

PGS AND THE SMALLHOLDER MARKETS

Biography

Ashish Gupta is the Vice President of IFOAM Asia and has been on both the Managing Committee and National Steering Committee of the Organic Farming Association of India since 2010. He is also Secretary Managing Committee member of PGS Organic Council. His areas of interest include policy advocacy with state operators, standards especially PGS, small and marginal farmer family sustainability analysis as well as identifying and executing projects related to rural poverty alleviation linked with sustainable agriculture.



Abstract

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is a trust based peer review mechanism providing primary producers greater participation in market access. India has been leading in the promotion of creating and sustaining short supply chain based PGS market system. This not only enhances the overall sustainable agricultural production but also provides the primary producers with a suitable mechanism to convert their trust and honesty to market available requirements. In this paper we study the current status of various markets operating with PGS as a central tool to provide a greater and fairer market access to sustainable primary producers. We studied the last 3 years of data from various organizations in the PGS Organic Council, a conglomeration of regional and national Non-Government Organizations (NGO) dedicated to the cause of ecological agriculture and farmers' rights. These organizations, such as the Keystone Foundation, Mahagreen, OFAI and the Pan Himalayan Grassroots Foundation, Timbuktu Collective etc., work in various parts of India to promote the cause of PGS. We find exponential growth in the land under PGS, farmer groups and sale of produce. From 2008 to date, the number of local groups has increased in strength by 800%, and sale volume of produce has increased by over 50% since 2011. We also try to show how the markets and distances are panned from the primary producer to the end consumer. Here, however, we find that overall the distance to small local markets and short supply chains is increasing, and the footprint of PGS Produce over long distances is increasing, too. In addition we study the model of how the idea of PGS has enhanced greater community participation and provided for transparency and trust between both the primary producers and consumers. In this paper we first show the model of development of PGS as it exists on the ground, then we provide statistics on land under PGS, overall sales and growth potential. Finally, we discuss the challenges and problems facing the markets as they exist today and discuss possible solutions to sustain and enhance small and short supply chain markets. We conclude that, while short supply chains cater to local markets, the overall surplus volume of produce is leading to longer supply chains as well and that this dichotomy may be addressed by creating many interconnected small markets. This will allow us to keep the overall footprint of food travelled small and manageable.