PGS, supports market linkages, and will in the future approve the PGS for use of the East African Organic Mark (EAOM). It is planned to encourage, in the future, participation of buyers in the peer reviews and/or in the allocation of sanctions. The group also plans to invite government officials to take part in relevant committees. The main challenges with the inclusion of other stakeholders are that they sometimes do not share the same vision as the group, they may have other interests than organic production, and decision-making processes take longer in the case of consultations.

6.3 The use of the organic guarantee

The group as a whole is approved by KOAN. The organic certificate is given to the group as a whole. Members are allowed to both sell through the group marketing and individually. The issue of the organic claim is currently not very important since there is no regulation in force for making organic claims in Kenya, and the group does not yet have to manage an organic label. Indeed, the group has not yet applied for the use of the East African Organic Mark (EAOM), but they are planning to do so in the near future. Currently, they are therefore not using the mark on the products. The PGS is however developing a brand named “YETANA organics”, which all approved members will be able to use on their produce.

6.4 Training and other activities of the PGS beyond guarantee

Capacity building is an important activity of the group. Members must participate in relevant trainings. The group trainings are done on a needs basis: the relevant committee liaises with the Executive Committee who then communicates with KOAN and/or DECESE on the training needs. The day trainings are organised on the members meeting days - Tuesday - while longer trainings (up to three consecutive days) are planned on days that are convenient for the farmers. The PGS trainings are particularly handled by KOAN, while DECESE carries out the follow-up to ensure implementation. The Farm/Production Committee manages farmer-to-farmer extension.

Marketing is the other important group activity. The Marketing Committee is responsible for market studies, linkages and trainings in liaison with the Executive Committee. Currently, the marketing of products is done at two levels: individual marketing and group marketing. The group is working towards opening an outlet for bulking some of their key products especially bananas and butternut. The shop shall be branded and act as reference point for the group marketing. KOAN gives publicity to the PGS group and the group also participates in local fairs to market their produce.

6.5 Challenges and lessons learned

It took around 2 years to establish the PGS. One challenge is linked to internal conflicts: when members are in close proximity have close relations, some level of conflict inevitably occurs.

The East African PGS requirement to have at least one experienced inspector in each peer review/inspection team is difficult to achieve at the start of the PGS, as many are still learning by doing.

The PGS needs a strong market linkage for its survival; this is still an area that needs a lot of input for YETANA. The participation of traders is rather weak as they are always busy. The market linkages

needed for PGS sustainability are not yet fully realized. The group is working towards establishing an own outlet, which could improve this aspect.

It was difficult to achieve 100% participation during trainings. This necessitated the inclusion of participation in groups' activity be part of the internal standard.

The peer reviews worked well, due to the commitment of the committee members and the follow-up by DECESE. Generally speaking, the support of the local NGO is important for the success of the group. The group is quite cohesive, as it has other activities that bring it together, e.g. social welfare activities. More members are interested to join the group. There are enquiries from new potential buyers from Nairobi.

Contact: kajuma@koan.co.ke (Juma Muga, KOAN)

Annex I. East African Criteria for PGS approval (2013 version)

Note: There is another document that describes the process and procedure for application of the criteria for approval, **PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF PGS**.

Each and all of the following criteria must be complied with for a PGS to be approved for the use of the EAOM. However, “compliance” must be assessed in ways that are reflective of the diverse ways by which PGS aim to address the basic criteria: if there is a criteria that the PGS does not comply with for very justified reasons and it has an alternative and equivalent (=equally effective) way to address the intent of the criteria, this equivalent mechanisms can be considered acceptable. It should however be reported to the NOAM who will keep a compiled record of all “derogations based on equivalent mechanisms”. NOAMs will forward the report of granted derogations to the JMC minimum annually. This will serve for guaranteeing fairness and consistency in the assessments of PGS regionally, and for future improvement of these criteria.

1. The PGS is a participatory organization or structure, whereby producers (at minimum) and other stakeholders (desirable) participate in the choice of the standard, the procedures for verification and sanctions, and the choice of people with specific responsibility in the PGS. Decisions regarding PGS procedures are made either in general assembly, regular group meetings (open to all participating producers), or by regularly elected producer (and consumer) representatives.
2. The PGS ensures compliance of its endorsed¹ producers, at the minimum for the registered products (including livestock products if registered) and for all crop products (recognizing that compliance with livestock requirements is still difficult to achieve), with the EAOPS.
3. The PGS has developed a system for managing non-compliance, with clear consequences that are implemented, including suspending operators with serious non-compliances.
4. The PGS grants open and easy access to consumers, the public and any interested person to:
 - a. Its chosen standard
 - b. Its list of group members and its list of endorsed operators
 - c. Information concerning its structure and its main procedures (steps in the certification process)
5. The PGS has mechanisms to ensure that producers understand:
 - a. the principles of organic agriculture and expected practices,
 - b. the purpose and structure of the PGS and their rights for participation,
 - c. the role of verification and the sanctions that might be imposed on them in case of non-compliance.

¹ “Endorsed” is used here as a synonym of “certified”.

6. Participating producers take a public pledge to follow the standard and are subsequently subject to on-site reviews/inspections at minimum once a year to verify their continued compliance with the standard.
7. Farm/site review/inspection involve a team of persons, including at minimum 2 experienced persons and including at minimum 1 peer operator. Experience in on-site “inspection” can have been acquired through training or learning-by-doing. Reciprocal² inspection is not considered a valid procedure. Reciprocal inspection can take place if it is additional to a non-reciprocal inspection by a team fulfilling the above minimum criteria.
8. The PGS has a mechanism to also receive, objectively assess and feed into the verification process the information on potential non-compliances acquired outside of the farm visits (e.g. continued “social control”, external observations, consumer complaints, etc.).
9. The decision of endorsement of each operator is taken by a group of people designed in the PGS procedures. This can be a permanent committee or ad-hoc groups formed according to a pre-defined procedure. This group includes minimum 3 people, and minimum one member producer representative. The PGS does not delegate the decision of certification to an external body or organization, but it is permitted to request advice from external bodies. The PGS has mechanisms to minimize conflicts of interest, and to ensure consistency on the level of the certification decision.
10. Information about compliance is generated, maintained and updated (minimum annually) for each producer. This information includes the type of production, areas of compliance and non-compliance with the standard, brought-in inputs, etc.
11. The PGS delivers specific recognition or market access to its endorsed producers only. This can be in the form of a product logo, the EAOM, a certificate, access to an open market place, etc.
12. The PGS allows any stakeholder, including those not directly part of the PGS group (e.g. producers of other groups, consumers, state representatives, NGOs, NOAM representatives, etc.) to visit the PGS operators (open gate policy), to participate as observer in the farm inspections or PGS meetings, and to consult the PGS documentation. The PGS grants consumers the possibility to become active members of the PGS. The PGS communicates actively about this possibility.
13. The PGS procedures are regularly internally reviewed and improved, minimum once every two years.
14. The PGS includes on-going (minimum yearly) mechanisms for capacity building of operators and/or knowledge and advice sharing among group members.

Approved by the JMC meeting 18 November 2012

² Reciprocal means that operator A inspects operator B, and B inspects A, which can create conflicts of interest.

Annex II. East African Procedure for PGS approval (2013 version)

Background

This document outlines the *procedure* to be used for approval of PGS initiatives for use of the East African Organic Mark. It should be read and used together with the document **CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF PGS**.

Notably, PGS are under development and the National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAM) are engaged in assisting groups or business services to implement them. This procedure is not describing the process of assistance or advice to emerging PGS groups. The fact that the NOAMs are assisting the PGS is no hinder for the approval. The procedures and tools herein described may, if necessary, be adapted by the NOAMs to suit their own situation and work style. Any such modification shall be notified to the Joint Mark Committee (JMC) and the valid procedures and forms shall be filed.

General Policy³

- a. To be granted the use of the East African Organic Mark PGS groups must⁴ be approved by their respective NOAM.
- b. The approval process must include persons other than those engaged in supporting the PGS group⁵.
- c. Approval must be based on the submission of a complete file prepared by the applicant PGS (see file requirements below) and the documented verification (through file review and on-site visit) by the NOAM (or a person or a committee appointed by the NOAM for this purpose) of the compliance of the applicant PGS with the **CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF PGS** and **THE EAST AFRICAN ORGANIC PRODUCTS STANDARD**.
- d. Approvals can be conditional, i.e. that the PGS shall implement some improvements before or after the decision has become effective.
- e. The initial approval of PGS initiatives is valid for a period of 1,5 years.
- f. Subsequent approvals are valid for a period of 3 years.
- g. The approval can be suspended or cancelled any time by the NOAM if non-compliances with the criteria are observed.
- h. Before the expiry of the approval, the approved PGS initiative must re-submit a new and updated file and be subject to a new file review and on-site visit by its NOAM in order for the NOAM to renew its approval.

³ GR Note, this was part of the Criteria document, but it fits better here and was therefore taken out of the criteria. It has been revised to include reference also to the EAOPS.

⁴ In this document, "must" describes a condition/criteria, "shall" an obligation (for either the NOAM or the PGS) and "will" describes the procedural steps (and are in that sense also an obligation for the NOAM to follow).

⁵ This means that if one person is engaged in assistance to the PGS, at least one other person who is not engaged in assistance to the PGS must also be included in the decision-making for the approval. This is to reduce the risk of conflict of interest i.e. inherent in judging someone you have trained.

- i. The East Africa Joint Mark Committee (JMC) has a right of veto on the approval of PGS groups. It can therefore require the NOAM to revise their decision and revoke or suspend approval at any point in time.

Procedures

Inquiry

Any PGS interested in applying for approval will get from the NOAM:

- a. This procedure (or a simplified version of it)
- b. The CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF PGS**
- c. THE EAST AFRICAN ORGANIC PRODUCTS STANDARD.**
- d. RULES FOR THE USE OF THE MARK**
- e. **LICENSE AGREEMENT**

Application

The PGS initiative applying for approval and for the use of the EAOM will submit to its NOAM their file containing the following up-to-date information:

- a. Its PGS Manual explaining the PGS structure and the certification procedure in such a way that the NOAM can verify the existence of procedures or processes that ensure compliance with the **CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF PGS.**
- b. A completed **PGS GROUP APPLICATION FORM** (according to template)
- c. The current list of its endorsed operators and their registered categories of production.

Examination of file

A person or committee appointed by the NOAM will review the file and

- a. seek clarification on any unresolved matters
- b. determine if the PGS has reached stage of development to progress towards approval
- c. assign one or more persons to make an on-site assessment visit

On site assessment visit

An on-site assessment visit will be made by an individual or group appointed by the NOAM. The visit shall include:

- a. a review of the relevant documentation
- b. interviews with leaders and members of the group, about their understanding of organics, of the standards, the awareness of being part of a PGS, their personal involvement in the PGS, of their opinion on the PGS procedures and management. Interview of members will normally be part of the visits under (d.)
- c. a review of the files of a selected number of members
- d. on-site visits of a sample of members for which the files have been reviewed
- e. an exit discussion with the PGS leadership where the findings are presented

The visit shall be recorded in the PGS Assessment Form

Decision

A person or committee appointed by the NOAM will review the file and the result of the on-site assessment visit and shall

- a. seek clarification on any unresolved 'matters
- b. determine if the PGS can be approved

- c. determine any conditions that has to be fulfilled before or after licensing of the mark. Any such condition shall have a clearly spelled out time line.

The decision and any applicable conditions shall be recorded on the PGS Assessment Form

Registration and licensing

Once a group has been approved,

- a. the decision will be communicated to the PGS group by means of a standard letter
- b. a License Agreement will be signed,
- c. a certificate will be issued
- d. the relevant data will be included in the Register of Mark Users.

Monitoring and complaints

There may be on-site visits by the NOAMs within the approval period to verify continued compliance if judged necessary. In addition, the NOAM shall investigate complaints against any approved PGS group. Such an investigation shall include at least:

- a. Judgment of the nature of the complaint and if an investigation should take place
- b. Investigation of the actual situation
- c. Asking the PGS group for any comments or corrections
- d. Informing the complainant about the outcome

In a complaints process, the identity of the complainant shall not be disclosed to the PGS group.

Transparency

The process of each approval and the basic data about the PGS groups shall be accessible⁶ for any interested parties, including members of the public.

Training

The persons involved in file reviews, on site visits and decision-making shall be trained to perform their functions including, but not limited to:

- a. knowledge about the **EAST AFRICAN ORGANIC PRODUCTS STANDARDS**
- b. the system for the use of the East African Organic Mark, the contracts, the rules for the use of the mark etc.
- c. the **CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF PGS.**
- d. This procedure
- e. The relevant forms for the job

Managing the process

One person shall be responsible for the management of the whole process and each step. A file shall be kept for each PGS with all the relevant documents. The second page of the **PGS APPLICATION FORM** serves as a file for registration of the steps in the process.

Presenting the case to the JMC

When the PGS is presented to the JMC the following shall be made available for the JMC:

- a. The PGS Group Application Form
- b. The PGS Assessment Form
- c. The PGS Manual or similar.

⁶ The exact nature of how data will be made available is left open but can include posting on the internet or just being available as hard copies from the NOAMs office.