



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

To whom it may concern

**Object: IFOAM urges the government of The Philippines to recognize Participatory Guarantee Systems as valid certification systems for the local organic market.**

Dear Sir or Madame,

Greetings from the IFOAM office!

First, we in the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) would like to commend your efforts for supporting the passage of the Organic Agriculture Law. We are very pleased that the government of the Philippines is seriously taking up organic agriculture as a means to promote health, provide food and livelihood for many impoverished farmers and as a tool to fight the changing climate and diminishing biodiversity.

We welcome the intent and the overall content of the Organic Agriculture Law which aims to promote organic agriculture development in the Philippines and we believe that the law provides an adequate framework for the segment of organic agriculture that is market-led and export-oriented. However, the law does not provide a favorable framework for the development of organic agriculture among small and marginalized farmers, for the growth of the local internal organic market nor for the involvement of consumers. By restricting organic labeling only to producers who can afford to be certified through third party certification, the law will de facto exclude from the organic movement (and statistics) a number of farmers that have been producing organically for many years and have built successful relationships within organic farmers associations and / or with consumers.

IFOAM encourages different and complementary approaches to guarantee organic products towards the consumers. One such approach is Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), also sometimes called Participatory Certification. PGS exist for many years in various parts of the world, and are being strengthened and promoted by IFOAM. Participatory Guarantee Systems 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. They represent, in a way, a case of second party certification whereby the leading role is taken by associations of farmers and consumers. PGS has been well defined at the international level: they are characterized by common key elements and features, while presenting a good potential for local adaptation to the needs of the stakeholders. In all five continents, PGS are demonstrating their effectiveness in building the capacity of and empowering organic farmers, educating and involving consumers, and ultimately proving the perfect tool to encourage a participative development of organic agriculture locally. Based on these advantages and on the educational efforts of IFOAM, PGS are now gaining fast recognition around the world. Several governments have passed or are drafting organic laws and regulations which are

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favorable to PGS. This can be done either by allowing PGS-certified organic farmers to use the word “organic” on their products, or even by recognizing PGS as a valid certification option for the internal market. The Brazilian organic law is a particularly good model in this regard.

IFOAM believes that, especially in countries with an emerging organic market, small farmers who have been practicing organic agriculture should have the right to sell their products as organic and should not be prejudiced just because they cannot afford to pay for third-party organic certification. When producers and consumers take part in the organic certification process they gain trust and confidence and transparency becomes a key to ensure the integrity of the organic products. Failing to recognize this will further marginalize and criminalize the small farmers who must be encouraged instead to practice organic agriculture.

We understand that the law has already been passed and that your country is now in the process of constructing the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). In this light, we are urging the government and the persons-in-charge of the drafting of the IRR to consider the following suggestions:

- Recognize PGS as a valid option for organic agriculture certification for the internal market. PGS are indeed a certification system and also deliver organic certificates to their certified producers.
- Ensure that PGS-certified products can be sold as organic.
- Recognize and legitimize organic producers certified through PGS and include them in whatever governmental support will be granted to all organic producers.
- Amend the law as soon as possible to include the recognition of PGS.

We encourage you to visit the PGS section of the IFOAM website ([http://www.ifoam.org/about\\_ifoam/standards/pgs.html](http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html)) where you can find a wealth of information regarding PGS, and we remain at your disposal for any further question or assistance in this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact our PGS coordinator at [pgs@ifoam.org](mailto:pgs@ifoam.org).

With best organic regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Katherine DiMatteo'.

Katherine DiMatteo, IFOAM President