

## Inside. . .

|   |   |
|---|---|
| PGS in Timbaktu Collective .....            | 1 |
| CERTIFIED Naturally Grown .....             | 2 |
| IFOAM PGS Committee .....                   | 3 |
| 10 Anniversary Bio-diversity Festival ..... | 4 |



## PGS in Timbaktu Collective



PGS peer team doing a Farm Appraisal in a groundnut field in Andhra Pradesh

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Experience in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh further confirms the belief that Participatory Guarantee Systems for organic produce is an extremely relevant method of organic certification for small and marginal farmers and very helpful in getting better price for their farm produce.

Peddakka is a marginal farmer in Gantimarri village, in Anantapur District. She owns 5 acres of rainfed land on which she grows groundnut, redgram and minor millet every year. She is also an active member in the women's self help group. Until 2006, she used to sell her farm produce to local traders who cheated farmers both, in weighing practices as well as in fixing the price. It was the same for almost all farmers in the village. They used to lose atleast 25% of their income through this process.

Timbaktu Collective organized film shows and theatre performances and

created awareness on importance of organic farming in Ganthimarri village. In 2006, with support of Timbaktu Collective, Peddakka took the initiative to form a farmers group in her village with 26 farmers, named Durga Sendriya Vyavasaya Sangham (Durga Organic Farming group). The farmer members of the group also realised that organic farm produce fetched more and had a much better market as more people were willing to pay for organic products. This group of farmers agreed to grow crops organically in 141 acres. But soon they learnt that organic produce needed certification for selling at a premium price. The only option was third party certification which was expensive and not affordable by these small farmers.

At this juncture, Timbaktu Collective introduced this group to the PGS system of certification. Training was organized for farmers, they accepted and decided

*Contd on Pg 2*

to grow organic crops and follow all systems required for PGS certification.

All the farmers showed their willingness by taking a pledge. They were all given a copy of Indian Organic Standards in the local language, Telugu. The standards were printed on posters and displayed in *sanghas*, so that everyone could read and adhere to them. The *sanghas* are again divided into 5 sub groups called *brindams*. Adjacent farmers in one area form one *brindam*. The monitoring became easy, as all members in a *brindam* know each other. With the help of *sangha* volunteers, all the farmers maintain diaries and the needed documents. The *sangha* meets twice a month on specific dates to discuss

they are in the fourth year of organic cultivation. The group has joined the farmers cooperative, setup by similar groups from other villages. Peddaka is elected as one of the directors of the cooperative. The cooperative buys the organic produce of farmers at 5-10 % higher price than the market price. The weighing too is done by the farmers themselves. The group members are also eligible to avail loans from the cooperative to meet cultivation expenses. Peddaka is happy as she and her groups are now free from the clutches of money-lenders and local traders. Their income too has increased to a remarkable extent. Peddaka says, "The cultivation expenditure is reduced by atleast Rs 1000/- per acre and also I am able to get



Farmers taking pledge

various issues. PGS is part of the agenda in all discussions. The *sangha* discusses and finds out the reality and rejects the certificate to the farmer, if found to be using chemical fertilisers. Depending on the situation and sincerity of the farmer, s/he may be given a chance to continue in the group on his/her promise for not using chemical fertilisers again. The appraisal sheets are filled up by *brindam* members and given to the *sangha* with the recommendations for approving or denying certification. The approved list of farmers for PGS certification is then prepared and sent to Timbaktu Collective, the Regional Facilitating Council.

In first three years, the produce of the farmer is treated as 'organic-in-conversion' and from the fourth year it is certified organic. Produce of Durga group is fully organic from this year, as

atleast Rs 300/- additional per quintal of groundnut. So my income has increased by atleast Rs 10000/- per year now."

There are 50 more groups like this Durga Group. Now, Timbaktu Collective is facilitating all these 51 groups in adopting PGS methodology to certify their produce. 890 farmers benefit and about 3000 acres are certified organic through PGS system.

**"This is the best way of certifying, who else will know better than us that our crops are grown organically. This method strengthens our group and all of us benefit out of it. Lot of others farmers now want to follow us"** says Pedakka with a smile.

Brahmeshwar Rao

For more information:  
[www.timbaktu-organic.org](http://www.timbaktu-organic.org)

## CERTIFIED Naturally Grown

### The Grassroots Alternative to USDA Organic Certification

When the National Organic Program (NOP) was implemented in 2002, small-scale organic farmers were faced with a difficult decision: refrain from calling their produce "organic" – even if they had maintained impeccable organic growing practices for years – or become Certified Organic by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-accredited certifying agency. For many farmers, neither choice was attractive.

Certification through the National Organic Program requires a considerable amount of record keeping – a paper trail of everything that happens from seed to sale. For diversified small farms that may grow upwards of 200 varieties of vegetables, herbs, flowers and fruits, the mounds of paperwork have been prohibitive. Even setting aside the paperwork, the high cost of certification fees puts the USDA Organic label beyond reach for many small-scale growers.

Many farmers decided it just wasn't worth it. Growers who opted not to participate in the NOP didn't have "permission" to describe their produce as organic, even if they'd been using organic methods for years. They had lost a very valuable marketing tool at a time when more people were becoming aware of the environmental and health benefits of organic growing methods. These farmers needed a simple way to describe their growing practices to customers.

Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) was created by farmers six years ago for small-scale direct market farmers using natural methods. Today nearly 700 farmers from 47 states are Certified Naturally Grown. The certification process involves an application, on-farm inspections, and a signed grower declaration that's publicly posted on CNG's website ([www.naturallygrown.org](http://www.naturallygrown.org)).

CNG's growing standards are based on the same practices as the National Organic Program – no synthetic fertilizers,

pesticides, herbicides or fungicides, and no genetically modified seeds are used – but with a greater emphasis on improving the soil through composting and cover crops. And CNG’s livestock standards include some improvements and clarifications regarding living standards and access to pasture requirements.

Rather than employing “third party” inspectors, CNG inspections are carried out by other farmers in the program who live nearby. To discourage fraudulent “trading” of inspections, a farmer is not allowed to inspect the farm of the farmer that inspected her farm. There are real advantages of this peer-review approach. First, local networks naturally develop, and the information-sharing and collaboration this facilitates strengthens the movement as a whole. Second, neighboring farmer-inspectors are more likely to regularly and randomly visit their neighbors, and they’re intimately familiar with local pest pressures, so they can be more aware of cheating – and thus serve as better deterrents.

What about fees? The recommended annual contribution is \$50 - \$175 but it’s up to each farmer to determine the exact amount, whether more or less. This system has worked because farmers believe in the program and want to see it continue.

The CNG program is unique for its high level of transparency. All participating farms have publicly-available profiles, on the CNG website at [www.naturallygrown.org](http://www.naturallygrown.org). Each farm’s profile includes a Grower Declaration signed by the farmer stating she or he will abide by CNG growing standards, the farmer’s inspection report (once completed) signed by the local inspector, and the farmer’s online application which includes details about his or her growing practices.

Over time, more and more customers have come to recognize the colorful Certified Naturally Grown label. Like any true grassroots movement, CNG has grown because of the many people who are committed to the ideals of organic agriculture and the health of our communities.

- Alice Veron  
For more information,  
visit [www.naturallygrown.org](http://www.naturallygrown.org)

## New IFOAM PGS Committee selected by the IFOAM Executive Board

In its August meeting, the IFOAM Executive Board has selected members for the new PGS Committee, now a permanent committee within IFOAM structures. The following persons have been selected to sit on the PGS committee:

● **Eva Torremocha (Spain):** Eva works as an independent consultant to provide support to different emerging PGS initiatives in Spain and neighboring countries. Eva also maintains strong linkages with the French PGS Nature & Progrès. Eva also manages a small subsistence organic farm in Andalusia.

● **Ron Khosla (USA):** Ron runs a CSA organic farm in the US. Ron has been involved in PGS since 2002 with the set-up of the PGS “Certified Naturally Grown” in the US. Ron has also served as a PGS adviser to the FAO project to set-up a national PGS system in India in 2006.

● **Chris May (New Zealand):** Chris is both an organic horticulturist and managing director of his own organic consultancy. In 2001-2003, Chris developed “Organic Farm New Zealand”, the national PGS system in New Zealand. Chris is still involved in OFNZ as certification manager. Chris has also acted as PGS trainer in several places around the world, such as in Africa, South-Asia and the Pacific.

● **Mathew John (India):** Mathew has worked with the Keystone PGS in India for the past decade. Mathew is now member of the PGS India Organic Council which he helped to set-up in 2006.

● **Janet Villanueva (Peru):** Janet is PGS advisor of the National Association of Ecological producers in Peru (ANPE) and is a member of the Peruvian national PGS. Janet has been involved in the development of ANPE’s PGS from the start (2005).

● **Konrad Haupfleish (South Africa):** Konrad is administrator of the Bryanston Organic & Natural Market, the first operational PGS in South Africa, which he helped to set-up in 2005.

Ron Khosla, Chris May and Mathew John have already served on the IFOAM PGS Task Force and have been re-selected by the EB. Eva Torremocha, Janet Villanueva and Konrad Haupfleish are new members on the committee.

According to the PGS Committee Terms of Reference, members have been nominated for a 3-year term, starting August 2009. IFOAM is pleased with the geographic and professional balance of the committee and is also pleased to count 2 women on the committee.

*Farmer from Ramagiri Mandal, Anantpur district, AP*



## Celebrations of Tenth Anniversary of Mobile Bio-diversity Festival

It was a decade ago that we started celebrating the return of the Sun on Sankranti Day with festivities marking the return of our cherished local seeds into active farming systems through a colourful Biodiversity Festival. The Festival not only symbolises the celebration of the agrobiodiversity of the region but also the way the poor and the women have retrieved their dignity and autonomy. This is the tenth year of the Festival and we rejoice the dawn of that time of the year again— time for the farmers of the Deccan dryland region to celebrate their food systems, seed sovereignty and rich bio-diversity on their farms; time to celebrate their identity as farmers even as others of their kind are losing hope and hold on their independence

Since 1999, the annual Mobile Bio-diversity Festival of Deccan Development Society (DDS) has made its presence felt as a unique festival of the rural communities, dialoguing with fellow farmers and citizens about ecologically sustainable agriculture, community seed sovereignty and the idea of local production, local consumption and local markets.

Continuing the tradition, the Biodiversity Festival - 2009 started on Makara Sankranti, 14th January, from the village Tekur, Nyalkal Mandal and concluded at Machnoor village on 13th February. The colourful caravan, heralding the joys of food sovereignty, once again rolled across 55 villages in Medak District.

The Mobile Bio-diversity caravan is welcomed by people of all the villages through which it travels exuding an atmosphere of gaiety. It symbolises an agrarian system which is capable of sustaining the lives and livelihoods of the entire rural community. Hundreds of traditional varieties of seeds (of the Deccan dryland region) are displayed in the caravan of tastefully decorated bullock-carts. The harvest festival of Sankranti merges with the festivity here.

The final National Biodiversity Action Plan of India has strongly endorsed biodiversity festivals pioneered by the Deccan Development Society as a tool for the promotion of agri-biodiversity all over the country alongside recommending that the Community Gene Banks model of the DDS should become a national model.

The procession of bullock carts, decorated with sheaves of grain, flower garlands and colourful fabrics is an overpowering image of bountiful crops and food-sovereign villages. Inside the evocatively painted carts there are small baskets with their own glass cases containing seeds, a colourful shop-window of biological diversity on wheels. Each village greeted the procession with songs and dances. Women farmers, moving along the caravan, singing and dancing, spread their message of ecological farming even as other women prepare traditional dishes bringing out the culinary significance of their crops.

It is a time for many to turn nostalgic about food and food crops they dissociated with long time ago, pressed by aggressive marketing of external input-based agriculture which they have been forced to practise today. In every village there were discussions about the concerns and demands of the agrarian communities, especially the poor and women.

After a month and over 55 villages, the procession ended in the central Community Seed Shrine run by the women's sanghams. Over 80 small, colourful clay pots with seed are arranged in rows, an oil lamp is ceremonially lit in front of each one, while women sing prayers to seek the blessings of the Lord of Food and Farming. On the event of tenth anniversary of the festival, a number of National and International events on Climate Change, Organic Farming, Democratizing agriculture Research etc., were organized.

P.V. Satheesh, [www.ddsindia.com](http://www.ddsindia.com)

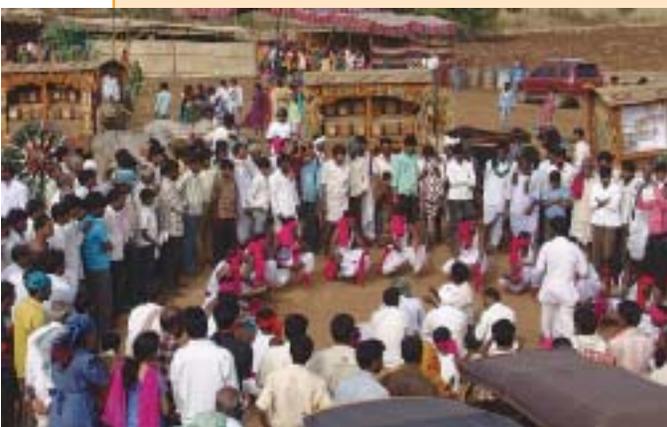
## State Level Convention of Organic Farmers

DDS organized a state level organic farmers convention in the month of February 2009 in Zaheerabad, Medak District. Sri Miguel Braganza, Additional Director of OFAI was the chief guest. Around 400 farmers from different districts of Andhra Pradesh participated in this convention of which more than 200 farmers showed interest to take the membership of OFAI.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri P V Satheesh, Director, DDS, mentioned that farmers of this region have been following the organic cultivation with inter crops and multiple cropping patterns, despite pressure exerted by the scientists and the Departments to promote monocropping on a large scale. He also said that however, these small and marginal organic farmers are tremendous trendsetters in these days. For them, organic farming was not a business but a way of life. It

involved nurturing the soil, saving seeds, practicing mixed cropping and crop rotation and learning continuously from nature to get along in a sustainable way. He continued that now-a-days, large companies and business houses were looking at this agriculture pattern as just as another kind of business. Unless a farmer was engaged in all the activities mentioned above, it could not be called organic agriculture and warned farmers about the threats to their farming from the business houses. These business houses were insisting on third party certification. So, he inspired farmers to take this certification process also into their hands through a process called Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) which is being followed by DDS under the aegis of OFAI, which liberates farmers from certifying agencies.

Speaking on this occasion, Sri Miguel Braganza, Addl. Director, OFAI shared with the farmers that, more than 70% of the steering committee members on OFAI are farmers. He also informed the group



that the Government of India had spent more than one lakh twenty five thousand crores of rupees on fertilizer subsidy and wondered why the government could not support small organic farmers, who in fact nurtured the soil as well as the ecology by not using the harmful chemical inputs.

Several other farmer leaders and NGO activists also addressed the gathering. They included Mr Joginaiodu from SVDS, who praised the organic farmers of the Deccan area that, they swam against many odds and remained as models for other small holding farmers.

Mr Nimmaiah, of PEACE, Nalgonda district, alerted farmers that they should not fall into the trap of companies as many of them were also trying to hijack the organic production systems and market from small farmers.

Others viz., Smt Saraswati from SABALA and Shri Prakash from ARTIC also shared their views about the organic farming and the need for maintaining small farmers farms as viable production systems through organic methods.

In the afternoon session, a training programme on SRI paddy cultivation was organized, and Sri Nagarathnam Naidu, an organic farmer who excelled in SRI paddy cultivation shared his experiences and techniques in SRI cultivation.

Later preparation of *panchagavya* and plant protection concoctions was demonstrated for the benefit of participants and aspirants of organic farming.

P.V. Satheesh  
For more information:  
[www.ddsindia.com](http://www.ddsindia.com)



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1/6 Page : Rs. 1,000/-



### Participatory Guarantee System Meeting

PGS farmer meetings were conducted at two different places, by Green Foundation in the project areas around Bangalore, to discuss about implementation of the programme according to modified PGS guidelines.

The first PGS farmer meeting was held at Kodihalli, on 29th June 2009 with the presence of 100 farmers of which 57 were women farmers and then at Maralawadi on 1st July 2009 with the presence of 42 farmers of which 28 were women farmers to discuss following issues.

- 1) PGS introduction to new groups
- 2) PGS implementation guidelines
- 3) Marketing linkages for organic products
- 4) Action plan for the programme implementation

Dr. C.S.P. Patil, Executive Director, Green Foundation explained the importance of organic farming in the present day circumstance and introduction of PGS and its advantages over third party certification.

### National Consultation on Farmers' Rights to Genetic Resources – Stewardship or Ownership?

A National Consultation on Farmers' Rights to Genetic Resources – Stewardship or Ownership? was held in Bangalore on the 22nd and 23rd of May 2009. It was co-sponsored by GREEN Foundation, Bangalore, and the Center for Gandhian Studies, Bangalore University. The participants included all groups of stakeholders in the issues that were discussed, including farmers and farmers' representatives, NGOs, the PPVFRA, legal experts, as well as social activists and concerned citizens.



## UP COMING EVENTS

- 10th & 11th Sept, 2009 - South Asia Conference on Outstanding Agriculture Techniques at GKVK, UAS Campus, Bangalore.
- 12th & 13th Sept, 2009 - Organic Mela at MHS Hall, Lalbagh, Bangalore
- 1st - 4th March, 2010 - 9th PGS Organic India Council meeting, organized by Grassroots at Ranikhet



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## PGS Organic India Council (As on 31, August2009)

| States  | Code             | No. of Local groups | No. of Members |
|---|------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| <b>1. OFAI</b>                                  | <b>A 01</b>      |                     |                |
| a. Maharashtra                                  | (MOFF) MH A 01   | 44                  | 323            |
| b. Uttar Pradesh                                | (KVK) UP A 01    | 02                  | 20             |
| c. Kerala                                       | (INFACT) KL A 01 | 01                  | 10             |
| d. West Bengal                                  | (DISHA) WB A 01  | 07                  | 48             |
|   | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>54</b>           | <b>402</b>     |
| <b>2. Keystone Foundation (KF)</b>              | <b>A 10</b>      |                     |                |
| a. Tamil Nadu                                   | TN A 10          | 13                  | 113            |
| b. Karnataka                                    | KA A 10          | 0                   | 0              |
| c. Kerala                                       | KL A 10          | 0                   | 0              |
|   | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>13</b>           | <b>113</b>     |
| <b>3. Grassroots [PHGDF]</b>                    | <b>A 40</b>      |                     |                |
| Uttarakhand                                     | UK C40           | 11                  | 136            |
| <b>4. Covenant Centre for Development (CCD)</b> | <b>A 20</b>      |                     |                |
| a. Orissa                                       | OR A 20          | 03                  | 30             |
| b. Tamil Nadu                                   | TN A 20          | 07                  | 107            |
|   | <b>Sub-Total</b> | <b>10</b>           | <b>137</b>     |
| <b>5. IIRD</b>                                  | <b>B 01</b>      |                     |                |
| a. Maharashtra (IIRD)                           | MH B 01          | 78                  | 1449           |
| b. West Bengal (SEVA)                           | WB B 01          | 10                  | 53             |
| c. Karnataka                                    | KA B 01          | 05                  | 57             |
|   | <b>Sub Total</b> | <b>93</b>           | <b>1559</b>    |
| <b>6. Timbaktu Collective</b>                   | <b>C 10</b>      |                     |                |
| (Andhra Pradesh)                                | AP C 10          | 52                  | 954            |
| <b>7. Deccan Development Society (DDS)</b>      | <b>C 20</b>      |                     |                |
| (Andhra Pradesh)                                | AP C 20          | 41                  | 205            |
| <b>8. Chetana Vikas</b>                         | <b>C 30</b>      |                     |                |
| (Maharashtra)                                   | MH C 30          | 16                  | 100            |
| <b>9. GREEN Foundation</b>                      |                  |                     |                |
| Karnataka                                       |                  |                     |                |
| Peer Appraisals being initiated                 |                  |                     |                |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                              |                  | <b>290</b>          | <b>3605</b>    |

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