

# The Global PGS Newsletter

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## Table of Contents

The Brazilian national organic logo gives the PGS choice to consumers	1	A Revitalized Effort to Develop PGS in Southern Spain (Andalusia)	2	Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...	5
New Organic Law in French Polynesia recognizes PGS on the same level as third party certifiers	2	PGS gains momentum in South Africa	4		

## The Brazilian national organic logo gives the PGS choice to consumers

By Flávia Castro



In past issues we have been following developments related to the implementation of the new organic agriculture law in Brazil. Since the beginning of this year, Brazilian consumers will find on supermarket shelves newly labeled organic certified products, identified by the same unique logo. The interesting news is that consumers will also be able to select the certification system they prefer by checking the label, since the law requires this to be stated together with the logo, as you can see in the reproduction below<sup>1</sup>:



One single logo, two different systems. How will this affect consumers' choices at the moment of placing their favorite organic product inside their shopping cart? How prepared is the Brazilian consumer to decide on the guarantee system that they consider more trustworthy?

Recently, a few newspapers and TV news broadcastings in Brazil have mentioned the changes in national organic agriculture regulations and the implications of these changes for producers and consumers. Some journalists, though, did not report on the theme extensively enough and failed to mention the duality of systems when referring to the seal, or the difference between third party and participatory certification. Currently, 6 organizations are accredited by the Government to provide organic certification, 3 of which are PGS, with the remaining 3 providing third party certification. However, an article published in a popular newspaper (*O Estado de São Paulo*, 29.01.2011), discussing the challenges faced by producers with the implementation of the new law, affirmed that

<sup>1</sup> Source: Brasil, IN. n. 50, 2009

only 3 organizations in total had been able to obtain accreditation by the government before the beginning of 2011, excluding from the news all 3 of the accredited PGS: ABIO, ANC and Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia, which are already well known to the regular readers of this newsletter.

IFOAM and the PGS team will continue to monitor the developments that follow in the coming months and report these developments to you, such as the strategies that will be adopted by PGS groups to improve their communication with consumers or by the Government to create more understanding of the law among the general public. Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind that it is indeed a great achievement for the global PGS movement that this possibility, for consumers to choose and for small producers to have an alternative to third party certification, not only exists but is officially and nationally recognized!

## New Organic Law in French Polynesia recognizes PGS on the same level as third party certifiers

By Joëlle Katto-Andrighetto



On 19 November 2010, the Assembly of French Polynesia approved a new law on Organic Agriculture, entitled “n° 2010-20 LP/APF du 19 novembre 2010 du projet de loi du pays relative à l’agriculture biologique en Polynésie française”. The law recognizes as possible “control

bodies”: the competent authority, third party certifiers and Participatory Guarantee Systems. It defines PGS as a “Locally-based quality assurance system which guaranties that an agricultural product is in conformity with the conditions of production, processing and labeling set in the norms and standards related to organic agriculture and officially approved according to the conditions defined in this law. The Participatory Guarantee System is based on active participation of the stakeholders: producers and consumers.” The law actually requires approved PGS to include consumers as members and requires that consumers also be represented during the farm inspections.

Under the newly approved law, PGS, as well as third party certifiers, are subject to oversight by the Organic

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Agriculture Commission, composed of representatives of the government and of the civil society (organic producers, consumers and associations). This oversight includes approval based on requirements defined by the council of ministers on the basis of a recommendation by the OA Commission. Approved PGS are also required to communicate annually to the competent authority the list of their producers and a summary of their control activities. The competent authority reserves the right to audit the approved PGS and to witness the farm inspections.

The association BioFenua, and in particular its president Gilles TeHau Parzy (also member of POETCom, mentioned in earlier issues of this newsletter) have been instrumental in shaping this new organic law. BioFenua is currently working on supporting the development of several PGS across French Polynesia. For more information, contact Gilles TeHau Parzy at [eden@edenparc.org](mailto:eden@edenparc.org).

## A Revitalized Effort to Develop PGS in Southern Spain (Andalusia)

By César De la Cruz Abarca (Coordinator of BioCastrol and PGS facilitator in the region)



The development of PGS in Andalusia, Spain, was promoted and supported by the region’s government (Junta de Andalucía) from 2006 to 2009, through its Organic Agriculture General Management Office (GMOAO). During this period of time three regions in Andalusia’s highlands (Castrol, Segura and Ronda) conducted their own pilot projects that resulted in the development of a model of PGS, while also generating tools for its implementation. The model was created using a participatory action research methodology and the ideas came mostly from

producers. When the general director of the GMOAO changed, however, the project lost support. As a result, the related activities gradually ceased.

In Castril, a lack of a practical or tangible output for small producers also contributed to the failure of the project. The association BioCastril, however, was very interested in making it work. As a small organization, BioCastril did not have the capacity to support a PGS on its own. For this reason, the organization's board of directors decided to go out and show the results of what had been done locally, with the purpose of involving other organizations that work with organic agriculture. Therefore, in October 2009 BioCastril organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convening of Ecological Production of the Granada Highlands (Altiplano de Granada) and promoted a round table called "Current Status and Possibilities for the PGS." The association also participated in a workshop about initiating PGS, organized by the Association of Alumnia and the Council of Málaga, with a presentation titled "PGS, the work done on the Castril region."



BioCastril farmers practicing the Visitor Guidelines

In 2010 promotional efforts were intensified. In March, a visit to Castril by organic agriculture university students from Cordoba and Andalusia International Universities helped make the students aware of the role that BioCastril has played in developing PGS. In May, the association participated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Technical Workshop of Commercial Agriculture and Short Supply Chains, promoted by the Spanish Society of Ecological Agriculture (SEAE) in Almeria. In June, BioCastril and Andalucía's Seeds Network jointly organized Analucia's 7<sup>th</sup> Fair of Agricultural Biodiversity, during which a talk and a practical workshop about PGS took place. In September, BioCastril met Granadas' Association of Consumers and Producers, "El Encinar", to discuss PGS, and in November, as part of Andalusia's 3<sup>rd</sup>

Workshop of Agroecology and Environmental Education of Andalusia's Federation of Consumers and Ecological Producers (FACPE), the association presented a talk about the Case of Castril and the current status of the PGS in Andalusia. Information has been made available on BioCastril's website ([www.biocastril.es](http://www.biocastril.es)), including articles, dissertations, developments and foreign experiences, as well as visitor and internal guidelines (both have been jointly developed by farmers of pilot projects in Castril, Ronda and Segura). BioCastril has also managed to include the PGS within the agenda of the Highlands' Group for Rural Development, an organization that channels European funds to rural development projects in the area.

As a result of these promotional activities, BioCastril is now collaborating with EcoValle, an Association from Granada, to develop short supply chains and PGS processes of EcoValle. Since January 2011, four meetings and workshops have been held. Progress has been made, including the identification of factors that will generate confidence in the system. Moreover, the visitor's guide has been outlined as well as its structure and internal guidelines. BioCastril is also collaborating with FACPE, which began the construction of its PGS in December 2010. During the first meeting, the reasons for why FACPE should adopt a PGS were discussed, as well as the BioCastril and EcoValle experiences, and a work plan was proposed.



FACPE workshop: discussing reasons to adopt PGS

Other workshops are planned for February, during which FACPE's partner organizations will work in their specific areas, meet regularly to review the progress made, come to agreements and continue with the construction of the system. Obviously, this process will be more complex given the nature of the Federation, which brings together twelve organizations throughout Andalusia. But at

the same time, the potential for PGS promotion and enhancement is significant.

BioCastril's effort to raise awareness and stimulate interest among other organizations in PGS has been successful. It has built bridges between the organizations working in this field, revitalizing the process that started in 2006. As it was recently announced by this Newsletter (Jan. 2011), La Universidad Popular de Huéscar in Andalusia has included training on PGS as part of its 2011 programs and BioCastril will be responsible for this training. We expect that our efforts, together with the work of other organizations, will make PGS a reality in Spain.

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## PGS gains momentum in South Africa

*By Konrad Hauptfleisch*



Recent events in South Africa indicate that PGS is set to become the preferred assurance system for local markets. This is seen in a growing demand from producers for a market access system that will put them closer to their consumers, give a credible guarantee of quality

and integrity, and, most of all, connect people with their food.

The regulatory environment in South Africa is set to change. The recently implemented Consumer Protection Act and new labeling regulations demand increased compliances and assurances from producers. Any product sold to a consumer will have to comply with the regulations – and this includes any claims made regarding organic, natural, homemade, farm fresh or any other statement as to the nature of the product. This is not only affecting the way large retailers are conducting their business, but also how smallholders and small producers interact with their customers.

PGS is an ideal system to give smallholders the tools to assure the integrity of their products and to create a credible label or market to communicate this integrity to the consumers. Meetings held with farmers and stakeholders over the past three months indicate that farmers are desperately looking for alternative systems.

The momentum is no longer just with a few agencies, trainers and NGOs, but with the farmers themselves, and this means that it has a real chance to develop. One of the most significant developments of the last few months is the founding of a national body for PGS in South Africa.

At a meeting of stakeholders in the Western Cape, PGS South Africa, a network to support, co-ordinate and develop PGS in the region, was formally constituted. Members of active and developing PGS groups met and accepted the PGSSA Constitution, elected a Management Committee and adopted the IFOAM definition of organic agriculture as well as the PGS definition as foundational principles of the association.

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The Chairperson of PGSSA is Konrad Hauptfleisch, IFOAM PGS Committee member. Other members of the Executive are Prof. Raymond Auerbach of Rainman Landcare Foundation, a long-standing IFOAM member, Ms. Sicelo Kunene of Organic Spaces, and Ms. Liz Eglinton of Bluesky Organics.

Founding members of the association are:

- Live Unplugged, a farmer co-operative system for local markets and national networking has adopted PGS as its primary guarantee system.
- One of the most prominent CSA systems in the country, Abalimi Bezekhaya, working with nearly 3000 growers in the Cape townships.
- In the Southern Cape, the Eden PGS was formed after a seminar given to stakeholders at the Nelson Mandela Metro University. They have also joined PGSSA and will be working closely with Live Unplugged.
- Bryanston Organic & Natural Market PGS
- Stellenbosch Organic Farmers Market PGS, and
- Live Unplugged Swellendam

At a recent organic sector road show held in the Cape Province, PGS was presented to the delegates, and was met with huge enthusiasm. A member of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture was overheard to say: "At last! This is what organic agriculture has been waiting for!"



There is increasing support for PGS coming from government; both from a trade and agricultural perspective, and this can only be good news.

Despite the apparent inability of South Africa to get its formal regulatory framework for organic agriculture in place, it is clear that the grassroots are moving ahead with a momentum born out of real need and a true commitment to organics. This is PGS in motion – once this train gets up to speed, there will be no stopping it – nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come and, for the South African organic sector, that idea is PGS.

## Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



### ...AFRICA

- **East Africa:** The follow up to the Regional Cooperation for Organic Standards and Certification capacity in East Africa (OSEA) project, OSEA II, has been approved by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and implementation started last December. The project includes a PGS component and will promote the development of PGS in East Africa, while coaching emerging and existing initiatives, such as those carried out by NOGAMU, in Uganda. A first meeting took place in Arusha in January to plan the various project activities.



### ...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **Bhutan:** The [Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative](#) (SJI) is interested in PGS as a part of the “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) movement promoted by the Government of Bhutan. The Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) has been in touch with this group and is planning a ten day interactive program in 3 to 4 locations in Samdrup, a province adjoining the two Indian state’s of Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal [Darjeeling area].. For more information, contact Miguel Braganza: [braganza.miguel@gmail.com](mailto:braganza.miguel@gmail.com)
- **India:** On 31 Jan. and 1 Feb. 2011, 23 participants deliberated at the Eco Certification workshop held at Keystone Foundation, in Kotagiri. They discussed sustainable collection of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and reviewed the various certification schemes used to certify NTFPs, including PGS. Participants agreed that the Ministry of Environment and Forests should promote and recognize the diversity of approaches on sustainable NTFPs extraction and guarantee systems, like PGS. A set of recommendations are being forwarded to the national process from this workshop. For more information, contact Matthew John ([mathew@keystone-foundation.org](mailto:mathew@keystone-foundation.org)).



### ...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Italy:** PGS is gaining interest from consumers and media in Italy. Many small initiatives, usually involving organic non-certified producers and community supported agriculture groups (Gruppi d’acquisto solidale), have been promoting participatory guarantee, through local farmers markets and box schemes. The Italian newspaper “il Manifesto” has recently published a page long article ([8 Jan. 2011](#), p.16) by journalist Claudio Magliulo, entitled “Unsustainable Organic”, denouncing corruption and other problems related to certification practices and costs in the organic sector, with particular emphasis on the Mexican market. The author discussed the reasons why producers look for alternatives to third party certification and the benefits they obtain by joining a PGS.



## ...LATIN AMERICA

- **Andean Region:** The project Agricultura Familiar Agroecológica Campesina (AFAC) of the Andean Community (CAN), funded by the Spanish cooperation (AECI) and implemented by [GALCI](#), just came to an end. Started in 2010, the project included a PGS component under which local market strategies were developed and PGS were highlighted. This year, CAN will work on new proposals to continue the work of the task force and implement the main recommendations. For more details, contact Patricia Flores. ([patriciafloresescudero@gmail.com](mailto:patriciafloresescudero@gmail.com))

## Imprint

The Global PGS Newsletter is published monthly. All PGS-related articles are welcome. Please send your articles for submission in English, French or Spanish to [pgs@ifoam.org](mailto:pgs@ifoam.org). Deadline for submission of articles is the 30th of each month for the following month's issue.

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