

The Global PGS Newsletter

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The Global PGS Newsletter is one year old!



With this issue, the Global PGS Newsletter celebrates its first anniversary. Thanks to the support of Hivos (Netherlands), and the contribution of all article authors, we have been able to publish 12 issues since October 2009. For this occasion,

we launched an Index Table of all articles published in The Global PGS Newsletter since its creation. The Index is available [here](#). This should make it quicker to find articles published in previous issues of the newsletter. Thanks again to all, and keep contributing!

Submission of papers for the Organic World Congress: don't miss the deadline!

The 17th IFOAM Organic World Congress, the first in Asia, will be held in the Republic of Korea in 2011. The Organic World Congress is the biggest global organic conference happening every 3 years alongside the IFOAM General Assembly. The program of the

Organic World Congress is made of presentations on various topics related to organic agriculture, from contributors whose papers have been accepted by the OWC organizing committee. Anybody can submit papers, and PGS is one of the possible topics to be addressed. Let's make sure that PGS is well represented on the OWC program! Submit a paper on your PGS experience (case study) or other PGS-related issues (more general), and you will be able to present at the OWC 2011 in Korea if your paper is accepted.

The deadline for submission of papers is November 30, 2010. All submissions must be in English and adhere to the submission guidelines specified on the OWC website at www.ifoam.org/kowc2011 (refer to the guidelines for paper submission). Submissions will be reviewed by experts as to the quality of content, authenticity and relevance of the topic for a wider audience. For further information and guidance, please visit the above link.



PGS BASICS

Criteria for assessing PGS initiatives: the PGS Self-Evaluation tool

The concept of “Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)” is now widely known in the organic sector and many initiatives claim to be PGS. Although PGS initiatives across the world can be very diverse, there are a number of key characteristics that they should ideally all fulfill. These characteristics have been compiled in the form of a self-evaluation tool, which PGS initiatives can use to evaluate themselves. The criteria encompassed in the tool can also be used by other organizations to evaluate (and approve) PGS initiatives. This is, for example, the method chosen by the Pacific Community to officially review and approve PGS initiatives for the purpose of enabling them to use the Pacifika Organic Mark. The self-evaluation tool was designed by the IFOAM PGS committee and is available online at www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/PGSSelfevaluation.html.

PGS and the Philippine Organic Agriculture Law: Excluding PGS, excluding small farmers

By *Alfie Pulumbarit and Rowena Buena*



For almost twenty-five years, farmer-scientist group MASIPAG has been in the forefront of regaining farmers control over seeds, technology and land. As a network focusing

on alternatives to chemical-based, industrial and capital intensive farming, MASIPAG works with farmers, scientists and non-governmental organizations to find solutions to the worsening problems of hunger and indebtedness.

An important aspect of MASIPAG’s rural development approach is empowerment of farmers through self-reliance. Self-reliance teaches them to chart their own destiny and do away with the culture of dependency. Such programs include seed collection, breeding, crop diversification, network strengthening, sustainable and organic agriculture.

Still, fundamental to the mainstreaming of these programs is recognition and support from the government. For decades, government support has been focused on chemical-based agriculture, while organic agriculture is left to NGOs, environmentalists, small farmers and hobbyists.

This year, however, saw the passing of the Organic Agriculture bill into law. The law is much welcomed by the organic producers and advocates, as it even adopts the comprehensive definition of organic agriculture set by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). The benefits and incentives specified in the act include funding for organic agricul-

ture practitioners, research and development, trading post establishment, and inclusion in the educational curriculum.

On the other hand, the law falls short of its essence as it is stated that only third-party certified products will be recognized as organic. In effect, the law will exclude those who are practicing first- or second-party certifications. Those farmers who cannot enter this scheme (mainly small farmers) will not be entitled to the grants, incentives and support as accorded by the law. Farmers who label their products as organic without passing third-party certification will also be penalized. Presently, the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) is being drafted and will be finalized before the year ends.

MASIPAG believes that the law should be flexible enough to accommodate the growing number of organic agriculture practitioners. Small farmers who have been practicing organic agriculture should have the prerogative to label their products as organic and should not be prejudiced just because they cannot afford to pay for third-party organic certification. Failing to recognize this will further marginalize and criminalize the small farmers, who must be encouraged instead to practice organic and sustainable agriculture.

The Participatory Guarantee System or PGS has been the type of organic certification process that fits MASIPAG’s principle of self-reliance. PGS builds teamwork and cooperation, trust and honesty, and encourages sharing of knowledge and practices, among others. The principles of PGS also fit the nature and capacity of small farmers, as most of them do not have the financial means and educational attainment needed for third-party certification. Thus, PGS serves to empower the small farmers to also take part and participate as key players in the development of organic agriculture.

The law should recognize PGS as another category to

certify organic products. PGS is recognized and is now being strengthened by IFOAM as a system of certification wherein farmers and consumers take the lead role. By bringing more farmers into PGS programs, we are meeting the needs of small-scale farmers and local, low-income consumers. Immediate action should be taken in order to remedy the situation, such as amending the law, while at the same time proving that PGS is a viable alternative certification process through continuous practice and development. This, however, will involve a huge effort, as organic agriculture in the Philippines is still in its infancy. But, given the increasing number of smallholders adopting organic agriculture, MASIPAG believes that the principles guiding PGS will be accepted in the near future.

PGS in Uganda

By *Kugonza B. Irene* (ikugonza@nogamu.org.ug),
Standards Officer, NOGAMU



Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) is a fairly new concept in Uganda. It started in 2007 after the launch of the Harmonised East African Organic Products standards (EAOPS) and the East African Organic Mark (EAOM).

In Uganda it is our tradition to carry-out farming without any use of artificial chemicals and synthetic fertilisers. It is common that most of the agricultural products grown traditionally are organic. The only problem has been the lack of documented system to verify this. PGS is the perfect opportunity for us to do so!

Currently only a few farmer groups and one of the locally owned organic shops and its suppliers are implementing it. There are three different categories of PGS schemes in Uganda. NOGAMU, the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda, has set-up a system to support and approve PGS groups and grant them the right to use the EAOM to brand their products as certified organic.

The first category is the farmer groups involved in outgrower schemes with an export company. These groups are certified organic for export through internal control systems but also opt for PGS certification so as to enable their members to use the EAOM mark for their non-export produce sold on the local markets, mainly fruits and vegetables. About 450 farmers are PGS certified in this arrangement and are currently marketing using the EAOM on their produce sold in

Ugandan hotels, organic shops and supermarkets.

The second category is the buyer-farmer group arrangements where major buyers of the farmers' products (processors) have organised their registered farmers to get PGS certified so as to be able to sell the processed farmers' produce as branded organic produce with the EAOM. This scheme has the majority of farmers currently, and the farmers supplying the organic outlets in Uganda especially fruits and vegetables are in this scheme.



NOGAMU officials, the government community development officer and Members of the Namulonge Horticultural farmers association during one of the PGS Standards formulation meetings

The last category are organized farmer groups and associations that already have their own markets and are interested in branding their products as organic and promoting organic products locally and regionally.

NOGAMU is involved with the implementation of PGS under all these arrangements for over 2,000 farmers from all over Uganda. It has played a key role in assisting farmer groups to implement PGS systems. NOGAMU is involved right from the initial stages such as when the group sets up PGS standards and guidelines. NOGAMU is also involved in the final stage of issuing the annual license for the PGS certification and issuing of the organic mark.



Group members of a vegetable growers group for the organic shop in Kampala share experiences about the different methods of controlling pests in their vegetable gardens. This was during one of the routine farm visits (inspections) that are part of the group's weekly meeting agenda.

Unfortunately, the capacity to meet standards still remains weak in many developing countries. PGS, when fully embraced, will play a key role in ensuring the organic integrity of organic products sold in the local markets in Uganda because it involves voluntary member participation, monitoring and implementation! It will also contribute to addressing the local consumers' demand for "safe and healthy foods", an emerging trend in Uganda.

Report from the Latin American organic meeting in Lima

The 5th Latin-American meeting on Organic Agriculture (V Encuentro Latinoamericano de Agricultura Orgánica) took place in Lima, Peru at the beginning of September. Delegations from 18 countries were present. As part of this event there was a meeting of the Latin American PGS Forum, with PGS stakeholders presenting their experiences from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru. Several international organizations such as IFOAM, MAELA, Heifer International and SSNC were also present. PGS experiences shared in the 5th Latin American meeting included:

- El Rincon Ecologico (Argentina)
- Family producers of Cañuelas (Argentina)
- AOPEB (Bolivia)
- AGRECOL Organic fairs (Bolivia)
- The national association "Eco Feria y Colectivo Cañuelas (Ecuador)
- Local market development and the agro-ecological network (Ecuador)
- The Ecovida network (Brazil)
- The Xique-Xique network (Brazil)
- ANC (Brazil)
- Columbian network of organic markets (Colombia)
- Mexican network of organic Tianguis and markets (Mexico)
- ANPE (Peru)

It was decided that the next (6th) meeting would take place in Colombia.

To download the English translation of the Mexican PGS experience summary, click [here](#).

For more information and to obtain the summaries of other experiences (in Spanish), please contact [Jannet Villanueva Escudero](#).

Report on the first stakeholder consultation meeting of the new national PGS program in India

By Miguel Braganza, Secretary of the PGSOIC



National Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF) of Government of India's Ministry of Agriculture held the first of the proposed three feedback workshops at Hotel Coronet, Pune (Maharashtra state) on September 21-22, 2010. The next two workshops are proposed to

be held at Bangalore and Delhi in preparation for the launching of Participatory Organic Guarantee System for India, the first time ever that the Government of a country formally participates in PGS. The draft proposal has drawn its strength and technical details from the PGS-India document prepared by Mr. Ron Khosla under DAC-NCOF-FAO's TCP project, the IFOAM PGS guidelines, the OFAI-PGS handbook for PGS Local Groups in India, other documents of IFOAM and experience earned through the implementation of the NPOP programme.

The Draft "PGS Operational Manual" was circulated by Dr. A.K. Yadav to members of the PGS Organic Council of India (PGS-OIC) and other NGOs and OFO (Organic Farmers' Organizations) in India for comments. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India, has approved the launching of Organic Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in the country under the National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF).

Dr. Claude Alvares (Director of OFAI), Mr. Joy Daniel (President of the PGS-OIC) and Mr. Miguel Braganza (Secretary of PGS-OIC) attended the first workshop organized by NCOF in association with the Maharashtra Organic Farming Federation (MOFF), Pune. All organizations congratulated the NCOF on taking the bold step forward and strongly recommended that the changes suggested by Joelle Katto of IFOAM-Bonn and Ron Khosla of the IFOAM PGS Committee be incorporated into the Manual of PGS to be used by NCOF. The validity of the certificate, the periodicity of the meetings, the composition of the National Advisory

Committee and certification of off-farm processing by organic farmers or under their control and supervision, were some of the area which needed changes. The organic farmer members of MOFF made similar suggestions. The recommendation was accepted by the Director of NCOF and the representatives of various Regional Centres (RCOF) who were present for the discussion.

Comments and feedback may still be sent to NCOF at akyadav52@yahoo.com and to PGSOIC Secretariat at pgsoic.sec@gmail.com.

Structure of the PGS Brazilian law in relation to PGS

By Flavia Castro



Brazil is the country with the most elaborated legal recognition of PGS. Its organic regulation recognizes PGS certification at the same level as third-party certification (granting access to the same seal), and establishes processes by which PGS can obtain accreditation from the Ministry

of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply. Below is an overview of the structure of this recognition in the Brazilian legal system. The full legal documents are available online. English and Spanish versions of the Organic Agriculture Law and of the Decree that followed it can be found [here](#).

Law 10831 of the 23rd of December 2003 (Organic Agriculture Law)

A short law that defines Organic Agriculture, its objectives, and general conditions for organic production in Brazil.

One article (3) regulates marketing of organic products as follows:

“In order to be traded, organic products shall be certified by an officially recognised body pursuant to criteria established in specific regulation.

3.1 Where direct trading takes place between consumers and family farmers taking part in proper social control organisation processes previously registered with the appropriate inspection body, certification shall be optional as long as product traceability is assured to consumers and inspection body alike, as well as free access to production and processing sites.

3.2 The organic production certification referred to in the heading of this article, focusing on systems, criteria and circumstances involving its application shall be regulated by this Law with consideration to the various certification systems in operation in the country.”

Decree 6323, of 27th of December 2007, regulating the law 10831

A detailed law. Contains definitions of “Social control organization” and “Participative Organic Quality Assurance Systems”, PGS.

One section of the law regulates labelling:

- All products subject to the Brazilian Organic Conformity Assessment System (SisOrg) must follow labelling rules for organic products.
- Products sold in direct sales can bear the SisOrg seal (the national organic seal) only if verified by an accredited conformity assessment body. Otherwise, the producer may put on the label (or display at the place where the product is sold) the phrase: “organic product not subject to certification in the terms of Law n.10831 of 23rd December 2003”.

Another section regulates direct sales without certification through social control organizations.

There is also a section in the law which regulates the SisOrg:

- It creates the Brazilian Organic Conformity Assessment System (SisOrg), formed by entities and bodies of federal public administration and by organic conformity evaluation bodies (PGS and third-party certification) accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply.
- The SisOrg is identified by the national organic seal, which must indicate the control system that was used for the organic conformity assessment of the product (PGS or third-party certification).

Yet another sub-section regulates the functioning and the accreditation process of PGS. This sub-section also states that “The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, the Ministry of Agrarian Development and the Ministry of Environment shall provide support to the construction of Participative Organic Quality Assurance Systems”.

Implementation rule No 19, of 28th May. 2009

This implementation rule (Annex 1), describes the mechanisms for organic quality control and information.

Various articles contain provisions that apply both to third-party certifiers and to participatory certifiers. One subsection, (articles 18 to 21) describes the procedures for the accreditation of a Participative conformity assessment body (PGS).

Essentially, applications must be submitted to the office for Agricultural Policy and Development (Sepdag) in the Brazilian State where the PGS has its Head Office.

The application must contain a completed application form (provided in Annex IV of the rule), the statutes of the organization, the certificate of legal registration, a PGS operational manual and standards adopted, as well as data on each controlled producer, if applicable. The accreditation is preceded by an audit of the PGS organization performed by COAGRE, a department of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for organic agriculture development in Brazil.

COAGRE is the public national body that decides on accreditation for third party certifiers and PGS in Brazil.

Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Spain:** SEAE (Spanish Society for Organic Agriculture) held its IXth technico-scientific congress from the 6th to the 9th of October in Lleida, Catalonia. About half of the presentations in the “Regulations, standards and certification” session have been dedicated to PGS.
- **Spain:** COAG, a Spanish association of farmer organizations, organized a seminar entitled “From organic agriculture to agro-ecology” on the 23rd and 24th of September in the Basque Region. A full afternoon of the 2-day seminar was dedicated to PGS, with several presentations and workshops, among which a presentation by the Brazilian PGS network Ecovida. For more information on the outcome of the Seminar, contact Mamen Cuellar at ma2cupam@uco.es.
- **Italy:** As announced earlier, the upcoming Terra Madre event (21-25 October, Torino, Italy) will include a PGS workshop. Certified Naturally Grown (USA) will be represented through its Executive Director, Alice Varon (alice@naturallygrown.org), looking forward to meeting others at the PGS session on Friday the 22nd at 15:00. Mathew John from Keystone Foundation (IFOAM PGS committee, India), Laercio Meirelles from Ecovida (Brazil, laerciomeirelles@terra.com.br) and Eva Torremocha (IFOAM PGS committee, Spain) will also be present at the event. Get in touch! The online forum entitled “New certification models: Participatory System” has been created and discussions have already started there. To participate in it, click [here](#).
- **USA:** Certified Naturally Grown developed a marketing guide for beekeepers to complement CNG’s apiary certification program. Read it online at www.naturallygrown.org/guide. New market cards were also developed for participating farmers and beekeepers: www.naturallygrown.org/cards.



...AFRICA

- **South Africa:** In mid-September, Konrad Hauptfleisch and Raymond Auerbach conducted a seminar at the Nelson Mandela Metro University where 60 participants were introduced to the latest developments in organic agriculture worldwide and to PGS. The outcome was the formation of a working group to take PGS and marketing activities forward in the Southern Cape Province. In parallel, following another meeting with Konrad, an association, Live Unplugged will go into PGS. Live Unplugged is setting itself up as a national network of locally-owned co-operatives operating hubs to connect local farmers with local markets, shortening supply chains, operating under the principles of organic agriculture, local production and local consumption. The marketing will be under a common brand with PGS as the assurance system.



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **The Philippines:** The Association of Taiwanese Indigenous People's Development (ATIPD) from Taiwan visited MASIPAG communities in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental last August. The participants, including farmers, NGO workers and a certification body from China, COAA, were able to visit farmer organizations who are engaged in certifying and marketing organic products and learned the importance of organizing work in the creation of a marketing/business enterprise. They were also able to see farmer inspectors in action. For more information, contact Rowena Buena at info@masipag.org.
- **India:** Keystone Foundation finalized its protocol for the eco-certification of Wild Honey harvest. The procedure followed by PGS will be applied to guarantee the product as being fair trade and sustainably harvested. These products will be sold with an ECO MARK. As of now the mark is called PGS Wild, as it is based on the principles of Participatory Guarantee System applicable to small and marginal organic farmers. To get a copy of the monitoring protocols or for more details, contact Snehlata Nath (sneh@keystone-foundation.org), Anita Varghese (anita@keystone-foundation.org) or Robert Leo (leo@keystone-foundation.org).
- **French Polynesia:** a law regulating organic agriculture is about to be voted by the Assembly of Polynesia. The current draft recognizes PGS as one of the ways (together with third party certification) to certify organic products. More about this in a next issue of The Global PGS Newsletter.



...LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil:** Giovanna Sacchi, from the University of Bologna, presented her paper "The theory of conventions as a framework to analyze participatory guarantee system for organic food", in a workshop on "Institutions and Organizations" in Sao Paulo, Brazil, from the 3rd to the 5th of October. To learn more, contact giovanna.sacks@gmail.com.

Imprint

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