

# New PGS map online: PGS Initiatives worldwide

By the PGS Team of IFOAM – Organics International



IFOAM - Organics International and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have developed a global online platform to display PGS initiatives

on a world map. The platform was designed in the framework of a half-year FAO project that aimed at building inclusive and efficient agricultural food systems through the implementation of PGS in Laos PDR, Cambodia and Myanmar.

One of the aims of the new map is to help PGS groups to market their products more easily by linking them to consumers and potential buyers. The map is also a resource to learn about PGS initiatives around the globe and it will help IFOAM - Organics International to collect data from PGS initiatives. PGS groups can easily submit new and updated information using an online form. The Global Map of PGS Initiatives is complementing the PGS Statistics Map, which displays for each country the number of PGS initiatives operational and under-development and the number of involved and certified producers.

Through the Global Map of PGS Initiatives:

- **Anyone interested to learn about PGS** can find information about the various PGS groups and initiatives by selecting a certain country or clicking on a region and zooming in on the map. Potential buyers can search for specific products they look for using the text search function;
- **Organic producers, certified through PGS**, can be featured upon provision of information about which type of organic food they are producing, the contact person and the location to buy their products. Over time, they can add, update or submit any relevant information.

Local PGS groups can submit information about their PGS directly, by filling an online form. Alternatively, a Facilitating Organization supporting one or more local PGS groups can submit information about multiple groups using an excel template.

Currently, the entries displayed in the map do not mirror exactly the information contained in our internal PGS database, since we decided not to display those initiatives for which we don't have any specific contact person and/or a precise location. Now that the map has been launched, we ask PGS initiatives around the world to help us make the platform as comprehensive and up do date as possible. Please send us updated information about your existing PGS groups and submit data about initiatives that are not yet on the map. Together, we can develop this map into a powerful tool to strengthen PGS around the world.

You can explore the map here and submit information about your PGS group here. We recommend having a look at the User Guide before starting to use the map. For any further information you can contact our PGS Team at [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio).

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# DemeterLOCAL: Participatory certification in Biodynamic® agriculture in the USA

By Federica Varini, PGS team at IFOAM – Organics International



*From a chat with Jim Fullmer, co-director of Demeter USA we learned that the Demeter association in the US is working with groups of farmers in different parts of the country to establish a participatory certification program. Their efforts in supporting participatory certification, described in this article, adds a new element to the complex and varied global PGS mosaic.*



Jim Fullmer

*Demeter represents and unifies the biodynamic movement, whose philosophy is inspired by the lectures of Rudolf Steiner: *Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture* (1924). Overall, Demeter represents 5,000 farms, with nearly 150.000 hectares in more than 50 countries. On the global level Demeter is organized as Demeter International, a worldwide network of independent national Demeter organizations. In order to become a member of Demeter International, the national organizations must implement a Demeter certification program based on the international Demeter certification standards for production and processing. Currently, the federation has 18 full members and 5 guest members (guest members support the objectives of Demeter International, but do not run a certification program).*

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All products marketed with the Demeter trademark must be produced according to the International Demeter Standards. Demeter International runs an International Accreditation Council to develop procedures for the harmonization of Demeter certification programs worldwide and an International Certification Office, to organize certification of farms/operations in countries without their own Demeter organization. Usually independent certification bodies certify Demeter products.

In the USA, Demeter was formed as a non-profit organization in 1985 and now certifies 300 farmers. Recently, Demeter USA has started to establish a participatory certification program for the growth of regional biodynamic foodsheds<sup>1</sup>. The program began in the years 2013-2014 under the name DemeterLOCAL. Since then three pilot projects on participatory certification were launched in Colorado, Tennessee and California.

This idea of participatory certification is not completely new in the global biodynamic movement: in the Netherlands, already in 2008, the biodynamic association and the Demeter certification organization had established the so-called Farm Talks. Designed as a methodology for collectively observing and discussing specific challenges, Farm Talks were initially conceived as a possible alternative to third party certification. However, the method was considered not suitable for inclusion in the accreditation for Demeter certification in 2013. Nevertheless, Farm Talks still go on as a practice to provide farmers with means for knowledge exchange and personal development.

In Brazil, since 2010, the Biodynamic Association has been working with smallholders to set up PGS following the Demeter International Standards. The Biodynamic Association received official PGS accreditation by the Brazilian government in October 2011 and since then is allowed to use the national organic logo on their PGS certified products. Today the Association includes 53 biodynamic producers divided in 5 PGS local groups located in the States of São Paulo and Minas Gerais.

Demand for biodynamic food in the US outstrips supply and there is a shortage of biodynamic farmers. Demeter USA first regarded the establishment of participatory certification as a **tool to educate farmers and to draw new ones**. DemeterLOCAL started as a program to spread education and knowledge on Biodynamic practices among farmers, giving them the opportunity to meet and learn from each other, which is often more effective than learning from consultants and agricultural extensionists.

<sup>1</sup> A **foodshed** is the geographic region that produces the food for a particular population. The term describes a region where food flows from the area that it is produced to the place where it is consumed.



*1st Farm Inspection with Jim Fullmer  
(Six Boots Collective-Nashville, TN)*

Farmers in DemeterLOCAL are organized in groups and one of the founding criteria of DemeterLOCAL is that the food that is produced by the group must be kept within

the local foodshed, and must be sold within a 200 mile radius of the farm. Like in the PGS approach, DemeterLOCAL groups can include not only farmers, but also consumers, educators and other stakeholders interested in biodynamic farming. The groups can take different forms and design their own organizational set up according to local characteristics and needs. Regardless of the different shapes, the **Demeter Biodynamic Farm Standard** forms the basis of the system, serving as guideline for farm improvement and for participatory verification.

The PGS pilot projects in Colorado and Tennessee are examples of a **farmer-to-farmer model**, where producers in a rural community form a group and work with each other to exchange knowledge and verify that the standard is being met, based on the peer review approach.

The pilot in California differs from the classic PGS model, as the role of peer farmers in the verification process is limited. Instead consumers with agricultural skills and knowledge are recruited to visit and evaluate the farmer according to the guideline standard. This is happening in the context of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) where consumers have a close relationship to the farms and pay for a share of the anticipated harvest; which they will periodically receive once harvesting begins.

A third form, (a pilot is being developed with the support of the Maharishi University in Iowa) follows a model where an educational institution organizes a curriculum in Biodynamic agriculture and utilizes interested local farms as a site for field classes to teach Biodynamic agriculture. Students can visit these farms and apply their knowledge about the biodynamic standard to assess farmers' practices and then write their report for the certification office.

Biodynamic certification through a participatory approach is possible because in the USA, Demeter is the owner of

the trademark terms "Biodynamic®" and "Demeter®" and it is not regulated by the organic authorities. If the farmer wants to market his/her produce as biodynamic, the report of the farm visit is submitted to the central Demeter office, where it is reviewed and verified whether or not the Demeter Standard is met. Once all the necessary information is obtained, Demeter decides for or against the certification. In the positive cases, a Demeter certificate is issued and Demeter reserves the right to send out an inspector to perform third party verification. Once a farmer is certified, the same policies & procedures as for any Demeter member apply; regardless of the type of inspection re-certification must take place on an annual basis.

Though less expensive, the annual basic fee is \$300 per farm, in addition comes a licensing fee that depends on the gross sales, i.e. 0.5% of the gross sales above \$100,000 per year, to set up of this type of initiative requires a lot of time and human resources. The members of the local groups involved in organizing the system usually work on a voluntary basis and they need to be trained concerning biodynamic practices, farm review procedures and also group decision-making. The Tennessee local group for instance, recently began to look for grant funding for the group's startup costs, especially to support the communication with the public about the value of Demeter certification, and to pay a coordinator to organize inspections, trainings, and to be the main contact with Demeter USA.

Even though Jim admits that there are still many challenges, especially when thinking how to scale-up the program, he concludes:

**"The States are the new world: a culture that initially displaced the native populations and now is a melting pot of many cultures. While this is a process of defining itself as a collective culture, it also is a fertile ground for new and cutting edge ideas. A participatory model of education and verification has much potential in such an environment."**

Learn more about DemeterLOCAL from the website of **Demeter USA**.

# Sustainable Organic Agriculture in Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte, Philippines

*Extracted from the: 'A Report on the State of Sustainable Organic Agriculture in Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte' (2016) by Ralyn S. Manuel, Project Evaluation Officer II, Municipal Planning & Development Office, Local Government Unit of Kapatagan, Lanao del Norte, Philippines.*



Kapatagan is a town of 54,000 inhabitants in Lanao del Norte, Philippines. It is a member of the League of Organic Agriculture Municipalities (LOAM-Philippines) with the mission of leading the promotion and implementation of sustainable organic agriculture programs in the country.

The PGS was set up to address the difficulties that small-scale organic farmers have in getting access to third party certification. Kapatagan with technical assistance from MASIPAG, started to prepare the ground for setting up a participatory certification system. In order to encourage like-minded institutions to participate in the PGS, Kapatagan funded a three-days PGS Orientation Training & Installation in November 2014 and a three-day Farmer Inspectors' Training in August 2015.

Kapatagan made a formal statement to become an organic municipality in 2008 when the local government realized that conventional farming is not suitable to address poverty issues and the challenges posed by climate change.

The PGS was declared operational in July 2016, with seven farmers certified through the scheme, covering a total of 20 ha. The PGS Iligan-Lanao del Norte is composed of several farmers associations, Non-Governmental Organizations, church-based groups, three Local Government Units and a civic organization. The success has been made possible not only through the support of the municipality and the active participation of the committee members, but also thanks to the contribution of the member organizations, who have given their financial support.

The adoption of Sustainable Organic Agriculture (SOA) in Kapatagan, however, started long before, between the late 1990's and early 2000 supported by the Catholic Church through the Social Action Center (SAC) of the Diocese of Iligan.

## PGS and Rice Production in Kapatagan

In 2014, Kapatagan initiated the establishment of a PGS initiative in Iligan-Lanao Norte in coordination with MASIPAG. The municipality allocated Php 100,000 (around 2,000 Euro) for the development and installation of the PGS in the area. This was part of the Agricultural, Coastal, Environmental Resource Development Program (ACERDEV), started in 2010 and funded with an average of Php 1.5 million a year (around 28.000 euro).

Within its support to organic production, the municipality of Kapatagan has decided to place special focus on organic rice production. One of the major challenges that restrain small-scale farmers from adopting sustainable organic agriculture in rice cultivation is the land tenure issue. In many cases, farmers do not own the land they are working on, thus they are not free to decide which farming practices they want to adopt. Landowners usually are skeptical about organic rice cultivation, due to intense labor and lower yields.

The municipality of Kapatagan owns two hectares of rice land and decided to convert them to organic production. Dalagang Bukid and Black Rice varieties are grown, which are among the rice varieties most commonly grown organically by small farmers. This is expected to be a showcase for the surrounding farmers to demonstrate that growing organic rice is not only possible but also profitable.

MASIPAG has assisted the local government with its long experience in organic rice selection and arranged



PGS Iligan-Lanao del Norte



PGS Committee members with Dr. Chito Medina, MASIPAG National Coordinator

cropping trials managed by farmer associations, which have lead farmers to identify their top 10 rice varieties from the original 50.

To ensure that organic rice sold in the market is not contaminated with synthetic chemicals, the town of Kapatagan has built a rice mill with a solar dryer and a warehouse solely for organic rice, investing 3M Php (55,500 euro). Part of the funds were provided by the local municipality, while the rest was sourced from the 2014 Bottom-up Budgeting Program in partnership with the Department of Agriculture. Moreover, to ensure the availability of organic fertilizers and other organic farm inputs, an organic fertilizer processing facility was built with an investment of 4.5M Php (83,000 euro).

In July 2015, through the adoption of the MASIPAG Farmers Guarantee System, three rice farmers have

obtained certification. And many more are now interested in joining the group.

### Program continuity

Convinced by the principles of sustainable organic agriculture, the new Mayor Hon. Barry Y. Baguio is committed to continue what former Mayor Atty. Benjie Y. Baguio started during the previous administration.

Among his priorities for this year are:

- Realization of a program called “organic FAITH” (Food Always In The Home) which aims at the establishment of vegetable gardens for all town employees, community members and schools and
- Increase the production of organic fertilizer and the production of organic rice and make the Kapatagan Institute of Organic Agriculture and Industry fully operational.

## PGS in West Bengal, India

*Adapted from an article by Joe Hill, Visiting Faculty at Department of Rural Management, Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi. The full article can be found in the Jharkhand Journal of Development and Management Studies here.*



Market development, especially of domestic markets, continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing organic agriculture in India. Creation of producer-consumer relationships, sufficient supply, product variety, and fair prices are important for stimulating demand.

### The project

The NGO Society for Equitable Voluntary Action (SEVA), based in Kolkata, West Bengal started the Vikas Kendra project in 1985, focusing on rural development. In 1991, 100 farmers were selected in 10 villages of North Parganas district and they were helped to convert to organic farming. Four years later, another 100 farmers were brought into the project. By 1998 the farmers began

to encounter problems in selling their products. In 2003, SEVA partnered with IIRD (Institute for Integrated Rural Development, one of the leading NGOs in promotion of PGS in India) Maharashtra in order to organize local markets. Their first organic bazaar was set up in Atghara village. Six months later a second organic bazaar was started nearby and three organic markets were organized in Kolkata. However, at that moment, a new problem emerged since, unlike customers in local markets who trusted the farmers, urban consumers were seeking a proof of the organic quality of the products.

In 2005, six members of the Vikas Kendra project were invited by IIRD, for PGS receiving. That was the starting point to begin setting up 53 PGS groups, each comprising six farmers (total 318 farmers). Each group is divided into two peer groups that consist of farmers that visit each other to check the organic cultivation practices. The PGS groups are organized into ten larger Jaiba Krishak Sangha (Organic Farmers Associations), which meet on a monthly basis. SEVA has translated the organic standards of OFAI (Organic Farming Association of India) into Bengali and provides it to all the members. In addition, it was necessary to raise the awareness about standards implementation and to facilitate visits between Kolkata-based consumers and organic farmers. Four new PGS groups were added in 2015, giving a total of 342 small farmers, which are now following organic principles to grow vegetables, pulses, paddy rice and oilseed on about 35.5 acres (14.4 ha) of land.

## The farmers' views on PGS

An award-winning farmer, Nirapada Biswas, has received 5,000 rupees in 2005 and 10,000 rupees in 2013 as prize money from the West Bengal government. He had begun organic agriculture in 1991, at a time when he was suffering from a blood disease that had bloated his entire body. His doctor had told him he would have died and thereafter he had decided to stop using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In 2005 he joined a PGS group, to



Nirapada on his organic vegetable farm during the monsoon season of 2015

reach those markets where consumers seek a guarantee label. Nirapada explains that organic vegetables are easy to identify, because they are rough and dull, whereas chemical produce is bright and fine. Nirapada claims that running a household through organic farming is possible and not so difficult. He doesn't have any input costs, and gets a good price for his produce, which he sells twice a week on the local market. His wife, when asked, says that their family has had no need for a doctor in two decades.

## SEVA's experience with PGS

Abdur Rahaman, who is in charge of SEVA's Agricultural Department, says that the low cost of the PGS process appeals to farmers. By having small PGS groups, i.e. of six farmers, the control of the PGS process is easier. He said that, over the years, up to a 100 farmers had been expelled from the PGS groups for using chemicals. Samples of the farmers' vegetables had been taken to Kolkata for testing and found to be chemical-free. SEVA has received support from local donations and IIRD; however the West Bengal government has never supported its agricultural work. Despite this, the farmers are still farming organically. According to Abdur, "NGOs have come from West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Bangladesh to learn from us about organic farming, but none knew about PGS. So PGS is needed across India. We ourselves need to know more about PGS."

Finally, in 2016, SEVA secured funding from the government through the programme<sup>2</sup> to enhance traditional farming, being able to start a three-year project to support 100 new organic farmers, organized into two groups of 50 farmers. By March 2016, SEVA had selected farmers in Jangalpur, Panji and Pingaleswar villages where some PGS groups had already been established.

Given the SEVA perspective that PGS groups of six farmers are more suited to the West Bengal context, it remains to be seen how these large groups will function. The same applies to the question of whether government-funded PGS groups will suffer from bureaucracy or over-regulation.

## Challenges and opportunities

The strongest points of the Vikas Kendra's PGS groups are firstly the strictness of the control system for compliance, which has had to exclude several farmers who were not respecting the standards and secondly, their experience accumulated over 10 years of operation. Yet the challenge of sluggish domestic market development still remains.

<sup>2</sup> Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

Nevertheless, SEVA and its farmers have succeeded to produce and supply local markets and markets in Kolkata with a wide variety of high quality, fresh organic products. However, the work of SEVA remains a drop in the ocean since it supports only 579 farming families in a district that has a 10 million population.

Looking at the PGS experience in West Bengala, we have to conclude that organic agriculture in India still has a long way to go. A ten year gap occurred between civil society and the government's efforts to develop a pilot system of PGS (in 2005-06), and the announcement by the central government of its PKVY and other programmes to support organic farming (in 2015). For farmers and NGOs like SEVA, lack of strong support from the government and the slow development of domestic markets is a major challenge.

From the farmers' perspective, PGS is a success providing a suitable system for marginal and small farmers to certify their produce as organic for selling on local and urban markets. These farmers have tiny landholdings and it is encouraging to see that they are living meaningful, dignified lives, earning sufficient income to run their households with positive effect on their health after they stop using chemical inputs. Moreover, thanks to the PGS approach, farmers have developed multiple skills through the several trainings organized by SEVA.

Scaling-up the number of farmers and the area under organic production, and creating new market linkages especially in Kolkata, will be the next level of development that needs to be achieved. For this, it is necessary to raise awareness amongst the middle classes, who can afford to pay a premium for organic food.

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

### ASIA

**THAILAND:** Lemon Farm sells PGS certified products produced by certified small-size organic farms. Lemon Farm will open its 14th outlet in The Walk Kaset Nawamin in October. This social enterprise can be regarded as a pioneering retailer in organic produce, operational in Bangkok for almost two decades. **"PGS is a very good system. It allows us to trace back through the farm process and makes use of social control"**, the managing director of Lemon Farm shops said. The farmers, on the other hand, have hands-on training and can share their knowledge while inspecting other farms. You can read the full article [here](#).

**PHILIPPINES:** The Go Organic Davao City (GoDC) has urged restaurants to serve organic products and to source their supply from the city's growers by promoting the city's own brand of certified organic products. Part of the

campaign is to encourage local restaurants to buy organic products from suppliers certified through the PGSDavao, which is composed by farmers who have been recognized by the city's Organic Agriculture Management Committee and the Department of Agriculture's Technical Committee on Organic Agriculture. You can read the full article [here](#).

### AMERICA

**PERU:** On the 18th and 19th of November, in Ayacucho, the 7th National PGS Meeting of Peru will take place. This event is being organized by the National PGS Council, in coordination with the Regional PGS Council of Ayacucho; led by ANPE Peru<sup>3</sup> and other organizations involved in agroecological and organic agriculture. The

3 Asociación Nacional de Productores Ecológicos del Perú





objectives of the meeting are 1) to create a space for exchanging experiences, reflections and contributions to the development and consolidation of PGS initiatives 2) to understand and analyze progress, difficulties, lessons learned and knowledge developed, and 3) to generate ideas, proposals to guide the actions of PGS Regional Councils, as strategic instruments to consolidate the PGS system in the country. And much more. You can download the program [here](#).

## EUROPE

**FRANCE:** From the 12th to 14th of December in Montpellier, the conference *Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development* will take place. Organized by CIRAD<sup>4</sup>, the conference will be an opportunity to bring together key actors from developing countries and innovators from the

4 Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement

field, from all world regions, to debate about the role of agricultural value chains in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. A special session about Institutional Innovations for sustainable food systems, including PGS, will be held on Wednesday 14th. To learn more about the venue and how to participate, visit this [website](#).

**BELGIUM:** On Saturday, the 19th of November, at the farm Arc en Ciel, 6920 Wellin, a PGS workshop will take place: *From theory to practice*. This training is organized by the *Ecole Paysanne Indépendante*, click [here](#) to learn more about it. Furthermore, in Brussels, on Friday the 9th and Saturday the 10th of December Agroecology in action, an event about the current developments towards a sustainable agricultural paradigm and an ethical food system in Belgium and Europe, will take place. Among the different topics, a workshop on short supply chains and PGS is foreseen. It will be held on Friday afternoon. Click [here](#), to learn more about the event.

## 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@iffoam.bio](mailto:pgs@iffoam.bio).

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