

The Global PGS Newsletter

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Table of Contents

IFOAM World Board member publishes PGS-supportive article in leading Peruvian magazine	1	First PGS event ever organized in China	3	PGS basics	5
Latin American PGS Forum created at the recent Antonio Prado seminar	2	Interview with the Competent Authority from El Salvador - a country whose regulation does not recognize PGS (yet!)	4	Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...	6
				Keep IFOAM updated about your efforts!!!	6

IFOAM World Board member publishes PGS-supportive article in leading Peruvian magazine

A few weeks ago, IFOAM Vice President Roberto Ugas, Professor at the agricultural university La Molina, published a 3-page article in the Peruvian magazine *La Revista Agraria*. The paper calls for the recognition of the economic importance of organic agriculture for the Peruvian economy and poverty alleviation and calls for the competent authority to support, rather than inhibit, the development of Participatory Guarantee Systems in Peru. The Peruvian government is one of the least supportive of PGS in Latin America, with an organic law that does not recognize the well developed PGS system in the country, making de-facto illegal hundreds of small organic producers selling their products on the local market. The full article is available in Spanish on the IFOAM website (www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/All-PGS-Publ.html).



Roberto Ugas' article in *La Revista Agraria*.

Latin American PGS Forum created at the recent Antonio Prado seminar



The Latin American PGS Seminar that took place in Antonio Prado, Brazil on the 11th and 12th of November resulted, as anticipated in the October issue of The Global PGS Newsletter, in the creation of a Latin American PGS Forum. The Latin American PGS Forum replaces,

in a more structured form, the former Latin American “PGS Facilitator Group”. The Forum has already identified a number of working areas, including building linkages between the various regional PGS initiatives but also between them and competent authorities in the region or IFOAM at the international level. The Forum is structured through a coordinating group composed of one representative of each country involved so far (Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico and Costa Rica), as well as Ecovida’s member Laercio Meirelles acting as moderator and Patricia Flores and María Noel respectively representing the IFOAM regional group GALCI and the regional MAELA network.

Jannet Villanueva, member of the IFOAM PGS committee, is representing Peru in the Forum. The Forum is planning to organize at least one meeting a year with participation of PGS initiatives, producers and consumers.

The Latin American PGS Forum replaces, in a more structured form, the former Latin American “PGS Facilitator Group”.

The founding members of this LA PGS Forum have signed a joint “Declaration of Principles,” in which they express their vision for the development of PGS in the region. This declaration refers to the IFOAM definition of PGS (however with a slight modification of the original term “locally-based” into “based on the empowerment of communities”), and recalls basic characteristics of PGS. **The declaration contains several positions reflecting the current thinking of LA PGS stakeholders, including:**

- their strong feeling of belonging to the organic movement,
- their worry of a current “conventionalization” of organic agriculture to meet market requirements,
- their commitment to increase the participation of consumers in Latin American PGS, and
- their wish to enable PGS-certified products to cross national boundaries

Interestingly, founding members also express that the PGS model could be applied to guarantee other

processes, whether rural or urban, based on social justice principles, which concurs with positions already expressed by the French PGS stakeholders and like-minded organizations.



Participants of the Latin American PGS Seminar, Antonio Prado, Brazil, November 2009.

You can find the basic founding documents of the LA PGS Forum in Spanish version on the IFOAM website PGS section. English translation is envisioned at a later stage.

The Brazilian workshop was also the occasion of several presentations from participants from Mexico, Uruguay, Peru, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Brazil, giving updates on the PGS situation in their respective countries.

The workshop proceedings are also available in Spanish on the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/All-PGS-Publ.html

Upcoming issues of The Global PGS Newsletter will contain interviews with various actors involved in this Forum.

First PGS event ever organized in China

The first PGS event ever organized in China took place in Nanjing on the 6th of November. The workshop was organized by the IFOAM member organization OFRC (Nanjing Global Organic Food Research and Consulting Center), with assistance from IFOAM representative to China Prof. Zhou Zejiang. Chris May, member of the IFOAM PGS committee, facilitated the workshop. The 30 participants were drawn from a wide group of stakeholders (producers, farmers' associations, businesses, certification, consultancies, researchers and government agencies). The purpose of the workshop was to provide the participants with an introduction to PGS that would enable them to understand the components of a PGS and the dynamics of PGS development and implementation processes. Participants quickly grasped the PGS concepts. Finding a PGS path for organic products in China is challenging due to the fact that the Chinese Organic regulation requires third party (ISO type) certification to market products as organic even on the local market. In that sense, the Chinese situation may be closer to the US or EU situation in which PGS systems can exist but need to develop alternative ways

of communication and labeling. Yet China remains a developing country in many aspects, with a national organic market still largely underdeveloped and millions of smallholders and village consumers in rural areas which may not afford third party certification. Let us see what the Chinese stakeholders will do with the seeds that have just been planted...



Participants of the PGS workshop in China, Nanjing, November 2009

“Finding a PGS path for organic products in China is challenging due to the fact that the Chinese Organic regulation requires third party (ISO type) certification.”

Interview with the Competent Authority from El Salvador - a country whose regulation does not recognize PGS (yet!)

Juan Rene Arevalo, Competent Authority in charge of Organic Agriculture in El Salvador, has been interviewed last month by Jannet Villanueva Escudero for The Global PGS Newsletter. Here is an extract.

JVE: How do you see, as Competent Authority, the development of the local market for organic products in El Salvador?

JRA: The local market is currently developing primarily through organic fairs, a few specialized outlets and direct sales to consumers. However, there is a legal gap on the certification level in the sense that a product is not recognized organic if it is not certified. In organic fairs, the main marketing space, you can find certified and non-certified products. It would be good if the local market for organic products would position itself as well in more formal sectors like the supermarkets. In the country some organic products are sold in fairs, supermarkets, hotels and they enter more and more the formal markets such as in the case of El Salvador Organics, which is a group gathering individual and organized producers. It already has two outlets and is planning the creation of distribution networks. En that sense, all the possible alternative are being looked at for those organic products which are not certified. The alternatives include PGS, public certification and others. PGS are an alternative but they haven't taken up the opportunity to go more in depth. There are different kinds but no unified model, so it is not easy to control. As competent authority, I didn't get the opportunity to accompany a PGS process. It is important to know it in more details to assess its viability because we need to look for an alternative that provides the national market with a guaranteed organic production.

JVE: Regarding the regulatory framework, you have a Law to promote organic agriculture [...] Do you regulate the use the of the word “organic” [ecológico, orgánico o biológico] on the national market?

JRA: Our organic law is only to regulate and control, not to promote. We do not have a promotion law. This is a gap: it would be necessary to incorporate promotion aspects in the regulatory framework. There is a law for the registry and control of organic producers, but we also have a policy for organic agriculture and a national commission for organic agriculture (CNAO) which must promote organic production and marketing. [...]

JVE: What are the general framework, conditions and actions that are being considered or seen by the public sector as the most appropriate for local markets?

JRA: In our Ministry of agriculture there is an office for agricultural business which does organic promotion, with a department of organic production which serves the general public, exporters and the local market. This office participates in national and international fairs where it promotes organic products from our country. [...]. The implementation of organic fairs is possible because in practice the regulation is not strictly applied due to the fact that there are a lot of non-certified organic products. At the moment there is no national label and there are some discussions on the creation of a label that would be valid for any type of certification. A new regulation is under preparation where certification is more open, not only for PGS but also for other alternative systems which may develop.

“In organic fairs, the main marketing space, you can find certified and non-certified products. [...] The implementation of organic fairs is possible because in practice the regulation is not strictly applied.”

-Juan Rene Arevalo

JVE: You are the coordinator of the Competent Authorities from Central America, Panama and Dominican Republic. Can you explain your objectives and plans as a regional initiative?

JRA: The objective was to create a conducive environment for the marketing of organic products at the national and regional levels. The first objective is the harmonization of the norms: having one single regional regulation, strategy and system. We focus on processes which can benefit the region. At present you could say that the progress on Common regulation for the Central American region is 80%. In this discussion we looked at alternative systems in general, not only PGS. The problem is that Central America does not have a process to accompany PGS. We do not know PGS well, we haven't seen them in practice and they are so diverse. So, how to succeed harmonizing them? When we look at alternative systems such as PGS or public certification, in both cases we do not know the process or the costs. In some of the countries in the region we have been thinking that public certification could fill the gap left by third party certification: the State could reduce certification costs. For all this harmonization process, we have a strategic alliance with IICA which is partnering with the IFOAM GOMA project. [...].

The interview has been shortened for the purpose of this newsletter. The full interview in Spanish can be requested from Jannet Villanueva Escudero at jvillanuevaescudero@speedy.com.pe.

PGS BASICS

Where to find information on Participatory Guarantee Systems?

On the IFOAM website of course! Go to: www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html. The PGS section of the IFOAM website is the only place in the web that centralizes global information on Participatory Guarantee Systems. It contains basic information such as the PGS definition, core documents, cases studies and answers to the Frequently Asked Questions on PGS. It also contains a (nearly) comprehensive database of PGS worldwide and a well-organized PGS library with many free downloadable documents in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. The database contains links to individual PGS's websites. The IFOAM website PGS section is your gateway to the PGS world!

From the IFOAM home page: "About IFOAM" -> "Standards and Certification" -> "PGS".

Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- United States: Certified Naturally Grown developed a new informational flyer that seeks to help participating farmers communicate with their customers about how CNG differs from the National Organic Program (NOP). Interesting to notice is the way the flyer refers to organic practices without claiming that CNG farms are organic (which would be illegal under NOP regulation) and the way it refers to international support from IFOAM and others. Flyer is available on: <http://www.naturallygrown.org/documents/MediumFlyer.pdf>
- France: Nature & Progrès has published its own PGS practical manual. You can access it through the IFOAM Online Global PGS Database at http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs_projects/pgs_projects/index.php N&P plans to have the manual translated into Spanish by May 2010.



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- Bhutan: Sources from the Ministry of Agriculture have indicated that the ministry is looking at the possibility to convert the whole country to organic farming. The ministry is studying the opportunities for setting-up a certification system adapted to the national situation, probably something of a PGS nature, with linkages towards third party certification to facilitate future export of organic products. Welcoming this audacious strategy, IFOAM will organize the next meeting (January) of its PGS Committee in Bhutan, followed by the participation of a few IFOAM representatives into a workshop of the Bhutanese stakeholders to refine their organic development strategies.
- Sri Lanka: A 3-day PGS workshop is being organized from 16th to 18th of December. An Indian delegation composed of Mathew John, Robert Leo and Miguel Braganza from the PGS Organic India Council will join the workshop to share the India PGS experience. The workshop is jointly organized by Lanka Organic Agriculture Movement (LOAM), Sri Lanka Nature Forum (SLNF), Sewa Lanka foundation, Neo Syntheses Research Center (NSRC), National Center for Organic Agriculture and Practical Action.
- India: The PGS Organic India Council re-launched its website. Check the new impressive website on <http://pgsorganic.in/>!
- Nepal: Local women groups have decided to declare the Jharkot village, Mustang District of Nepal, as Organic Village and agreed on setting up a PGS scheme. The village is located at an altitude of 3,500 meter and contains 70 households with 175 ha of cultivated land). For more information on this interesting initiative, contact Samir Newa at samirji@gmail.com. The Nepalese organic stakeholders are also interested in learning from the Indian PGS experience and some exchange visits are planned for beginning of 2010.

Keep IFOAM updated about your efforts!!!

Put pgs@ifoam.org on your mailing list, so that we can receive regular news from your PGS and share main developments with the global PGS community through The Global PGS Newsletter.



...LATIN AMERICA

- Brazil: The Latin American PGS Forum has been created in November at the recent Antonio Prado meeting organized and facilitated by Ecovida. The Latin American PGS Forum replaces, in a more structured form, the former Latin American “PGS Facilitator Group”. See more in detailed article above.
- Mexico: Mexican PGS stakeholders are discussing the creation of a national PGS system in Mexico, with local, regional and national levels. Mexico is creating a national label for organic products, which should also be usable by PGS-certified farmers as the Mexican law recognizes participatory certification.
- Peru: As announced in the last issue of The Global PGS Newsletter, a meeting with PGS representatives of the Andean region took place on the 19th of November in Lima, Peru. The participants of the meeting, mainly association of organic producers from the Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, discussed the elaboration of a regional proposal for PGS in the region. They also agreed on a framework to document each country’s PGS situation, documentation which will be reviewed in a next meeting and used to formalize the regional PGS proposal.



...AFRICA

- South Africa: On the 8th and 9th of January, the Bryanston Organic & Natural Market will host a training seminar and regional networking workshop on PGS. The workshop will gather participants from South Africa and neighboring countries. The discussions will address, among others, the issues of the local and or regional organic marks and their relation to PGS and regional trade. To participate, please contact Konrad Hauptfleisch before the 24th of December at konrad@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za.

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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