

Updates on Participatory Guarantee Systems worldwide.

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## The IFOAM PGS Committee says: Thank you, TOA Team!

As a generous present for the IFOAM 40 years anniversary (The Global PGS Newsletter, April 2013), all members of the IFOAM PGS Committee were invited to Bangkok, Thailand, to hold an in person meeting in the framework of the [International Forum on Innovating Alternative Markets](#). The two-day committee meeting was very productive, allowing for important discussions to take place, for example regarding IFOAM's PGS strategy for the next years. Some of the results will soon be communicated through this Newsletter.

The event created many opportunities for the members of the PGS Committee to interact with like-minded groups and individuals, to discuss alternative ways of promoting food security, sustainability and well being, in Asia and around the world. As Alice Varon (IFOAM PGS Committee member from the USA, North America) said: "It was quite gratifying to share my own PGS experience, learn from the Forum participants about their own unique challenges, and understand that even in such different contexts a PGS approach can help us create solutions."

Various organizations contributed to this forum but it is important for us to recognize the dedication of and express our gratitude in particular to the hard-working Towards Organic Asia (TOA) team: *Hans van Willenswaard, Wallapa van Willenswaard, Thanapol Kheolamai, Rita Phetphudphong* and *Vin Loc Van*. Eva Torremocha (IFOAM PGS Committee member from Spain, Europe) highlighted "the capacity they demonstrated to bring actors from diverse places, horizons and with diverse concerns, to gather, discuss and work together. To see civil society organizations such as IFOAM, URGENCI and La Via Campesina working together is really encouraging!"

Thank you, TOA Team! And a big "thank you" goes also to all the participants of the forum, for the challenging questions, stimulating discussions and fresh ideas for cooperation.



From left to right: PGS Committee members Marc Lewis (SA), Mathew John (India), Alice Varon (USA), Chris May (NZ), Eva Torremocha (SP), Jannet Villanueva (PE) and PGS Committee secretary Flavia Castro.

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# PGS at the Organic Symposium in Bangkok 2013

By Cornelia Kirchner, IFOAM Value Chain and Programs Assistant



From 10-11 May, an “Organic Symposium” was held in the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center in Bangkok, organized by the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand. PGS was a prominent topic in the event, particularly on the second day, which included sessions held in the framework of the International Forum on Innovating Alternative Markets towards Food Security and Food Sovereignty. IFOAM was well represented throughout the event: the IFOAM President Andre Leu was one of the keynote speakers and all members of the IFOAM PGS Committee attended, participating as panelists in some sessions.



IFOAM President Andre Leu at the opening ceremony of the Organic Symposium

Andre Leu’s speech on PGS was inspiring, focusing on the importance and the potential of peer review, a concept that is essential in PGS. He argued that governments regularly question the reliability of peer review for quality control in the agricultural sector, even though the concept is already widely and successfully adopted in other sectors such as scientific research, medicine and the legal profession. Another one of the key arguments he presented was that a good peer review system, in addition to serving as a tool for quality control, also delivers extra services and in particular it contributes to a continuous improvement of the systems and practices adopted.

The PGS Committee members participated in a panel

discussion in which they shared their experiences with the audience comprising mainly of participants from Thailand and countries from the region. Kesang Tshomo, from Bhutan, Chomchuran Boonrahong from Thailand and Pham Min Duc from Vietnam, all involved in PGS initiative at different levels, completed the wide range of PGS country experiences shared in the session.

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The event was a good opportunity not only to disseminate information and raise awareness on PGS, but also to deepen interactions with the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement. URGENCI, the International Network for CSA,

also participated in the event and organized sessions with representatives on experiences of CSAs in Asia. Joy Daniel from India, also involved in PGS, was part of this panel, together with Etona Orito from Japan and Shi Yan from China.

The presentations were complemented by World Café sessions, where all participants had a chance to brainstorm and discuss about PGS and CSA, as well as Organic Agriculture, and about how these topics can be related to promote benefits that are shared by farmers and consumers.



Participants during the International Forum on Innovating Alternative Markets

Finally, the event was a great opportunity to increase awareness and acceptance of PGS in Thailand and Asia. But it was particularly important to deepen the relationship and create synergies within the PGS movement in different regions and with the CSA movement that shares many goals and challenges with PGS.

# CSA and PGS: the approach of Little Donkey Farm

By Fang Zhong, Research Director & Assistant to GM of Little Donkey Farm ([zhongfangpoli@gmail.com](mailto:zhongfangpoli@gmail.com))



Founded in 2008, as the producing-teaching-research base of Renmin University of China, with the collaboration of local government in Haidian District, Beijing, the Little Donkey Farm (LDF) is now considered a model for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and an active promoter of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in China. LDF Farm believes that organic farming can be a practical solution for rural development in China, suitable for the 500 million Chinese farmers who in general own a small piece of farmland, often less than one acre.

In order to gain the support of consumers and citizens, LDF initiated a CSA program in 2009. The customers can choose to subscribe a vegetable box or grow vegetables in their own rented plots on the farm. In 2012, more than 1000 members subscribed the vegetable boxes, and the consumers managed over 400 planting plots.

Even though organic agricultural standards are followed in the farm, LDF never applied for organic certification. The farm produces vegetables but also meat (chicken and pork) and eggs. PGS have recently been considered as an efficient and convenient alternative to guarantee the organic quality of the produce and to gain the customers' trust, building on the good basis of the CSA. For a small farm like Little Donkey Farm, which only supplies the local market, third-party certification would lead to costs that are difficult to bear. Instead, by involving citizens' in the

box scheme, farming and other activities on the farm, the whole producing process becomes very transparent and more accessible to the public, without increased costs.

Besides the idea of using PGS for the development of a better business model of the CSA farm, LDF aims to promote PGS also at the national level. In the 4th CSA conference held end of 2012, the National Ecological Agriculture Network was launched by LDF and 10 other similar farms/cooperatives. With the support of IFOAM Asia Representative Zhou Zejiang, LDF began to improve record keeping systems in the farm and to study possibilities to implement a PGS. The main difficulties

found at this stage are that for the individual farmer, keeping records can be big challenge, while for the cooperatives, it is not easy to maintain the quality of various products from different farms.

Recent attention from the mass media, both domestic and international, has helped to build recognition and contributed to increased trust between the farm and the citizens. On 23 May 2013, IFOAM PGS Coordinator Flávia Castro visited LDF and had a meeting with the farm staff to present the work IFOAM is doing to promote PGS, examples of how PGS is implemented around the world, among others. The participants in the meeting had a chance to ask questions and clarify their understanding of PGS as to how it could apply to their own context. As a like-minded organization, LDF is looking forward to becoming an IFOAM member in the near future.

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The young staff team of the Little Donkey Farm

## PGS Project funded by IFAD is launched in the Pacific

*This article was published as a media release by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) on Tuesday, 11 June 2013. For more information, contact: Ashley R. Gopal, Media & Communications Assistant - IACT, Land Resources Division, SPC, Suva, Fiji (Tel.: +679 337 9492; email: [ashleyg@spc.int](mailto:ashleyg@spc.int)); or visit the SPC website at [www.spc.int](http://www.spc.int)*

A group of organic practitioners from Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Palau and Vanuatu were trained to facilitate the development of organic participatory guarantee systems (PGS) to provide a credible organic guarantee to consumers seeking organic produce. This will be done through the direct participation of farmers and consumers in the organic guarantee process, and is based on recognized standards for organic production.



Launch of Project: Left to Right – Sant Kumar, President Fiji Organic Association; Ropate Ligairi, Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Ministry of Primary Industries, Fiji Chief Guest; Samu Turagacati, Representative of Secretariat of the Pacific Community; Sakiusa Tubuna, IFAD Sub Regional Coordinator.

The training, which concluded on 7 June 2013 in Nadi, marked the first activity of a project funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and implemented by the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The aim of this project is to enhance the access of Pacific smallholders to high value markets by obtaining appropriate and recognized organic certification and support. During the training, participants completed action plans for implementing PGS in their home countries that will be supported through the IFAD project and POETCom activities.

One of the participants, Ahling Onorio, Manager of Kiribati Organic Producers, said that the first step will be to raise awareness of PGS and of the importance of organics for small islands, which depend not only on the land but also the sea for their livelihoods. The action plan for Kiribati includes meeting with the Abaiang Island

Council to discuss plans for PGS and seek their blessing for the work. It also involves undertaking training on producing virgin coconut oil and sugar from coconut sap so that these value-added products can be included under the PGS and open up new sources of income for producers.

Cicia Island in Fiji's eastern Lau Group intends to be certified under PGS so that produce from the island can be marketed under the 'Organic Pasifika' PGS certification. This will be done with the full engagement of the communities and youths on the island.

The training enabled participants to work through the theory and practice of PGS, which included fieldwork and mapping of farms, as well as peer inspections of organic papaya farmers in Sabeto, Fiji. The peer inspections are at the heart of PGS and involve growers undertaking the organic inspection of other growers' farms, much as scientists peer review each others' work to ensure standards are high and that any issues of concern are not overlooked. According to Stephen Hazelman, POETCom Organic Extension Systems Officer, peer reviews are an important part of training in the certification system. "This is where real development and innovation happen – farmers learning from each other, sharing knowledge and seeing for themselves what works and what doesn't work on farms. It is much more meaningful than seeing something on a demonstration plot or just being advised that something works," he explained.



Participants from Fiji and Samoa discussing elements of Pacific Organic Standard with trainer Chris May

In summing up the training, the Executive Chairman of the Rotuma Export and Marketing Company, Hiagi Foraete, said that passion and commitment to organics was required. 'Traditional structures will be used to ensure the organic guarantee along with peer reviews and training activities. The passion will come from recognizing the environmental benefits to future generations that our actions today will have,' he stated.

Around 30 participants attended the training. POETCom is the peak body on organic agriculture for the Pacific region, and its secretariat is based at SPC with funding support from the European Union-funded IACT project.

## AFSP is over but the PGS updates will continue!

Starting from this issue, the IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter becomes a bimonthly publication. From now on, our subscribers will receive updates on PGS worldwide every two months, instead of each month. This change is related to a reduction in the total resources ear-marked for PGS within IFOAM: as the HIVOS funded project "Agriculture and Food Security towards full Sustainability" (AFSP) successfully came to an end in March 2013, the specific support that had been granted in the past three years for publishing the PGS Newsletter will not be available anymore. The PGS Team is thankful to HIVOS for the support provided in the past years and for creating the opportunity of developing this publication.

We take this opportunity to reassure our subscribers and readers that the IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter will continue to bring you interesting articles, information and worldwide updates on a regular basis, especially as you continue to send us your contributions and feedback. The next issue will be published in August 2013, and all contributions are welcome from now on until July 26, 2013. Articles and short news, including pictures and details of the authors should be sent to [pgs@ifoam.org](mailto:pgs@ifoam.org).

**The PGS Team is thankful to HIVOS for the support it provided in the past years and for creating the opportunity of developing this publication.**

## Continental news: What's new in...



### ...Africa

**Tanzania:** From 2-4 July 2013, the proponents of the IFOAM OSEA II Project in partnership with the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) are organizing in Dar es Salaam the third East African Organic Conference under the theme "Sharing achievements made and lessons learned". The conference will bring together organic stakeholders to share experiences learned since the launch of the East African Organic Products Standards six years ago.

The conference will report on the implementation of the East Africa Organic Products Standard and the East African Organic Mark and the growth of organic market, as well as introduce new aspects of organic production such as aquaculture and PGS, among others. The registration form and other related documents are available on <http://www.ifoam.org/en/events/east-africa-conference>. For more information, please contact Jane Albert from the TOAM Secretariat via email ([janealbert777@gmail.com](mailto:janealbert777@gmail.com)) or telephone (+255-787 133 133 or +255 758 974 037).



## ...Asia

**China:** On 24 May, a PGS Workshop was organized by Shared Harvest, one of China's greatest CSA practitioners, and Beijing County Fair, one of the biggest farmers' markets in China was held in the Center of Citizen Education of Nanguan Park in Beijing. Flávia Castro, IFOAM PGS Coordinator was invited to discuss PGS with the participants and present IFOAM's work. The organizers selected 50 from the almost 100 received application forms, as the space for the event was limited. The applicants had different backgrounds such as finance, economics and media, but there were also many farmers and consumers. Shi Yan, the founder of Shared Harvest, hosted the workshop and provided interpretation. The audience was very active and continued the discussion after the 2 hours of workshop. There is obviously a strong common vision to promote the local development of PGS and to further develop a healthier, balanced and sustainable agricultural system in China. For more information, please contact: Wang Yong, Shared Harvest, Beijing ([wangyong824@126.com](mailto:wangyong824@126.com))



## ...North America

**USA:** On June 10, Oregon State University held a forum on Certification Options for small-scale farmers. The five panelists represented Oregon Tilth, Demeter Certification (biodynamic) and **Certified Naturally Grown**. CNG option was ably presented by a local CNG farmer, Suzanne Porter of Big Lick Farm, who managed to make the most of her trip by conducting an annual review of another CNG farm on her way to the forum.

## Imprint

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