

The Global PGS Newsletter

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Table of Contents

PGS Featured in the 2008 IFOAM Annual Report	1	Where to Find Official References Supporting PGS?	3	PGS-related publications of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) also accessible on the IFOAM PGS website	5
Climate Friendly Food Launches its Website and Develops a Participatory Certification System	2	PGS basics	4	Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...	5
The PGS Self-Evaluation Tool	2				

PGS Featured in the 2008 IFOAM Annual Report

The 2008 IFOAM Annual Report, recently published, follows an innovative approach, which starts with the work of some IFOAM members to illustrate IFOAM's ultimate impact in fields, families, and communities. The report illustrates with concrete examples the role of IFOAM in providing a global knowledge network and support for its members. The report is composed of articles on various themes addressed by IFOAM, one of each is PGS as a tool for rural development. The article features the work of the PGS stakehold-

ers in India, the impact of this work on small farmers' livelihoods and its articulation with IFOAM's global efforts to promote and support PGS. The article can be used as a very nice and concrete information sheet to introduce new stakeholders or potential partners to the benefits of PGS.

The PGS article can be downloaded as a PDF at www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.

The full IFOAM 2008 Annual Report can be downloaded at www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/inside_ifoam/pdfs/IFOAM_Annual_Report_2008.pdf.



The spread in the IFOAM Annual Report featuring PGS.

Climate Friendly Food Launches its Website and Develops a Participatory Certification System

Climate Friendly Food, a UK not-for-profit social enterprise set-up by a group of organic growers, launched its new website (<http://www.climatefriendlyfood.org.uk/>) on the 12th of October. Climate Friendly Food decided to create a PGS certification scheme which could complement third party organic certification or could be an affordable stand alone certification mark for small holders.

In short, the certification process envisioned by Climate Friendly Food starts with a data entry into an on-line carbon calculator, then a commitment to comply with organic standards (demonstrated either through organic third party certification or through a PGS commitment to abide by the IFOAM Basic Standards) and

Climate Friendly Food would like to support other PGS to adopt low carbon measures.

to achieve carbon-related objectives (making bronze, silver or gold commitments). This process is followed within 30 days by a farmer-to-farmer inspection to verify the above commitments. The cost of this certification starts from £35 (equivalent of 38 Euro or 58 US Dollar). All the information is web-based and business information of each farm is publicly accessible, with the exception of financially sensitive information.

Climate Friendly Food started as an unincorporated association in August 2008 and became a registered Community Interest Company in February 2009. Climate Friendly Food founders were particularly inspired by the worldwide PGS experiences and the PGS materials developed by IFOAM and would, in particular, like to thank Ron Kholsa.

It is likely that the Climate Friendly Food carbon cal-

culator (which is free online) will be largely indicative of farming and food systems in industrialized countries. Climate Friendly Food would like to support other PGS to adopt low carbon measures and they are happy to share information with fellow PGS organizations via email. For more information, contact Jenny at jenny@climatefriendlyfood.org.uk

The PGS Self-Evaluation Tool

There are now many Participatory Guarantee Programs serving thousands of small farmers around the world. While there is enormous diversity in how these programs have implemented the various functions of a PGS, the key characteristics have proven to be consistent around the world.

In 2008, the IFOAM PGS Task Force developed a self-evaluation tool for PGS around the world to evaluate themselves. The purpose of this voluntary questionnaire is to provide PGS programs around the world with a self-evaluation tool to see how they are meeting the key PGS characteristics. It is also hoped that, very much in the spirit of PGS transparency, PGS programs share their answers with IFOAM and with each other.

Has your Participatory Guarantee System already filled the IFOAM Self-Evaluation questionnaire for PGS? If not, click [here](#).

Your PGS filled the questionnaire a long time ago and your situation has changed since then? Refill it!

Several questionnaires have been uploaded (with the consent of their authors) to the [IFOAM online PGS Database](#). Have a look!

IFOAM hopes that this self-evaluation tool will inspire PGS groups to learn from and share with each other, as well as to educate other groups new to PGS about the many ways that PGS groups around the world have implemented core PGS values in ways that are culturally appropriate to their region.



The Climate Friendly Food logo and the Climate Friendly Food founding team.

Where to Find Official References Supporting PGS?

A number of international official documents issued by reputable organizations contain statements that support or recognize PGS. These can be precious references for PGS stakeholders seeking recognition from their local authorities, potential donors or partners. Below is a list of such references:

- **IFOAM Position on the full diversity of Organic Agriculture. What IFOAM calls organic:**



“IFOAM does not see third-party certification as ‘universal’, or as the only tool to describe organic agriculture. There are other methods to verify organic production and farmers for the market place.” This is an extract from the new position leaflet published by IFOAM on the full diversity of organic agriculture. The leaflet is drawn from the IFOAM position on the full diversity of organic agriculture, dated December 2004, but presents the position in a shorter and updated form. The position leaflet reflects the current official IFOAM position vis-à-vis PGS, and contains a full paragraph explaining the PGS concept and concluding, *“IFOAM sees great potential in these participatory systems and is supporting their development through various projects.”* The position leaflet exists also in French and Spanish and can be downloaded on: <http://www.ifoam.org/press/positions/pdfs>.

- **UNCTAD-UNEP publication: Best practices for Organic Policy, what developing country governments can do to promote the organic agriculture sector:** This report was prepared by Gunnar Rundgren, under the CBTF Project “Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa”, but has now become a major reference for good organic policies. The goal of the report is to give guidance to the development of appropriate policies for the organic sector. The report is based on documented case studies from 7 countries, and contains a series of 35 precise recommendations for governments to implement in order to support the development of their organic sector. Recommendation no. 12 is part of the recommendation section “Standards and regulation” and concerns PGS. It reads as follows: “Compulsory requirements for mandatory third-party certification should be avoided as they will not enable other alternatives to emerge. Other conformity assessment procedures, such as participatory guarantee systems, should be explored.”

The publication can be downloaded for free on the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org/growing_organic or directly on the UNEP website: www.unep.ch.

- **Building Sustainable Organic Sectors:** “Building Sustainable Sectors” (BBS) is to national organic movements what *“Best Practices for Organic Policies”* is to governments. Also written by Gunnar Rundgren, this time within the frame of an IFOAM project, “BBS” has become *the* reference for national organic associations and platform to advance the development of the organic sector in their country. The report is also based on country cases and contains a generic analysis and recommendations section with nearly one page on PGS, including the following paragraph: *“PGS and other non-third-party quality assurance systems are spreading in developed and developing countries alike. They often address not only the quality assurance of the product, but are linked to alternative marketing approaches (home deliveries, community supported agriculture groups, farmers markets, popular fairs) and help to educate consumers about products grown or processed with organic methods. It is important that governments do not inhibit this development through overly rigorous regulations, as formal certification may not be what is demanded in the domestic market. It is equally important that those promoting and developing PGS ensure that they are credible and transparent.”*



This publication can be downloaded for free on the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org/growing_organic/building_sustainable_organic_sectors.php

- **IFOAM 2008 GA motion on PGS:** The IFOAM General Assembly, gathered in June 2008 in Modena (Italy), approved the following motion regarding PGS: *“IFOAM should continue to develop, promote and support Participatory Guarantee Systems through its permanent internal structures and include farmer representation.”* This was a very clear sign that IFOAM’s position to support to PGS reflects the wish of the organic movement as a whole, and not only of the PGS stakeholders.
- **FAO’s views on Organic Certification – Speech by Alexander Muller, Assistant Director General, at the First IFOAM Conference on Organic Certification, Rome, November 2006:** In this speech, Alexander Muller showed a deep level of understanding of the challenges currently faced by the organic sector, including the dilemma of designing national guarantee systems that can build and secure consumers’ trust in organic products while not creating excessive barriers to trade and to smallholders’ access to the organic market. According to Muller, *“A ‘certification flexibility’ is needed to enhance development of short supply chains as well as an expanded participation of small holders in the organic sector.”*

“Compulsory requirements for mandatory third-party certification should be avoided as they will not enable other alternatives to emerge.”

-Gunnar Rundgren

Some examples deserving consideration for replication include: the USDA/NOP certification’ exemption for producers selling organic commodities for less than US\$ 5 000/year; access of Swedish organic farmers to public support without necessarily being under a certification scheme; the Government of India’s promotion of participatory guarantee systems for the development of organic domestic markets.”

The full speech can be accessed under: <http://www.fao.org/docs/eims/upload/229843/IFOAM-organic-certification.pdf>

PGS BASICS

The official IFOAM definition of PGS

In 2008, the IFOAM PGS Task Force worked on writing a global succinct definition of PGS. The definition was finalized at its meeting in June 2008 and became the official IFOAM definition of PGS. It reads:



“Participatory Guarantee Systems are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.”



“Les Systèmes participatifs de garantie sont des systèmes d’assurance qualité orientés localement. Ils certifient les producteurs sur la base d’une participation active des acteurs concernés et sont construits sur une base de confiance, de réseaux et d’échanges de connaissances. ”



“Los Sistemas Participativos de Garantía son sistemas de garantía de calidad que operan a nivel local. Certifican a productores tomando como base la participación activa de los actores y se construyen a partir de la confianza, las redes sociales y el intercambio de conocimiento.”



“Os sistemas participativos de garantia são sistemas de garantia de qualidade focados localmente. Certificam produtores baseados na participação ativa das partes interessadas e estão fundamentados na confiança, nas redes sociais e na troca do conhecimento.”

PGS-related publications of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) also accessible on the IFOAM PGS website

In 2008, SSNC published a study fully dedicated to PGS, simply entitled “Participatory Guarantee Systems – PGS”. The study was written by Inger Källander, former member of the IFOAM PGS Task Force. The study is a good introduction to the PGS concept and provides a valuable summary of the main developments, challenges and opportunities for PGS in the year 2008. Although some information is already outdated to some extent, it remains a very good reference document on PGS, which can be used to introduce new people to the PGS movement. In 2009, SSNC published another publication entitled “Organic Farming in Brazil - Participatory certification and local markets for sustainable agricultural development” which also mentions interesting facts related to PGS in Brazil.

The publications can be downloaded for free on the SSNC website, and now also on the IFOAM website under the PGS section: http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html



An SSNC study dedicated fully to PGS, entitled “Participatory Guarantee Systems - PGS.”

Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- United Kingdom: Climate friendly farm (UK), a newly created PGS in the UK, launched its website and develops a participatory certification system.
- Spain: on the 29th and 30th of October, in Murcia, COAG (Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos - an agriculture union) has included a special workshop on certification matters in his national seminar on organic agriculture. Eva Torremocha held an introductory presentation on PGS, followed by the presentation of a case of PGS set-up in Spain (Sierra de Segura) and by a debate with the participants. The concept of PGS was very well received.
- France: The French national PGS, Nature & Progrès is going to meet with the representatives of the Alliance/AMAP network (Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne – the French concept for Community Supported Agriculture) during the AMAP annual conference. The discussion will be about several topics, including PGS development in France. The event will take place from 5th to 7th of December, in Anneyron (Rhônes-alpes).
- Spain: Mamen Cuéllar, from the Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos of Córdoba, went to Brazil to participate in the 6th Brazilian congress on agroecology, held in Curitiba. Ms Cuéllar presented a comparison between the French PGS Nature & Progrès and Brazilian PGS Ecovida.



...AFRICA

- Namibia: The Namibian Organic Association (NOA) is currently in the process of setting up National Organic Standards as well as a PGS. The aim is to finalize the standards and implement the PGS by 1 June 2010. A stakeholder workshop and PGS training session were held on 20 – 23 Oct 2009 whereby participants received training on organic vegetable production assessment procedures as well as food safety matters. The Namibian Organic Standards is using the Afrisco standards as a basis and terms of reference. NOA is sponsored by the Namibia Country Pilot Partnership for Integrated Sustainable Land Management (CPP NAM ISLM), hosted by the programme coordination unit in the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism. NOA contact details: Mrs Manjo Smith, info@noa.org.na.



...LATIN AMERICA

- Paraguay: Altervida and IFOAM, in cooperation with the “Mesa Agroecológica” and the Ministry of Agriculture, organized end of October a 2-day workshop to advance the development of the organic sector in the country and align the agendas of the public and private sectors, especially with regards to organic policies and their implementation. Gunnar Rundgren (former IFOAM President) was the lead facilitator of this workshop. The development of the local organic market and of PGS in the country was an important part of the program and of the discussions, as the Paraguay organic law recognizes PGS.
- Peru: the 13th National annual meeting of the organic farmers, organized by ANPE (national association of organic producers) will take place on November 17th and 18th in Lima. The meeting will contain 2 workshops on PGS. Coordinators of the Andean PGS project from Bolivia, Columbia and Ecuador will attend the workshops and present their progress, achievements and difficulties. IFOAM is supporting regional participation in this event.



Representatives of the National Association of Organic Producers (ANPE) in Peru, busy with the preparation of a PGS gathering. From left to right: Moises Quispe, ANPE's Executive Director and Silverio Trejo, ANPE's President.



Banner announcing the PGS workshops in Lima with regional participation from other Andean PGS representatives and IFOAM support.



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- Vietnam: a “PGS Review Workshop” was organized on the 10th of November in Hanoi. The workshop was organized and sponsored by the VNFU – ADDA Organic Agriculture Project. It brought together a total of around 40 participants including farmers, consumers, representatives from public institutions and even traders. The objectives of the workshop were notably to give an overview of the current status of the PGS and identify points for improvements, as well as to discuss the role of traders in the PGS and standards and inspection/certification procedures for retail. For more information, contact Koen den Braber at koenhuyen@gmail.com.
- India: The PGS Organic India Council team put together a national PGS case study paper for the FAO collection of good practices in institution building for agricultural and rural development. The paper was reviewed and submitted to FAO by IFOAM. The PGS Organic India Council is exploring the option of registering itself as an organization in India. The PGS Organic India Council is also engaging in discussions with groups in Nepal and Sri Lanka to promote PGS in their countries on the lines of the Indian model (see below).
- India: Keystone was selected as the winner of the Sitaram Rao Livelihoods Case Study Competition. The award ceremony took place on October 28, 2009 at the Livelihoods Session of the Microfinance India Summit 2009. The participants of the competition were required to write a case study of approximately 5,000 words on ‘Making Markets Work for the Poor’, with a focus on public-private- community partnership. Award Price was Rs. 30,000 for the top three.
- Nepal: The PGS booklet developed by the Indian PGS council has been translated into Nepali and distributed to major OA organizations in Nepal. The Nepalese, inspired by the Indian experience, organized their first meeting to kick-off PGS activities in the country. An ad-hoc committee of 12 persons was formed to constitute the PGS Organic Nepal Council in the initial stage, and its TORs were agreed upon. Cooperation with the certification body Ecocert was decided, whereby Ecocert will provide technical advisory support for PGS at the regional level.
- Sri-Lanka: the Indian PGS booklet is now printed in Tamil language and ready for use in Sri Lanka. Members of the PGS Organic India Council and Sri-Lanka stakeholders are discussing ways to initiate PGS activities in Sri-Lanka.

Imprint

The Global PGS Newsletter is published monthly. All PGS-related articles are welcome. Please send your articles for submission in English, French or Spanish to pgs@ifoam.org. Deadline for submission of articles is the 30th of each month for the following month’s issue.

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