Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS): what, why and how

IFOAM – Organics International
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The Introduction to Participatory Guarantee System is available in EN, FR, ES, GR, CZ, Hu, IT, ALB here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vb1hfRswKMg

The full documentary is available in EN, FR, ES, PT, KO here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbwiCwhlAEs
1. What is a guarantee system for organic agriculture?

The different types of guarantee
Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people.

It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity, and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects.

Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.

-- Official IFOAM Definition --
Consumers pay a premium price, or make extra efforts to seek organic products, because they believe such products correspond to particular efforts at the production level.

Producers should produce according to expectations. They commit to follow a set of organic practices.

Organic practices are often laid down in an organic standard, which gives producers following such standard access to an organic label.

Label = consumer recognition and trust.

Who guarantees that the producers really follow the standard?

Organic guarantee system
Basis of an Organic Guarantee System

- an **organic standard**, which contains the production requirements that organic farmers, processors (and traders) must comply with;

- an **organic verification system** (also sometimes called conformity assessment system, or “control system” in the case of third party certification), which can be either third party certification or PGS and serves to verify compliance to the standard, in a consistent way.

- an organic consumer-facing **label** which is a logo put on the products that have successfully been guaranteed through the organic guarantee system
Who provides the organic guarantee?

- First party is the producer himself. Second party is another producer, the buyer, a consumer (etc.). A third party is a person or organization that is independent from the producer and the buyer and has nothing to do with the value chain.

- First party guarantee: Self Claim

- Second party guarantee: e.g. PGS.

- Third-party certification: Independent certification body
Participatory Guarantee Systems (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**.

-- Official IFOAM Definition --
Do not confuse PGS and Group Certification

Group Certification and Internal Control Systems:

- An **Internal Control System** (ICS) is the part of a documented quality assurance system that **allows an external certification body to delegate** the periodical inspection of individual group members to an identified body or unit within the certified operator.

This means that the third-party certification bodies only have to inspect the well-functioning of the system, as well as to perform a few spot-check re-inspections of individual smallholders.
How do Third Party and PGS align

- PGS and Third Party are regarded by IFOAM – Organics International as a complementary approaches to Organic Guarantee and Certification.

- The idea is that different producers in different situations need different solutions.

- Equally valid approaches to ensure compliance with standards for organic agriculture.
2. PGS development worldwide
Around 1'244'239 smallholders are benefiting from the system and 1'205'050 are already certified.

242 PGS initiatives exist worldwide of which 63 are under development and 179 are fully operational,

South-East Asia (India), Latin America and Africa are the regions with the highest level of PGS development.
We have recorded in our PGS database **31 PGS initiatives in Europe**, with at least **2070 producers involved** and **1667 producers certified**.
The growth of PGS worldwide

Development of PGS-certified producers worldwide
Source: IFOAM – Organics International 2020
PGS initiatives growth

Number of PGS initiatives operational worldwide 2013-2021

Source: IFOAM – Organics International
3. Key Elements and Features of PGS
PGS and local sustainable food systems is available in EN, FR, CC, HU, GR, ALB here: https://youtu.be/VfRmaqWaB5A
Resources: PGS Guidelines

These guidelines make the cornerstone of the toolkit. They highlight how, although developed independently in different countries and cultural contexts, PGS initiatives around the world share a common set of key elements and features. This revised edition of the PGS guidelines also propose a step by step approach for implementing PGS and introduce other important concepts like marketing and organisational arrangement.

Available at: https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/participatory-guarantee-systems/pgs-toolkit
PGS aim to ...

provide a credible organic guarantee to consumers seeking organic produce...

• ...creating meaningful relationships between stakeholders, based on democracy and inclusion
• ...at a reasonable cost for the farmer
• ...building alternative food networks
• ...reestablising ownerships of production standards and certification
• ...supporting agroecological approach (science-practice-movement)
• ...fostering food sovereignty
Motivation behind starting a PGS:

- Make organic claims (or differentiate organic produce from conventional produce, or ensure the organic quality of the produce)
- Less administrative burden for producers
- Customers need assurance
- Frustration with OA regulation/3rd party certification
- Improved knowledge sharing and participation
- Community building/empowerment
- Build local food systems

What would be yours?
The Key Elements of PGS

- Participation
- Shared Vision
- Transparency
- Trust
- Horizontality
- Learning Process
The Key features of PGS

1. Norms conceived by the stakeholders
2. Grassroots organization
3. Suitable to smallholder agriculture
4. Principles and values that enhance livelihoods and promote organic agriculture.
5. Documented management systems and procedures
6. Mechanisms to verify farmer’s compliance
7. Mechanisms for supporting farmers
8. Farmer’s pledge or similar (contract etc..)
9. Seals or labels
10. Clear and previously defined consequences
Participatory Guarantee Systems

Key Elements

- Shared Vision
- Trust
- Horizontality
- Transparency
- Participation
- Learning Process

Features

- Grassroots Organization
- Principles & Values that enhance livelihoods
- Norms conceived by all the stakeholders
- Clear, pre-defined consequences for non-compliance
- Documentation of management systems & procedures
- Mechanisms to verify compliance
- Suitable to smallholder agriculture
- Mechanisms to support farmers
- Seed & labels as evidence of organic status

Source: IFOAM Organics International (www.ifoam.org/organic)
Stakeholders participation is the essence of PGS

They participate in:

- Shaping and selection of standards
- Designing the procedures
- Decision making
- Verification procedures

→ Peer review
Peer review

Process where farmers belonging to the PGS, together with consumers and other stakeholders assess the production practices of their peers.

It is the core of PGS.

It means that the quality control is not carried out by an external inspector but by the members of the same group, community, association.
PGS: more than a guarantee system

- Bring people together
  - Is a tool for collective actions bringing opportunities for cooperation and other social processes
  - Generates learning and improvement of practices for farmers and consumers
  - Build alternative food systems

These benefits may even be perceived as bigger benefits of the PGS than the certification itself
4. Focus on the peer review process
Peer Review

• Process where farmers belonging to the PGS together with consumers and other stakeholders assess the production practices of their peers.

• It is the core of the PGS.

• It means that the quality control is not carried out by an external inspector but by the members of the same group.
The goal of the peer review should be always two-fold:

- to verify that the standards are being upheld,
- to create the opportunity for producers to review their practices with their peers and reflect on how to improve further.
A peer review is:

• An assessment of a producer that is either applying for the first time to become a member of a PGS or either that needs his/her certification to be renovated.

• A verification of the production practices, but it could/should also include an assessment of the broader sustainability goals of a producer.

The assessment is based on:
- Field observations
- Interview with the producer/processor
- Consultation of administrative and accounting documents

• The output from this process is a written report of the peer review visit (dated and signed) with details of what was seen and any non-compliance activities.
Generally, during the peer review, the following stakeholders are involved:

- The team performing the peer review
- The Producer reviewed
How to behave when doing a peer review?

• Being part of the team that reviews a farm requires acquiring a certain amount of knowledge and competences in order to conduct a visit that can be really constructive for all participants

• It is also a matter of how the people performing the review position themselves during the visit

• It is fundamental that a sense of trust and transparency is built among all actors, because if the reviewers are unable to identify the needs of the producer being assessed, the PGS will not be able to play its role in improving practices
Attitude and ethical behavior of the team

- be attentive and observe carefully,
- be ready to adapt to different people and situations,
- be consistent in keeping the time (it might be necessary to interrupt certain discussions and to postpone them to after the visit),
- be able to rephrase questions if necessary, so as not to put the producer in difficulty if she/he did not understand the question,
- be able to rephrase the answers ensuring mutual understanding among all participants,
- be able to analyze while avoiding personal judgements,
- be able to summaries,
- be able to maintain a certain level of detachment from the situation.
When

- Usually at least once a year

- Always when a new producer applies to become a member

If producers hold already an organic certificate issued by a third party certification body, the peer review could follow a different schedule.
Defining how the PGS will ensure compliance, thus how the peer review should be organised and implemented, should be discussed in a participatory way in the initial stage of creation of a PGS initiative.
Tools to gather information

Objective: to perform the peer reviews in an efficient, fair and comparable way

→ every PGS develops a set of templates and procedures to help its members achieve this objective.

→ different PGS initiatives have different tools, however a common set of support documents can be identified.

Take care to keep the process easy to follow and understand for all members!
The Organic Standards
Checklist of questions
**F. Rapport d’enquête**

**SYNTHÈSE DE L’ENQUÊTE NATURE & PROGRÈS 20**

Enquêteur : .......................................................... Accompagné(e) par : ..........................................................

Date de la visite : .......................................................... Durée : de ........................................... à ...........................................

Nom de l’adhérent : .......................................................... Adresse : ..........................................................

Tél : .......................................................... Email : ..........................................................

Évaluation de l’exploitation par rapport à la Charte ? Oui ☑ Non ❌

Contrôle A.I. CET : Oui ☑ Non ❌ (Organisme) : ..........................................................

Joindre le rapport de contrôle au dossier.

Nombre d’unités de travail humaines (UHT) : ..........................................................

Droit (familial) : .......................................................... quartiers permanents : .......................................................... exploitants : .......................................................... stagiaires : ..........................................................

Orientation principale de la ferme (spécialité) : ..........................................................
Surface totale : .......................................................... Surface Agricole Utilisée : .......................................................... Bio : ..........................................................

Commission + année : ..........................................................

Produits pour lesquels l’adhérent demande la mention N&P

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cultures - animaux</th>
<th>Produits transformés</th>
<th>Surface - NB</th>
<th>D’animaux - quantités</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Caractéristiques

Signature Enquêteur : .......................................................... Signature Adhérent : ..........................................................

1/11

AVIS POUR L’ATTRIBUTION DE LA MENTION

Avis de l’enquêteur (appréciation globale et points de non conformité) :

Fait à ..........................................................

Signature Enquêteur N&P : ..........................................................

11/11
Additional documents

Beside these basic documents, several PGS initiatives use also:

- Farm/business management plan
- Records of practices
- Maps
- Other type of record keeping
In practice:

Several steps:
- **Before the visit** → Preparation

- **On the field**: physically going around the farm and/or the processing workshop

- **The "administrative" part**: to check the accounting elements (verification of invoices, traceability tests ...)

Preparation

The coordinator should:

• Make contact with the producer member to be reviewed in advance (at least one month) so that he/she can prepare the necessary documents (invoices, mapping areas of harvest or foraging ...)

• Send a reminder a few days before.

• Foresee to schedule visits also to plots, apiaries, etc. distant from the farm itself

Reviewers and the producer should prepare for the review by:

• Reading the standards and their guide well in advance.

• Reading the visit support materials well in advance and the previous report.

• Note the specific points to check/discuss during the visit.
Example:

1) make an inventory of the type of the productions performed at the farm and report them on the summary sheet → 1,5 hours

2) Read and discuss with the producers the requests for improvement done the previous year. Question the member about what could be done, the context, the difficulties encountered → 1 hour

3) Continue with the "field" part → 0,5 hour

4) Finish with the administrative part → 1 hour

Remember to keep an eye on the time!
Confidentiality

Beyond the legal framework that concerns the confidentiality obligations in the business sector, the team performing the review, as any member of the PGS initiative, has a "moral" duty of discretion and confidentiality (which can also be agreed signing a written contract) so as not to harm the producers visited, who open their farm in full confidence.

For example, members of Nature et Progrès sign a document called ‘Engagement déontologique et de confidentialité à Nature et Progrès’.

Confidentiality
Peer Learning

The peer review is a space for learning, where additional knowledge gaps and needs can be identified.

The learning process for the producer assessed:

- Explain and clarify her/his own’s own practices
- Reciprocal learning

The learning process for the consumers

- understand and get to know what does it mean farming and the challenges behind this job
Continuous improvement of practices

The objective of a PGS is never the certification in itself.

PGS initiatives always invests in mechanism to support their producers and to work towards a better agriculture and society:

How to do it? → some Examples

- Using the network as a resource
- Organising Professional meetings
- Establishing mentorship
- Looking for resources outside
5. First steps in PGS implementation
Group of stakeholders comes together

1. Situation analysis
2. Stakeholders share the vision
3. Agree and then document how the PGS will work
4. Build awareness for standards and make pledge
5. Map farm and record farm details
6. Internal monitoring/peer review
7. Certification approval
1. Situation analysis

To understand if PGS is relevant/important/necessary for a certain group of stakeholders, they should understand:

• the context in which it would be implemented,
• the needs of those involved,
• the challenges and the opportunities
2. Build a shared vision

- The PGS development is the implementation of a Shared Vision

- Building a shared vision through a participatory process is an essential step in the PGS development

- People need to understand the benefits they can get from joining a PGS

- They also need to make a commitment towards achieving this common goal.

- No matter how complex or easy is this vision, the important thing is to ensure that it is accepted and understood by all members.
3. Agree and document how the PGS should work

A PGS initiative should have:

- Shared vision (Charter or similar)
- Standards
- Rules/norms: including consequences for non-compliance
- Pledge/contract between members of the PGS
- Documented management systems and procedures
- Certificate
- Producers database
- Logo (optional)
- Legal entity (optional)
How PGS normally work:

Shared Vision

1. Standards and Rules conceived by all members

Members joining the PGS declare to share the vision

Mechanisms to verify compliance

2. Step 1

Verification of producers through peer reviews

3. 1.

4. 2.

5. 3.

6. 4.

Step 2

Approval

Certification

Documents

1. Standards and Rules
2. Pledge/Contract
3. Farm visit questionnaire
4. Producers database
5. Farm review report
6. Certification + (Logo)
Deciding on the organic standard

- Standards = production rules

- It contains the production requirements that organic farmers, processors (and traders) must comply with.

- A PGS can decide to develop a new organic standard or to adapt an existing one.

- The development or adaptation of standard must be a participatory process

- Involving expert in organic farming could be beneficial
Deciding on the organic standard

Standards can be lengthy documents. A summary is helpful.

It is important that producers are:

- aware of what the standards entail
- have access to the principles and key messages in these standards
- have access to a copy of the full standard.

Standards can be made available on the website of the PGS initiative i.e. for CNG where they’re summarized and in printer-friendly format

https://www.cngfarming.org/certifications
Examples: Production standards of N&P

15 technical production standards
• Describe operational aspects of a PGS:

- requirements for application and membership
- steps to be followed in the organic verification process
- documentation requirements
- Procedures for improvement of practices
- sanctions relating to non-compliance.

All this information can be summarized in a manual or guidelines that should be distributed to all PGS members.
- Vision + objectives of the PGS
- Process to accept a new producer (Application form + procedure + fee scheme if any)
- Process to renew certificates (checklist + procedure)
- Peer review and decision on certification
- Roles and responsibilities in the PGS (producers and consumers)
- What data needs to be collected and kept?
- What happens in case of non-conformity?
- Rules for using the PGS labels
Input list

- Clearly define which inputs are allowed for producers and processors.
- In case of doubts about an input used during a peer review:
  - Ask for receipt
  - Write down the composition, take a picture of the product
  - Define a group of people within the initiative that are in charge of investigating such cases, including assessing new products coming on the market.
  - If possible consult with a specialist
Non-compliance

• **Peer review is a tool for improving practices**, as well as a tool to **verify compliance**.

• There will always be circumstances where producers are unable or fail to comply with the standards and rules of their PGS.

• **PGS initiative should establish from the beginning clear pre-defined consequences for non-compliance.**

• The non-compliance sanctions should be graded to fit with the seriousness of the non-compliance.

• They have to be agreed by all stakeholders.

• Producers should be able to make an appeal in case they don’t agree with the sanctions.
4. Build awareness of the standards and make pledge

It’s fundamental that all actors involved understand and agree on the values and norms that define how the PGS will work, training is an essential step.

Once all stakeholders agree in being part of the PGS it’s important to formally ratify this decision through a written agreement or contract.
Farmer's Pledge

Byron Region

I PLEDGE that I will treat my farm as a holistic enterprise to grow wholesome, nutritious food. I will work within the environmental and economic parameters of the Certified Naturally Grown program for the duration of my membership.

- I will work to develop the fertility of the soil through ecologically sustainable practices.
- I will encourage and develop bio-dynamic agriculture.
- I will ensure that on my farm all animals are treated humanely and in a way that ensures their health and well-being.
- I will work with my peer group to build a sustainable local food system.
- I will participate in audits on my farm and disclose my farming records and any general public information.

All the information that I have provided is accurate and true and I will continuing membership and endorsement.

Date: __________/________/________

Signed: ____________________________

Witnessed by: ____________________________

Pledge/Contract

Contrat d'engagement

Demande de mention 2018

Je soussigné(e), ____________________________

(Tel : ____________________________

Fax : ____________________________

Email : ____________________________

(Complétée le nom d'une personne physique)

Au nom de ____________________________

(Complétée le cas échéant, par le nom de la personne morale)

Adresse : ____________________________

... ____________________________

... ____________________________

Démarche la mention NATURE & PROGRÈS pour l'année 2018

Je m'engage à :

- Respecter les règles de production et de conservation des cahiers des charges Nature & Progrès de la Fédération.
- Respecter le label NATURE & PROGRÈS et sa charte graphique.
- Respecter le label NATURE & PROGRÈS et sa charte graphique.
- Participer activement à la mise en place de l'organisme de contrôle pour l'année en cours ainsi que le contrôle de conformité correspondant.
- Transmettre à la Fédération Nature et Progrès le montant de mon chèque d'affaires de vente de produits sous mention N&PP, éventuellement diminué de mes achats d'antérieurs sous mention N&PP, et payer, à réception de la facture, ma cotisation solidaire sur chèque d'affaires.
- Participer aux activités de mon groupe local NATURE & PROGRÈS et à la COMAC.

Ce contrat est renouvelé par tacite reconduction à la fin de l'année civile. Toute résiliation de sera signalée dans les meilleurs délais à la Fédération Nature & Progrès et par lettre recommandée.

Signature

(Nom de l'organisme certificate)
5. Map farm and record farm details

- Name of the producer and Company
- Address
- Local group to which they belong (if it is a PGS with several groups)
- Kinds of products
- Area of the farm (ha)
- Date on which he or she joined the group (= date of signing the commitment / pledge)
- Date of last peer review
- Certification decision
- Sanctions/ recommendations
- Etc....
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<th>Craps</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
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Cloud based database

Good Market PGS

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<tr>
<th>Inquiry (Producer Profile)</th>
<th>Ready for Visit</th>
<th>Pending Committee</th>
<th>Pending Payment</th>
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<tr>
<td>IF103 Passcook House - Free range eggs</td>
<td>IF106 Passcook House - Organic Products</td>
<td>IF513 Eco Garden</td>
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<td>PGS263 Welawas women Group</td>
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<table>
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<th>Certified</th>
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<td>IF202 Senan</td>
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<td>IF203 Señor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Show Menu | IF208 Ulupuna Greenhouse | IF209 Thissa Bandara Thambanta (Sihan Aokin) | |

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Software examples

PGS Vietnam

WE UPDATE, YOU VERIFY

PGS organic - Participatory Guarantee System Organic, taking TRANSPARENCY as a core principle, applies QR code in order to trace back and check up the organic products monitored by the PGS.

- QR stamps are provided by distributors who officially have contract with organic farmers' groups.
- Only organic farmers can activate the stamps for qualified products before distribution.
- The activated status is the status of a file display.
- The products without checkable stamps are disqualified.

For more detailed information on organic farmers' groups and distributors, please view www.vietnamosorganic.vn
Software examples

N&P
6. Peer review

One of the main ways PGS ensures compliance with its members adopted organic standards is the peer review of another’s farm.

Peer review is a process whereby people in similar situations assess the production practices of their peers.

In PGS, a peer review takes place when producers, often accompanied by consumers and other stakeholders, visit a farm of another producer in their local group or region, to conduct a farm review. Peer review stands at the very core of PGS.
The Peer Review of Nature et Progrès is available in EN, FR, GR, CZ, HU, IT here: https://youtu.be/lv6hUtPSwG0
7. Certification Approval

- The results of the peer review are summarized in a report
- The result are presented to a certification committee
- The decision is based on the results of the peer review reported and summarized in a peer review report
**PGS Endorsement**

This serves to confirm *Nature’s Heritage Brunehilde and Wilksville properties* were assessed by the Bryantson Market PGS on 13 November 2017 and are endorsed to sell their products as:

**Naturally Grown**

Based on compliance with the *Basic Production Principles of Bryantson Market PGS* and the adherence to the required guidelines, the following products are endorsed as grown according to organic principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beetroot</th>
<th>Cauliflower</th>
<th>Green Beans</th>
<th>Mint</th>
<th>Sweet Potato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>Chilli</td>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>Swiss Chard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butternut</td>
<td>Eggplant</td>
<td>Leeks</td>
<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>Tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cauliflower</td>
<td>Collard</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td>Grassedilla</td>
<td>Marrows</td>
<td>Sweet Pepper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For: Bryantson Market PGS Group

Bryantson Market PGS is a member of PGS South Africa (PGSSA), a voluntary association of growers, retailers and consumers supporting organic agriculture and local food production based on the principles of ecology, health, fairness and care.

PGSSA is a proud member of FOAM (Forum Organic), and supports the development of organic agriculture in its full diversity and wealth.

This certificate is valid for 22 months from date of issue.

**Certified Upland Grown**

For use of any Organisations that would like to contract with us for a different use, please contact us for further information.

For the process of:

**Crop Production**

This Scope Certificate (DD/YYYY) is valid until (DD/YYYY) for the product(s) and area(s) specified in the annex.

For the product(s) and area(s) specified in the annex.

Signed by: [Signature]

[Company Name]

[Company Address]
6. Day to day operations
Day to day operations

A PGS initiative should have:

• A coordinator/coordination team supervising the day to day management, usually a member with technical ability and time availability (voluntary or paid position).
Typical roles of PGS coordination

1. Contact point for the PGS initiative.
2. Schedule meetings, trainings, etc.
3. Process PGS applications
4. Keeps and manages data about PGS members (database)
5. Coordinate schedule of the annual farm visits.
6. Follow-up incomplete documentation.
7. Local support for members.
# N&P Coordination team Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December-January</td>
<td>Check the renewal of the commitment of N&amp;P certified producers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check the producers members database (membership status, farm visit fee, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>New invoices are prepared and sent to all professionals within a week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation visits to be done for each COMAC with a summary of the budget funded by the federal office, with additional documents (summary sheets, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization of a meeting-training day with the members participating the farm visits in the areas without local COMAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March to November</td>
<td>Process the farm visit report, consultation, if necessary, with the federal COMAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Evaluation of the farm visits: as a general reflection on the quality of the farm visits during the year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial sustainability

• PGS rely on a lot of volunteer internal work, especially in the first years of implementation.

• Consumers can share the workload taking over different tasks.

• At least 3 years are needed to set-up a PGS initiative

• The financial sustainability comes from the market access and premium price compensating for their efforts in engaging in the PGS

• Membership fees also support the administration of the scheme and the defrayal volunteers' expenses.
Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) - Examples

**GASAP, Belgium**

- **Location:** Brussel Area, BE
- **Production method:** agroecology and organic
- **No of producers (certified):** 30
- **Start date:** 2016
- **Type of products:** Vegetables, fruits, grains, mushrooms, livestock products, honey, juices, pasta, bread, beer, kombucha, chocolate etc
GASAP, Belgium

Philosophy and principles

- GASAP is a network of 75 CSAs (involving producers and consumers)
- PGS as a tool to improve consumers-producers relationships used by GASAP since 2016
- **Two main objectives**: improvement of economic situation of farmers and access to quality food at an affordable price for consumers
- PGS is used more as a **tool for building trust and exchange** rather than just a conformity verification system
**GASAP, Belgium**

**Main elements of GASAP PGS:**

- **Standards**
  - Two standards: basic (adapted to the local context; compulsory) and aspirational (to strive for improvement)
  - Standard also contains specific sections for consumers’ involvement → Consumers participation is high

- **Advantages and Challenges:**
  - **Advantages**: exchange and experiences sharing; transparency and better communication
  - **Challenges**: low access to finances; and finding compromises between consumers and producers
Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) - Examples

DES Parma, Italy

**Location:** Parma, IT

**Production method:** organic with additional elements

**No of producers (involved and certified):** 57

**Start date:** 2013

**Type of products:** Fruits and vegetables, cereals, meat and cured meats, eggs and poultry, cheeses, honey and hive products, fish and fish products, jams, preserves, juices, wine.
DES Parma, Italy

Philosophy and principles:

- Core values are ecological sustainability, fair and socially sustainable economy, the enhancement of the local dimension, and prioritization of production and consumption of local resources.
- 60% producers are also third party certified (PGS and TPC)
- Marketing through solidarity based purchasing networks (GAS) and markets
Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) - Examples

**DES Parma, Italy**

**Advantages**
- PGS as tool for support and cooperation
- PGS to access some marketing channels (e.g. two organic markets in Parma)
- PGS as a tool for exchange and interaction

**Challenges**
- Consumers are not always actively involved, especially during and after COVID 19
- Strong producers’ commitment required towards PGS values that exceed third party certification requirements
7. Marketing
Marketing

• It is important to *maintain integrity* of organic PGS certified products after they leave the farm.

• Build market linkages → *involve local retailers/food-coop*

• Develop a *logo* (optional)

• Point of sales → in some cases the PGS establishes its own farmers market or point of sale

• If the PGS doesn’t have point of sale, it is important to verify possible misuse of the logo and check integrity of the products in the place where these products are sold.
Labels
Marketing: CNG Example

- Promotion of retailers that support CNG
- List of all producers

- Support farmers in developing marketing tools (logos, website, business-card, videos, etc....)

https://certified.naturallygrown.org/
The use of the term “Organic” in the EU

• In the EU the use of the term organic is regulated by the regulation 2018/848

• This Regulation applies to the following products:
  • (a) live or unprocessed agricultural products, including seeds and other plant reproductive material;
  • (b) processed agricultural products for use as food;
  • (c) feed

• The labelling and advertising of a product may refer to organic production methods only if it has been certified by a competent authority (third party certification body).

• PGS producers in Europe cannot make organic claims on their products, however they can explain to their consumers that they produce using standards that are based on the ideals of the organic movement.
8. Political justification for supporting PGS
Why supporting PGS?

• PGS offers numerous benefits, including:
  ✓ improved access to organic markets through a guarantee system for small-scale producers (more affordable than third party certification),
  ✓ increased education and awareness among consumers (by involving them in the guarantee process),
  ✓ promotion of short supply chains and local market development,
  ✓ farmer capacity building and empowerment.

  ✓ Create tools for implementing local democracy

• Public support in the initial stage of PGS development is necessary to provide resources for investment in capacity building and organizational development.
Resources: Global Policy Toolkit on Public Support to Organic Agriculture

This toolkit is aimed at anyone involved in advocating for pro-organic policies, designing them, or deciding on them. It is therefore aimed at both government representatives and private sector users. The toolkit is composed of a series of tools, including:

- A **main report**, the “Guidelines for public support to organic agriculture”: these guidelines make the cornerstone of the toolkit and present the fullest possible compilation of facts, arguments and tips of the full panel of policy measures that can be conceived to support organic agriculture. Most of the sections of this main report are also broken down into separate documents for easier download and use. The report is targeted to policy makers and policy advocates.

4. **Enabling measures (combined push-pull)**

   a. **National Data production and dissemination**
      - [Main report section](#)
      - [PPT](#)
      - [Policy Summary](#)

   b. **Support the institutional development of organic associations**
      - [Main report section](#)
      - [Policy Summary](#)

   c. **Build organic expertise within the public sector**
      - [Main report section](#)
      - [PPT](#)
      - [Policy Summary](#)

   d. **Support to PGS development**
      - [Main report section](#)
      - [PPT](#)
      - [Policy Summary](#)

   e. **Support to urban gardening and collective gardens**
      - [Main report section](#)
      - [Policy Summary](#)

Resources: Why invest in PGS?

Available at:
Published for the first time in 2011, this Policy Brief on PGS is a landmark in IFOAM’s advocacy work. The document targets policy makers and advocates that wish to support PGS not only through recognition in their national organic regulatory systems, but also through different form of support aiming at promoting rather than regulating.

Other international organizations supporting PGS development

FAO (Since 2006, when they assisted PGS development in India)

“PGS brings an original example of how to enable small producers to access and secure markets through a participative and collective certification mechanism.”

-Denis Herbel, FAO officer
Forms of support to PGS

• The right regulatory framework is very important: accommodate PGS in the organic regulation (See IFOAM-OI policy brief “How Governments Can Support PGS”).

• Finance projects that set-up PGS initiatives (must be at least 3-years long).

• Ongoing support: partial funding of existing PGS initiatives for expenses such as farmer training, committee meetings, development of standards and operating manuals, communication and networking.
Other examples

• In India the Government has been increasingly supporting PGS for its national market, developing a unique example of a large-scale government-facilitated PGS program, coordinated by its National Centre for Organic Farming, under the Ministry of Agriculture. The government has allocated a significant amount of money to promote conversion to organic farming and adoption of PGS through various programs.

• Peru, several local governments support PGS through local official recognition and supporting their implementation.

• The municipality of Bella Vista in Argentina is an active stakeholder in the set-up of their local PGS.

• The government of Mexico, in 2010 gave support of around EUR 82,000 to the national PGS network to form 20 PGS initiatives.

• In Costa Rica the government provided technical and financial support for the establishment of PGS initiatives.

• Brazil : In 2016, EUR 91,000 for support to family farmers and technicians involved in PGS initiatives.

• Central and local government in the Philippines support PGS through funding initial operation, including training, committee meetings, and development of standards and manual of operations.
THANK YOU!

pgs@ifoam.bio