

Good Market PGS annual General Assembly and organic community gathering



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Good Market Sri Lanka is a nonprofit social enterprise founded in Sri Lanka in 2012 to support an emerging new economy that is good for people and good for the planet. Good Market operates a weekly market and an organic shop in Colombo.

In 2013 the Good Market Organic Participatory Guarantee System was started by producers and consumers who wanted to support small-scale farmers in Sri Lanka who grow organically out of personal conviction but cannot afford the cost of third-party certification. The objective was to improve their market access and make organic products more affordable and accessible.

The Good Market PGS is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit initiative without external funding. The PGS is being incubated under the social enterprise, but it has a separate bank account and management committee.

Recently, Good Market has also set up an online platform to promote local producers find better markets and build stronger relationships among consumers and producers. It is brought to life by an amazing community of vendors, partners, and supporters and a small team handles day-to-day operations and provides community support.

The Annual General Meeting of Good Market PGS was held on 2 November 2017 in Colombo. The Good Market PGS members, composed of PGS certified

farmers, volunteers, technical pool members (qualified agronomists who support farm visits), consumers and supporters, came from various parts of the island to join this gathering. Participants showed their outstanding commitment to the PGS community by travelling all the way to the capital, despite the heavy rains and storms that were striking the islands during those days.

Annual progress of Good Market PGS in terms of number of new certificates issued and milestones achieved such as presence of IFOAM OWC in India, were presented and discussed during the gathering and members approved the annual report.

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Achala Samaradivakara
- Co Founder and
Director of Good
Market at the Genral
Assembly of Good
Market

Additionally, the financial support received from a leading national certified organic coconut producer “Cocomi Bio Organic” to organize farm visits and farmer trainings was very much appreciated by the members.

The gathering was also a moment to reunite the multitude of people currently involved in developing innovative organic produce for local consumption; it created the opportunity for them to meet in person and discuss future steps to keep the organic momentum going in the country. Seed saving, compost production, accessibility to certified organic inputs, farmer trainings and new market opportunities were widely discussed and identified as essential issues that need to be addressed for

moving forward. Therefore, it was decided to engage in the future in different activities such as seed saving networks, organized in local groups according to climatic conditions with the support from the PGS coordinator of the Good Market PGS secretariat. The PGS technical pool agreed to research the availability of certified organic inputs on the islands and afterwards to recommend them to farmers. Existing compost producers agreed on organizing farmer trainings on their farms to teach them about compost production.

At the end of the meeting participants returned to their homes refreshed with hopes to make the organic sector in Sri Lanka flourish, strengthening further the Good Market PGS community.

Red de Mercados Agroecológicos de Bogotá-Región: Towards sustainable agrifood systems in Colombia



By **Adriana Chaparro**, Professor of Agroecological Engineering at UNIMINUTO, Bogotá. achaparro@uniminuto.edu.

The *Red de Mercados Agroecológicos de Bogotá-Región* (RMABR) is a network of agroecological markets that was officially established in 2016. Currently, there are 10 member organizations: 3 farmer’s markets (Feria Agroecológica UNIMINUTO, Mercado Agroecológico Tierra Viva and Mercado Agroecológico Campesino), 5 home delivery

services (ALaCena, La Canasta, Semilla Andina, Agrosolidaria Engativá, Sembrando Confianza), Econexus In Situ, and Slow Food. There are about 200 producer groups or individual producers, and nearly 2000 families in Bogotá who are also involved. Members and participants often share the roles of market organizers, producers and consumers.



Members of the Agroecological Markets Network of Bogotá-Region.
Source: RMABR Archive, 2017

These different organizations have already been promoting sustainable food production and consumption at different levels, in particular through agroecological markets, in this area of Colombia for a few years. Some of them had developed and were implementing their own Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), using the agroecological markets as the main market channel for the producers involved. The idea of forming a network developed from the need to strengthen these markets, through the collective construction of knowledge and practices, as well as through awareness raising activities towards civil society and the government. The activities of RMABR focus on increasing the visibility of the members of the network and their role in contributing to sustainable agrifood systems for food security and sovereignty, the benefits of which should be shared equally by producers, consumers and nature as a whole.

A study was conducted in 2016 to come up with sustainability indicators needed to assess the performance of the different markets, in order to develop common guidelines. The results of the study showed a significant gap in terms of conversion to more sustainable agricultural practices. Given the pedagogical and didactic benefits provided by the alternative certification systems, we decided to move towards a common PGS, to be adopted by all the members of the network: the RMABR PGS started to be implemented at the end of 2017.

This PGS provides the network with a tool to ensure that the producers involved are “agroecological” or are in the process of transition. But it also promotes responsible consumption, local fair trade and a solidarity economy.

The certification is only available for the producers selling at one of the markets that join the network.

A farm review, or certification visit, takes place once a year for each producer, involving at least 3 persons: the producer who is being certified, the promoter of one of the markets where the producer is selling, and a third person, ideally another producer or a consumer. At each certification visit, the participants decide if the production system assessed is “agroecological” (in the sense that it complies with the definition and principles of agroecology and the RMABR PGS), “conventional” (does not comply with the definition and principles), or is “in agroecological transition” (partially meets the definition and principles, and there is a willingness to meet them all). The results are transmitted to the PGS Committee of the network and each market is responsible for issuing the corresponding certificates. In case of non-compliance with the principles of agroecology or of the RMABR PGS, there may be different categories of sanctions, decided upon by the PGS Committee. In addition to the farm review, a one-year agroecological transition plan is normally foreseen, as there are always things to be improved and learned.

By the end of 2017, 19 farm reviews for participatory certification had been carried out, of which 37% were certified as agroecological, 21% were found to be in agroecological transition and 21% were identified as conventional. The revision of the remaining 21% is still pending. The main challenges at the moment refer to the certification of producers that process raw materials and manage livestock. Transition to sustainable agrifood systems is made difficult by obstacles such as difficult access to seeds and seedlings and to adequate feed for livestock. For 2018, the RMABR plans to further strengthen the pedagogical, certification and support processes for the agroecological transition of the RMABR PGS, with support from the UNIMINUTO’s Agroecological Engineering program.

Inspirational stories from PGS farmers in Laos and Cambodia



By **Cornelia Kirchner**, IFOAM – Organics International,
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IFOAM - Organics International visit Mr. Keo's farm, Cambodia, September 2017

On their small farm in rural Cambodia, Mr. and Mrs. Keo grow organic vegetables that they sell to local consumers in Phnom Penh. To guarantee that the vegetables are organic, they use PGS for verification. Organic farming has changed the lives of the Keo family. Not only have they paid back pre-existing debts, but since they converted to organic farming they are now able to send their five children to school and even saved enough money to build a new house. Most importantly the family now has plenty of healthy organic vegetables to eat all year around.

The story of the Keo family is not an exceptional one, many organic farmers around the world have similar success stories to tell. Local organic markets are growing worldwide. This provides opportunities for local consumers to obtain fresh nutritious food, but also has much potential for small farmers in developing countries to improve their livelihoods.

IFOAM – Organics International has been promoting PGS as a tool for local market development for many years. In 2017 with support from a FAO-funded project we visited PGS farmers and other stakeholders in Laos and Cambodia to interview them and to collect their stories. The results are now ready: five inspiring PGS stories, two of them also available as short videos.

You can read all [stories](#) and watch the videos of [Mr. and Ms. Keo](#) and of [Ms. Bouchan](#) on our [PGS video and media library](#).

Soon the stories will be complemented by a larger publication titled: “Why invest in PGS? Examples and stories from Cambodia and Lao PDR” that puts the stories into context. We will keep you updated.

A European educational project to explore the synergies between PGS and Community Supported Agriculture.



By **Federica Varini**, IFOAM – Organics International, f.varini@ifoam.bio



Around the globe, organic farmers, consumers and facilitating organizations have been developing different innovations aiming at building local food systems based on solidarity and participation such as PGS and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives.

PGS and CSA are similar in their overall objectives of improving livelihoods of organic producers and increasing access to safe and nutritious food for consumers.

Both PGS and CSA enhance transparent and shared decision-making processes, prioritizing a solidarity-based approach where the responsibilities for implementing sustainable agriculture practices are shared by the community.

In the spirit of **Organic 3.0**, IFOAM – Organics International aspires to ensure transparency and integrity beyond third party certification, recognizing innovative solutions to guarantee fair and organic standards implemented by the very farmers and consumers they serve, encouraging direct

participation and the sense of collective ownership. For this reason, IFOAM – Organics International has recently started a project, with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, to develop and test a new educational training program for adult learners focused on building truly sustainable short value chains through PGS and CSA approaches in a European context.

Education Towards the Creation of Alternative Food Systems (EATingCRAFT): is a partnership between several European organizations: **Urgenci**, **Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete (HU)**, **Nature et Progrés (FR)**, **Pro-Bio-Liga (CZ)**, **Miramap (FR)**, **Agroecopolis (GR)**.

The 2-year project was launched in October 2017 and will produce a training program articulated in 4 modules, along with a trainer toolkit that will be published online on the project's website. Each module will be tested in three European countries: Czech Republic, Hungary and Greece. The ultimate objective is that by the end of the project, these countries will have built the tools and the capacity necessary to set up pilot PGS initiatives.



Kick-off meeting of the EATingCRAFT project, Prague, October 2017

Europe does not have a regulatory environment conducive to PGS, and only third party certified products are allowed to be labeled 'organic'. European PGS-certified producers, unable to make organic claims on their products, rely on their tight connections with their consumers, often an integral part of the PGS itself. This is the reason why, despite the legal obstacles, PGS initiatives are spreading also in Europe as complementary tool for certification particularly suitable for those groups of producers and consumers pursuing more meaningful relationships between production and consumption.

During this project, we will research the synergies behind PGS and CSA systems. On one side, we want to explore the ways PGS can contribute to the CSA approach offering a system to ensure quality and a

continued improvement of practices. On the other side, we will showcase examples of how CSA can inspire PGS in building a robust solidarity economy and cultivate relationships between producers and consumers. Eventually, this project will also be an opportunity to create a network of European PGS and to learn and share local experiences and challenges at international level.

PGS and CSA, two movements that have been developing in parallel rather than jointly, have a lot to learn from each other. We will let you know more about the project in the coming months. If you want to learn more about EATingCRAFT, visit the project [webpage](#) and join our project team at the next [Urgenci International and European Meeting](#) in November 2018 in Greece.

CONTINENTAL NEWS: WHAT'S NEW IN...

Global

Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP): From 5 to 7 February 2018 the High Level Meeting on Family Farming took place in Lisbon, gathering the Ministers responsible for Food and Nutrition Security of the Member States of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), accompanied by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Agriculture (FAO), José Graziano da Silva, and representatives of 17 million family farmers, 500 civil society organizations, dozens of representatives of the agricultural business sector, universities and research institutions of the CPLP. The outcome of the meeting, entitled “Lisbon Letter”, is an agreement for the valorization of family farming in the Member States of the CPLP. The agreement is based on the voluntary “Guidelines for the support and promotion of

Family Farming in the Member States of the CPLP” approved in June 2017 during the II Extraordinary Meeting of the CPLP Food and Nutrition Security Council. Point 5 of the agreement clearly states the commitment of Member States “to review or establish an appropriate regulatory framework and to support Participatory Guarantee Systems for quality assurance within the CPLP in order to actively promote the qualification and recognition of family farming products”. IFOAM - Organics International had the opportunity to contribute to a panel during the High-Level Meeting, with an intervention by Flávia Castro on the importance of PGS as a tool for market access supporting sustainable family farming. The Member States of CPLP are Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Guiné Equatorial, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tomé e Príncipe and Timor-Leste.

Americas

Colombia: At the end of 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) approved a resolution ([Resolución Ministerial 464 de 2017](#)) establishing the Strategic Guidelines for Public Policies for Peasant, Family and Community Farming. This document provides guidance for local authorities, private sector and civil society for their activities aimed at strengthening and promoting family farming in the country. The approval coincided with the official adoption of the Decade of Family Farming by the General Assembly of the United Nations. These guidelines are the outcome of a process that started in 2014 with an agreement between the MADR and the National Network of Family Farming (RENAF) to establish a working group on Family Farming in the country. Various meetings took place since then, involving over 350 people from local governments and civil society. In June 2017, an international workshop on public policy for family farming took place and the first draft of the document was discussed. This was the opportunity to address three key topics in detail: PGS, rural extension and local public policies. In the final version, PGS have been included under sustainable production systems, one of the 10 pillars for implementation of the strategy. Implementation is starting this year and could potentially impact the discussions on family farming taking place at the regional level through the Latin American and Caribbean Community (CELAC) and Mercosur. For more information please contact Pedro Guzman from RENAF at info@agriculturafamiliar.co.

establishment of PGS and organic production nationwide. This meeting is part of the activities that have been realized under a broader project in the Greater Mekong Subregion aiming at strengthening regional policy framework and capacity for enhanced market access of safe and environmentally friendly agri-food products. Read the full article [here](#).

Philippines: At the end of 2017, PGS Pilipinas, the country-wide alliance of PGS practitioners and advocates, released a video showcasing the benefits of PGS among small-scale farmers and producers in the Philippines. Watch the video [here](#).

India: “Bhoomi KA - India for Eco Food” is an initiative that seeks to link all people in the food supply chain. They help smallholder farmers to farm ecologically, getting a PGS certificate, taking the surplus to a retail chain and creating a market for them by sensitising consumers. In January 2018, in the city of Jamshedpur, this social enterprise organized a master chef competition using PGS certified organic products. Their aim was to make local restaurants and hotels aware of the importance of using local organic produce and to connect their costumers with PGS-certified farmers. Read the full article [here](#).

Asia

Myanmar: On 19 January, a consultation took place on the development of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. This meeting was a chance to discuss the establishment of a National PGS in Myanmar and potential economic benefits for PGS certified smallholders. Senior Officials from the Department of Agriculture were encouraged to collaborate closely with the private sector to support the

Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina: A network of organizations, with the support of Market Makers (a project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by Helvetas), is working to set up a national PGS model. IFOAM - Organics International has been invited to support the process: in December 2017, Federica Varini visited the country to present the concept of PGS, and in January 2018, Flávia Castro delivered a three-day PGS training in Sarajevo to 15 representatives of



the different organizations. Further activities such as capacity building for producers joining the first pilots and networking events, including participation at Biofach 2018, are planned for the coming months. For information, please contact Almir Mukaca (almir@fress.ba) or Sara Saljic (sara@marketmakers.ba).

Germany: On 14 February, within the framework of the Biofach European Congress, IFOAM – Organic International gathered an international panel of PGS practitioners to discuss the current status and future trends of PGS recognition and support by Governments. From Latin America, Laércio Meirelles (Centro Ecologico, Brazil) and Homero Blas (Sociedad Mexicana de Producción Orgánica, Mexico) discussed the trade-off and opportunities that arose from PGS recognition in their countries. Matthew Purkins (South African Organic Sector Organisation) and Anuradha Ranasinghe (Good Market PGS, Sri Lanka)

addressed the topic of designing national and private organic standard together with their national PGS communities.

Uta Assemat (Nature et Progrès, France) explained the challenges of being a PGS certified producer in Europe, where the current regulation forbids them to make organic claims. Last but not least, Bablu Ganguly (Timbaktu Organic, India) discussed the role of the Indian government in up-scaling PGS in his country.

Oceania

French Polynesia: Created in 2012, PGS Bio Fetia has a brand-new website where you can discover interesting information regarding the organic sector in the country. The [map](#) featuring their PGS certified producers is particularly interesting. The PGS today involves 18 producers and create partnerships with 7 retail shops across the island.

Imprint

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome at any time. Please send your PGS-related articles in English, French or Spanish to pgs@ifoam.bio.

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