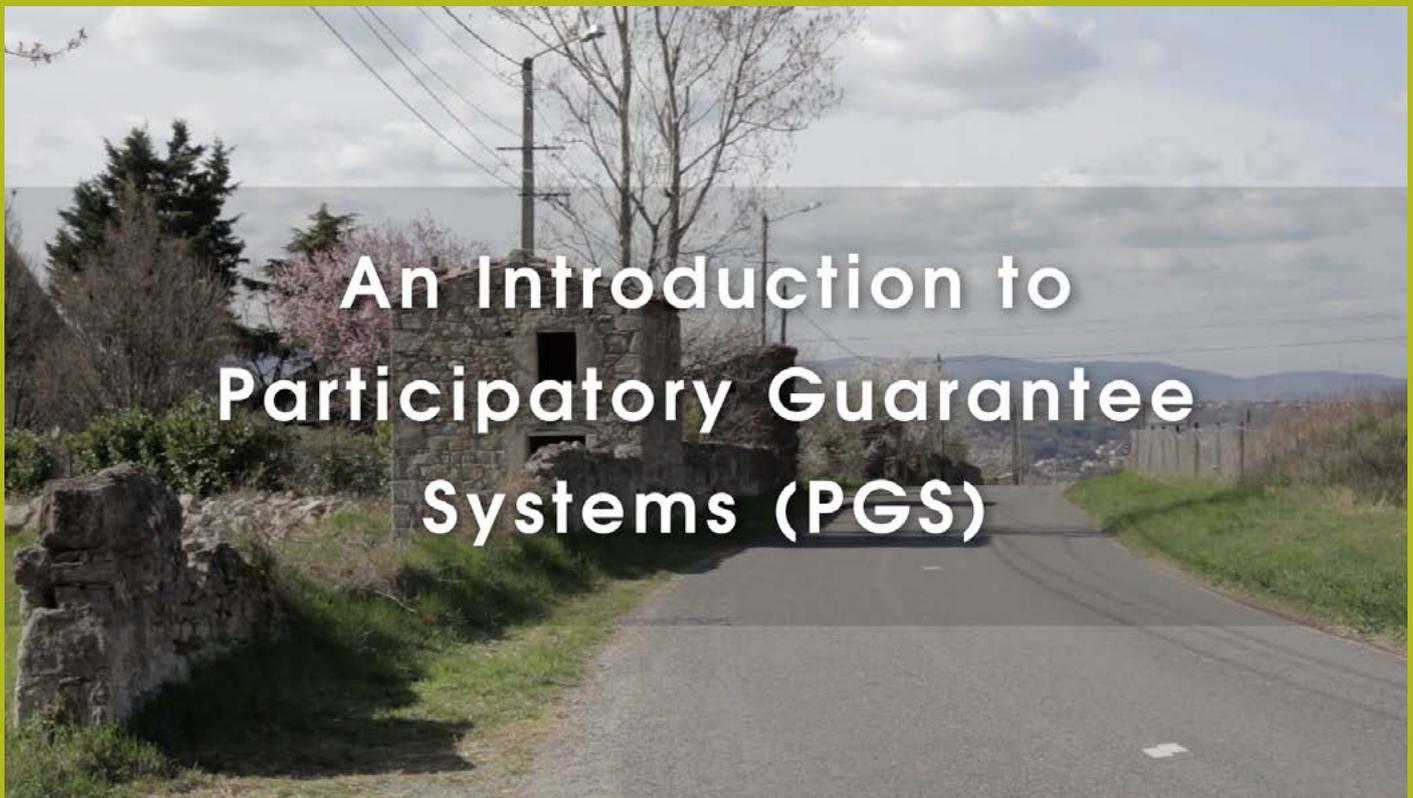


PGS Video – short version available now

By the PGS Team of IFOAM – Organics International



In February this year we released the one-hour documentary “A guide to Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture.” In the meantime the material was compacted

into a shorter eight-minute version summarizing the main messages of the video. This new video called “Introduction to Participatory Guarantee Systems” is now also available on our PGS portal and our Youtube Channel. Please feel free to use the video to spread the message about PGS.

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PGS in India – Current Status and Going Forward

By Ashish Gupta, Member of the PGS Committee of IFOAM - Organics International and former Secretary of PGS Organic Council, India.



Institutional support to PGS

India is among the most advanced countries developing and creating awareness about PGS. Through a voluntary framework for the domestic market, PGS are now endorsed by the central government through a mechanism called the *Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna*¹ (PKVY). It is the first time in the agricultural history of India that the government is taking such a strong and effective position in sustaining and supporting economically PGS and the organic sector. During the year 2016-2017, the government has assigned 4.12 billion Rupees (about 55 million Euros) to support the organic sector and assist PGS to get the necessary such as labels, packaging, training etc.

The PKVY-PGS mechanism is implemented by the National Center of Organic Farming (NCOF) under the Ministry of Agriculture. In India, PGS started with the intervention of domestic NGOs, FAO and the government in 2006. From 2006 to 2011 the NGOs took the lead in implementing PGS at the local level, through the **PGS Organic Council (PGSOC)**. Since 2006, the PGSOC successfully established the system in various parts

1 Traditional Farming Progressive Scheme

of India. Despite its limited resources, it was able to support 220 groups of farmers, involving a total of 7,000 small and marginal farming families, that cultivate over 8,800 hectares of land. Farmers also got an opportunity to interact with consumers in events such as Biofach in India. Currently the PGSOC tries to bring more farmers into its own network as well as to merge their system with the PKVY-PGS scheme by officially registering new and existing groups with the government. In July 2015, the Indian Ministry of Agriculture launched a **PGS Portal** with detailed information on producers, local groups and institutional structures participating in the program and it also provides product-to-farmer traceability for consumers. The platform makes accessibility ubiquitous, allowing farmers to register from all over India. The number of farmers under the PKVY-PGS scheme is growing since it was launched in 2011. After the PGS website was published in July 2016, the statistics available online indicate the existence of 1,458 PGS groups in India, certifying around 36,000 farmers, with 35,000 hectares under PGS management. If we add the additional PGS grouped only under PGSOC, India becomes the country with the highest PGS footprint in the world.

Successful example

One of the regional councils of the PKVY-PGS program is the Chetna Vikas Swarajya Trust, located in District Bulandshahr, in the Uttar Pradesh state. The PGS group



PGS farmers groups interacting with consumers at Biofach-India



Mr. BB Tyagi at his farm - Chetna Vikas Swaraja Trust

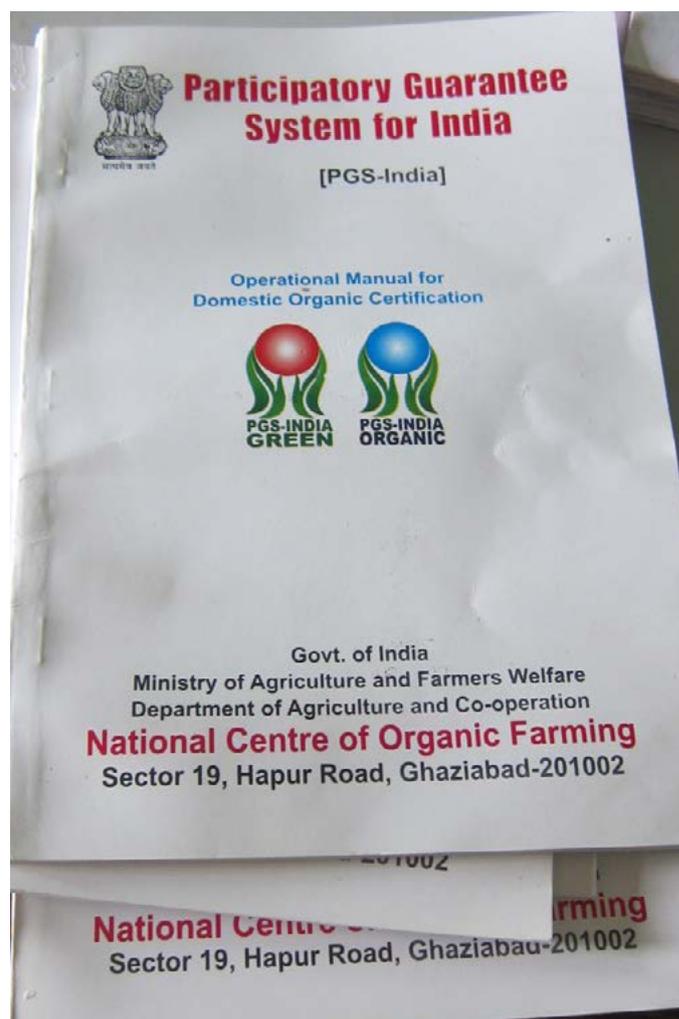
is coordinated by the Tyagi family. The head of the family, Mr. Bharat Bhushan Tyagi, is a gentleman farmer, who has a deep spiritual connection with his occupation. The group currently involves 70 peasant families and has a land bank of about 58 hectares. They have started to brand their products with the PGS label in order to have better market access. Currently, the group trades spices, flours, oils, vegetables, fruits and sweeteners. The farm is an example of an integrated system, using traditional cow and bull breeds, such as Haryana Desi and Rathi. Advanced agricultural practices are put into practice in order to ensure good yields (the cumulative yield per hectare of the farm is 30-40 tons). Among the techniques implemented there are different combinations of intercropping systems with seasonal and annual crops, vegetable and root crops and cereal and leguminous plants. Agroforestry with Burmese Teak is also implemented and a variety of organic fertilizers, are added in order to sustain and improve soil fertility. The overall goal of the PGS group is to earn 700,000 to – 900,000 Indian rupees per hectare (about 9,500 to 12,000 Euros). Such turnover will allow the group to sustain their families while being enough competitive on the market.

Challenges and strengths

When observing this kind of example, of which several similar exist across India, it is not difficult to realize that sustainable agriculture can be productive and profitable. However, Indian organic farmers lack extension support and research on small-scale organic farming, in different agro-environmental conditions is scarce. Thus, the PGS scheme still has to face many challenges

and improvements in the years to come in order to be fully successful. For example, the PGS platform is currently in English, while it would be important to include local languages as well. Also, the PKVY scheme is unable to support all farmers across India, therefore some groups are left alone in organizing and financing their training and activities.

Despite the challenges, the way towards a stronger multifaceted organic sector is paved. According to Dr. Krishan Chandra, current Director of National Center of Organic Farming (NCOF), the government is planning a systematic intervention to convert clusters of villages into Bio-Villages under the PKVY-PGS scheme. Simplifying the PGS registration process to allow farmers easier access into the database will allow clusters of small and marginal farmers to use the system to create a sustainable value chain within their villages and scale up their markets. As of 11th August 2016, the government has opened one PGS shop in the capital city New Delhi and assisted farmer under PKVY-PGS to connect with other market and value linkages as well. For such reasons, in the coming years, it will be important to watch out for the progresses of this scheme, since it might play a key role in improving livelihood in India.



PGS Manual for Implementation in India

PGS Support Measures in the Philippines

By Blesilda M. Calub, University Researcher and Program Coordinator, Organic Agriculture Program (OAP), University of the Philippines Los Baños & and Rowena A. Buena, Technical Officer at MASIPAG.



The promotion of organic agriculture in the Philippines looked bright when the [Republic Act 10068](#), also known as the Organic Agriculture Act (OAA), was legally enforced in April 2010. Organic agriculture supporters and farmers, who started the movement in the Philippines in the mid-80s, were enthusiastic because organic agriculture was becoming one of the national priority programs of the country. An institutional budget was earmarked, allocating at least 2% of the annual budget of the Department of Agriculture (DA) for implementation of organic agricultural programs. Additionally, in order to help farmers to access the market, subsidies for certification fees and other support services to facilitate organic certification started to be provided.

However, the enthusiasm of some organic supporters turned into anxiety reading Sections 17 and 26 of the OAA, which state that *“Only third party certification is allowed to be labelled as organically produced. [...] mislabels or claims that the product is organic when it is not in accordance with the existing standards for Philippine organic agriculture or this Act shall, upon conviction, be punished by imprisonment of not less than one month nor more than six months, or a fine of not more than Fifty thousand pesos, or both, at the discretion of the court.”*

The immediate question of many organic farmers when they came to realize the implications of such statement was:

“Why are we, who take steps to care for the environment and human health, by not using synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, the ones who can end up being fined and imprisoned? While, those who use agrochemicals can do as much damage as they want without fear of any law that would constrain them?”

As consequence of this law many smallholder farmers² have been hesitant to fully adopt organic agriculture. Also many farmers, who were already implementing organic agriculture, soon realized that third party certification was too expensive for them and the documentation needed was too complicated, given their limited time and in some cases, education. The law has slowed down the rate of adoption of organic agriculture among farmers and even some farmers who had already converted to organic agriculture, reverted back to their conventional methods because third party certification caused financial and bureaucratic burden.

However, the prohibitive law mentioned above, was softened by the allowance of a two years transition phase, before enforcing the mandatory implementation of the 3rd Party certification. *“During the transition period, the 1st Party and 2nd Party, the community based and participatory guarantee systems side by side with 3rd Party Certification shall be recognized. [...] During this period, labelling of organic products shall be based on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Party Certifications”* (OAA Implementing Rules and Regulations, 2010).

Thus, the Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary, in coordination with the National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB), issued an Administrative Order to implement the first transition period from April 2010-2013. In January 2013, a few months before the Administrative Order expired, MASIPAG, a non-government organization of farmers and scientists, which initiated the PGS movement in the Philippines, held a PGS conference to discuss among others how to strategize a request for extension of the transition period. Mr. Andre Leu, President of IFOAM - Organics International, was invited to be the Guest Speaker in that conference. He also joined the group of key advocates of PGS including MASIPAG to request NOAB and the DA Secretary for a second extension which was finally granted from 2013 to 2016.

Recent developments

The decision of NOAB is not a guarantee but only a short-term solution. In order to change the situation, PGS Pilipinas, a nationwide network of PGS initiatives and advocates prepared a [position paper](#) to urge the members of the House of Representatives and Senate to amend

² Note: about 85-90% of farmers in the Philippines are smallholders with an average land holding of 0.5ha.

the Organic Agriculture Act and remove the provision of Section 17 that allows only third party certification. This is in order to pave the way for the law to allow other forms of organic quality assurance like PGS. However, the new changes in the political scenario of the whole country (new President, new Congress, new Department Secretaries and down the line) are both a challenge and chance for PGS Pilipinas and require a pro-active engagement in defining strategies and opportunities on how to position PGS in the national organic agriculture agenda.

The Organic Agricultural Act, passed in 2010, has now been in effect over 5 years thus it is due for a sunset

review. This could be a good opportunity to propose amendments for improvement including the aspect of certification and PGS.

The most recent success for PGS Pilipinas' advocacy efforts has been the decision by DA and NOAB during the National Organic Agriculture Congress and 1st PGS Pilipinas General Assembly of Nov 2015, to convene a Technical Working Group (TWG) to establish a Philippine National Standards (PNS) for PGS. Two TWG meetings have already been held to draft the PNS for PGS within 2016. Public consultations on PGS are being planned in each of the three main island groups of the country.

A taste from the Spanish National PGS Meeting

By David Vasconez, PGS Á Gavela, translated from Spanish by Federica Varini



From 16 until the 18 June 2016, Á Gavela PGS hosted the Second Spanish National PGS Meeting, which took place in parallel to the VI International Congress on Agroecology, hosted by the University of Vigo, Spain. These are some impressions from one of the organizers.

A step forward

During these two days of the meeting we felt that our slow collective march towards a more sustainable society was vigorously alive and that a contagious enthusiasm has been lingering throughout the conference. Several PGS activities and other grassroots movements from all over Spain have come together to share challenges and excitement in equal parts. Numerous were the subjects we discussed: the juridical legitimacy of the PGS as a tool for alternative organic certification, participatory sustainability, criteria and procedures of certification, engagement of consumers with producers and networking activities between PGS.

Agroecology and empowerment of grassroots movements Although PGS is not recognized as a voluntary scheme for organic certification here in Europe, its legitimacy is safeguarded by all the people who work together to implement the values laying the basis of PGS. PGS is embedded in the holistic approach promoted by agroecology and by the pioneers of the organic movement, constantly paying attention to all actors and to the different connections that compose our complex

food chains. Food sovereignty, direct participation, trust and transparency are values that generate sustainability and justice according to the PGS approach. For these reasons PGS does not need a legal framework in order to be endorsed by the civil society. Being a grassroots initiative, PGS is a tool to implement the empowerment of communities through the enhancement of collective responsibility.

Legal issue on the way

A long part of the discussion focused on a common problem that different PGS initiatives are increasingly facing when they claim their products are organic or "agro-ecological"³. Almost all PGS groups in Spain call their products "agro-ecological" but recently lawsuits by private producers and certifiers against farmers using this term have increased. The current European Regulation is designed to ensure the integrity of the value chain, especially when there is great distance between the producer and the consumer and the third party certification is indicated as the only legal tool of quality assurance.

Many of us share a feeling of frustration and anger being prevented to use the term agro-ecological to describe our products. We feel deprived to use a term that belongs to our philosophy due to the constriction of laws. The conclusion of the debate at our meeting was a generalized positioning of self-defense and reaffirmation about the use of the term "agroecological", and the necessity to underline how this term goes much further than the definition of organic agriculture, currently represented by the EU regulation.

³ In Spanish organic agriculture is called *agricultura ecológica*.

Engagement and participatory sustainability

During the meeting we have screened the film “A Guide for Participatory Guarantee Systems” produced by IFOAM - Organics International in 2015. This educational documentary shows different examples of PGS around the world. The movie has been the starting point for us to discuss about participatory sustainability, one of the biggest challenges of PGS initiatives. Understanding and embracing diverse needs and individual capacities of every person involved in a PGS, nourishing the educational dimension and creating opportunities for satisfaction, without forgetting fun and festive moments, were some of the key elements highlighted as necessary to achieve an adequate level of positive participation inside a group.

Moreover, we have discussed the engagement of consumers and the enriching possibilities that originate from the relationship with producers. Consumers are a key component of PGS, they can help with organizational tasks, help farmers in their work, support the producers by

sharing risks and much more. To rethink the engagement between producers and consumers will help to achieve more sustainable consumption and production pattern.

Eco-feminism

The concurrence of the PGS meeting with the IV Congress of Agroecology in Vigo was not a coincidence. In both events, many proposals to reinforce the eco-feminisms paradigm were presented, an essence of the agroecological movement. One of the most interesting issues discussed during the meeting was the importance of the affective-emotional dimension inside participatory approaches and the necessity to build tools enabling interpersonal and collective relations, as a means to feel the empathy necessary to help and understand the other people involved inside your PGS.

The meeting ended in a symbolic collective hug, shaped as a ring. Next stop: Madrid, autumn 2017.

PGS development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) – Updates from the ADB funded PGS project

By Chris May, Bioglobal Consultancy



Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and China are the 6 countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion where the Asian Development Bank (ADB) since 2013 is funding a project implemented by IFOAM – Organics International

to build PGS capacity and to establish PGS pilots. Project activities began in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos and activities in Cambodia, Myanmar and Guangxi Province in China commenced later. In 2015 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) also started to work with us on PGS in the region and to fund PGS development activities in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar complementary to the ADB-funded project. The development and status of PGS differs between each country reflecting their different cultural, political and economic situations. Overall the agencies, buyers and farmers linked with the projects have embraced the PGS model and are they are making good progress.

Cambodia

Activities in Cambodia were launched with a National Workshop in October 2014. Over the past 12 months, 4 PGS pilot groups supported by the project have been initiated, with the coordination of Caritas at Battambang; Natural Agricultural Village (NAV) at Sa Ang; the Center for Organic Development (COD) at Bak Kheng Commune near Phnom Penh and by CEDAC in the Relar Saraung District. These organizations are supporting the establishment of each PGS group as well as supporting or providing markets for the PGS products. Overall there is now strong support from both government and the private sector for the development of PGS to be used as a tool for supporting quality assurance initiatives to improve farmer’s income and ensuring food safety. The next step will be to create a national coordination body that will help support new PGS initiatives and help to link the initiatives in a coordinated way.

China – Guangxi Province

In May 2016, IFOAM – Organics International organized a PGS training to support two existing pilots in the Mashan



PGS farm visit

and Nong Lyn Districts of Guangxi. Pilot 1 is a professional cooperative with 40 households producing corn, vegetables and pigs and participating on a monthly basis in the Nanning farmers Market. Pilot 2 is also a cooperative with 70 households. They are involved in participatory rice seed breeding (traditional varieties) and produce paddy and ducks. The Centre for Chinese Agricultural Policy (CCAP) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences with financing from OXFAM are providing technical support for the development of these PGS pilot groups.

Myanmar

Since the project activities were launched with a National Workshop in October 2014 was followed by technical support visits in 2016. The Myanmar Organic Growers and Producers Association (MOGPA) is driving the development of PGS providing enthusiastic support and coordination to several different PGS pilots. MOGPA also organizes a weekly organic farmer's market in Yangon. At this time there is at least 4 PGS pilots groups in various stages of establishment, covering a variety of products including vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, coffee and rice.

Thailand

Thailand has an established and expanding organic sector that is growing by about 18% per year. The IFOAM-ADB project supported two separate PGS initiatives. The first is in collaboration with the Thailand Organic Agriculture Foundation (TOAF), where the team of IFOAM – Organics International provided training for the team and templates for the documentation of PGS activities. TOAF later received funding support to promote PGS in Thailand and they now have several pilots throughout the country. The second initiative is with Lemon Farm a private sector (social enterprise). IFOAM – Organics International provided training and documentation for 1 pilot, but Lemon Farm has now expanded their model to another 8 sites. Lemon Farm provide technical support to the PGS and also provide the market (in Bangkok) via their

14 organic stores and cafes. Visiting a Lemon Farm store and cafe is essential for anyone passing through Bangkok.

Laos

PGS in Lao PDR falls under the management umbrella of the Department of Agriculture (DoA) based in Vientiane. There are 3 PGS pilots in Xieng Khouan (about 70 producers, selling vegetables on local markets); Houaphan (5 villages with wild harvested bamboo shoots carefully dried to high standard) and Savannakhet (about 5 producers, selling vegetables on local markets). Initially the IFOAM ADB project and now the DoA were providing support to the PGS pilots. DoA has also undertaken various training programs to promote PGS supported by funding via an LoA from ADB to the Lao Government.

A significant challenge for the development of PGS in Laos is the limited local market demand and the small-scale nature of the private sector actors engaged in selling organic products. At this point in time the most valuable market is for quality dried bamboo shoots, produced in Houaphan Province, that can be sold for a premium price just prior to the Vietnam New Year celebrations (TET). Selling into this market can double the Lao farmer's income.

Vietnam

Vietnam has the longest history of PGS development in the GMS. The first PGS initiatives began near Hanoi in 2008 supported by Agricultural Development Denmark Asia (ADDA - Danish NGO). The IFOAM-ADB project followed a similar model and provided technical support to Action for the City (NGO) and the Department of Economics Hoi An to develop and then expand PGS pilots in Hoi An (now at least 2 PGS groups). In addition, a pilot was initiated by the Vietnam Organic PGS Group with IFOAM-ADB project support in Tan Loc Commune, Hao Binh Province in 2015. Recently ADDA started a new project to help strengthen the framework for marketing and production of organic agriculture together with Vietnam Organic Agriculture Association (VOAA) as main partner. VOAA is gradually developing as the coordinating body for PGS in Vietnam. Overall, Vietnam is well equipped with strong technical support from the Vietnam Organic PGS Group and there is a growing market for PGS certified products with several active retailers. One retailing company Bac Tom (with 7 stores in Hanoi) is now in the process of sourcing PGS certified dried bamboo shoots from a PGS pilot group (Houaphan Province near the Vietnam border and just a few hours drive to Hanoi) in Lao PDR. This situation is very interesting as it raises the opportunity for PGS certified product from one country to be recognized on a market outside their national borders.

Continental News: What's new in...

GLOBAL: In 2013–2014 FAO performed a survey to study innovative approaches where market demand can drive small-scale initiatives to supply local markets with sustainable agricultural products. The results of this study has been recently published with the title: “Innovative markets for sustainable agriculture: How innovations in market institutions encourage sustainable agriculture in developing countries” (Loconto et al., 2016). PGS, together with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Multi-actor innovation platforms, are recognized as exiting tool for institutional innovation. Five PGS case study are presented: Bolivia, Colombia, India, Namibia, Philippine and Uganda. You can download the PDF [here](#).

AMERICA

PERU: Although the national organic competent authority does not recognize PGS in its regulation, it has promoted more than 11 initiatives and there are various regional authorities that have officially recognized and supported PGS. To date, PGS is implemented in 10 regions of the country, often with the support of the local governments. On 6 April 2016, the regional government of Hancavelica has approved a regional regulation to recognize PGS as alternative tool to achieve sustainable development and to foster organic agriculture in the region among small-scale farmers. Another important achievement for the PGS network in Peru is the finalization of the certification process of 180 farmers who are part of the Ayacucho PGS, located in the Ayacucho region. Read the full article in Spanish [here](#).

USA: On 6 October, in the framework of the 6th annual conference of the Development Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association, hosted by Cornell University, there will be a special panel on “Certification

Regimes and Ethical Consumption”. In this occasion, Allison Loconto, from the French National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRA) and Maki Hatanaka, from the Sociology Department at Houston State University will talk about PGS and alternative ways of defining, measuring, and assessing sustainability. For further information visit the [website](#).

ASIA

PHILIPPINES: Two pieces of news from the dynamic Philippine PGS movement:

1. PGS Pilipinas, MASIPAG, Quezon PGS and PGS Nueva Ecija joined a Workshop Meeting on the Development of PGS Guidelines conducted by the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS) in Tagaytay City on 29 June. MASIPAG and PGS Pilipinas are members of the Technical Working Group formed by BAFS, aiming at developing the guidelines together with other organic agriculture stakeholders.
2. In the Philippines many local governments are supportive of PGS. On 5 July PGS Lanao del Norte - Iligan was launched in conjunction with the Kapatagan Municipality's 2nd Agri-Aqua and Livestock Fair. The PGS group also awarded the certificates to the 1st batch of farmers who passed the PGS inspection and evaluation process. The development of this PGS was initiated by the former mayor of the municipality of Kapatagan Benjie Baguio. Present at the event were also the Governor, Vice-Governor and Congressman of the Province of Lanao del Norte, who vowed to support the initiatives of the farmers and expand PGS in many municipalities in the Province.

Visit the [Facebook page of PGS Pilipinas](#) to learn more and stay updated with developments in the country.





INDIA: The next Organic World Congress will take place from 9 to 11 November 2017 in New Delhi, India. We expect PGS to take a prominent role at the event. Be aware that the deadline to submit papers expires already on 30 September this year. Please consider submitting a paper and get a chance to present your PGS initiative at the Congress. More information about the call for paper and requirements can be found [here](#).

AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA: Bryanston Organic & Natural Market (BONM) recently published an educative booklet for consumers about PGS. The booklet gives a good introduction to PGS, organic principles and the market. The BONM is inspired by the biodynamic philosophy and serves as an example of a PGS initiative established on an existing organic market. The PGS has been established in 2005 and today consists of 20 smallholder farmers from Gauteng and Limpopo who regularly supply the market in Johannesburg with fresh produce. You can download the BONM PGS booklet [here](#).

BURKINA FASO: In July, an article about PGS was published on the website of Tinga Neere, an NGO that promotes agro-ecology in the Sahel region in Africa. The article presents the case of NAPAM BEOGO, a PGS in Burkina Faso, and the involvement of soy farmers in an agroforestry project together with APAF (Association Promoting of Fertilizing Tree) during the season 2015-2016. The various activities of the project mainly involved producer awareness campaigns about the value of agroforestry and technical trainings for producers on implementation and maintenance of agroforestry systems and monitoring of the activities. You can find the original article in French [here](#).

EUROPE

CZECH REPUBLIC: Urgenci, the international network for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) will hold its 3rd European Meeting in Ostrava, Czech Republic from 16 to 18 September. PGS is also on the agenda. Please find more information about the event [here](#).

Imprint

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