

Dear members of the OARD Group,

IFOAM is active to facilitate the development of domestic organic markets because they are insufficiently developed. Local markets are essential for the development of sustainable growth of organic agriculture, and for sustainable rural development in general.

Export markets demand huge quantities of standardised, high-quality products. Agro-business companies can cope with these requirements, but a large number of small-scale farmers in developing countries are left behind by globalisation. IFOAM therefore pursues a diverse marketing strategy that strengthens local, regional or even international markets.

IFOAM's view of Organic Agriculture goes far beyond certification.

IFOAM has developed a comprehensive system of Norms¹ and an accreditation programme to promote and develop reliable third party certification. But IFOAM does not see this as 'universal' and not the only tool to describe organic agriculture.

Any system using the methods of Organic Agriculture and being based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture is regarded by IFOAM as 'Organic Agriculture', and any farmer practicing such a system can be called an 'organic farmer'.

IFOAM's mission embraces the 'worldwide adoption' of Organic Agriculture 'in its full diversity'. Part of the full diversity of Organic Agriculture worldwide is non-certified Organic Agriculture.

The IFOAM PGS Working Group

Recognizing the crucial niche that Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) occupy, IFOAM and the Latin American Agroecology Movement (MAELA) jointly hosted an International Workshop on Alternative Certification (now referred to as Participatory Guarantee Systems or PGS) in Brazil, 2004. Some of the key issues for discussion focused on the common grounds between the various systems, and how they could be provided legitimacy.

To provide continuity to the discussions and actions, a Working Group was elected from the participants. The Goal of the PGS Working Group is to *develop, facilitate* and *promote* PGS.

Achieved results and ongoing activities

The first two meetings of the PGS Working Group took place 2005 in Kampala, Uganda, and in Nuremberg, Germany (at Biofach2005). During and between the meetings the members of the Group were active to achieve the following results:

Compilation of a concept paper on PGS

The working Group compiled a Concept Paper on PGS. It describes the background, the philosophy, key elements and key features of PGS. In order to achieve network building on the basis of a widely accepted PGS Concept Paper, the document was recently translated into Spanish and send around to likeminded organizations and stakeholders for consultation (MAELE and other Latin American structures; IFOAM structures like Organic Guarantee System Review Group or Development Forum and also to "TorresWorkshop" Participants).

¹ IFOAM Norms: IFOAM Basic Standards for Organic Production and Processing (IBS) and IFOAM Accreditation Criteria for Bodies Certifying Organic Production and Processing (IAC).



The comments will be gathered and used to improve the paper during the next WG meeting in September this year. You can find the Concept Paper and other related documents on the PGS platform on the new IFOAM web page (www.ifoam.org)(http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html)

The PGS web pages

IFOAM's web site hosts information on PGS. The documents and information material available on this page are part of a constantly evolving and learning process to "develop, facilitate and encourage PGS around the world". The web page provides background documents in English, French and Spanish.

How to find the PGS platform on the IFOAM web page:



Open Biofach Event

At the Biofach 2005 in Nuremberg, the PGS Working Group prepared a presentation on PGS. The title of the presentation was: "Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)", an important tool for local organic marketing. After a short introduction of PGS, the working process of the PGS group and the PGS web pages was presented. This was followed by a group discussion on the PGS concept paper (see above). In the end, the action plan of the group was presented and participants could make suggestions on that. Many participants of the presentation were positive about IFOAM's involvement in PGS and brought in constructive ideas.

Case studies

In order to facilitate and promote PGS worldwide, IFOAM is financing currently the compilation of four selected case studies of PGS. The case studies will describe successful PGS in the southern and in the northern hemisphere. The PGS Working Group defined the structure of the document and IFOAM will organize fundraising to facilitate the publication of the document and its use as a lobbying tool.

Planned activities for the future

Apart from the four case studies that will be published together in one quite comprehensive document of about 50 pages, the compilation of a lobbying brochure is planned for this year. The brochure will be printed in English and Spanish.

In September 2005, the next meeting of the Working group will take place in New Zealand, right before the Organic World Congress (OWC) and the IFOAM General Assembly in Adelaide, Australia. The meeting will focus on further development of the concept paper on the basis of the comments received through the stakeholder consultation and on detailed planning for the up coming year with a focus on targeted promotion and preparation of PGS events during the OWC and the IFOAM General Assembly.

UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD

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A presentation and discussion on PGS (concept paper), a presentation of the case studies and the participation in a side event of the Motion Bazaar² of the IFOAM General Assembly are planned for Adelaide. At the Motion Bazaar, the PGS Working Group will lead a discussion on the topic. The concept of PGS will be visualized and promoted and questions will be answered by the members of the group.

For 2006, a public event on PGS is planned in Costa Rica. The focus of the event will be to achieve convergence between formal and informal certification schemes in Costa Rica. Representatives from Certification Bodies and Governmental Bodies are planned to be invited.

As soon as the above- mentioned case studies and the brochure are ready to go public, we will inform you.

With best regards,

Martin Eimer

(IFOAM. Assistant International Projects)

² A motion bazaar provides a room for final discussion and fine-tuning of specific motions before the voting act of the General Assembly.