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IFOAM-PGSOIC-LOAM initiative for PGS in Sri Lanka

By Miguel Brangaza. Secretary PGSOIC



The “Participatory Guarantee Systems” or PGS as a set of organic farmer-managed, farmer-centered, low cost quality assurance and “Organic” labeling systems is increasing gaining popularity in the world today. First put together at a consultation in Brazil in the year 2004 by selecting the best that was available in the existing systems worldwide, the same is now implemented in Brazil, New Zealand, India and even in some European countries. Presentations have been made by Mathew John in Manila, Philippines and recently in Thimpu, Bhutan. Similar presentations have been made by Miguel Brangaza in Damai, Malaysia; Seoul, South Korea and Bhatinda, India. Joy Daniel and Miguel have made a set of presentations at Bhubaneshwar, Orissa and Joy Daniel also spoke about it in Kobe, Japan. This is a brief report on the workshop held in Piliyandala, Sri Lanka, from 16 to 18 December, 2009.

The interaction was facilitated by Mr. Mathew John, IFOAM PGS Committee member and Treasurer of PGSOIC from Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri, India and Mr. Miguel Brangaza, Secretary of INOFO and PGSOIC from OFAI Central Secretariat, Goa, India with the assistance of Robert Leo, Programme Coordinator for PGS at Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri. Lanka Organic Agriculture Movement and SNLF coordinated the programme.

The workshop began with a brainstorming among the Sri Lanka delegates because of a 12 hour delay in the departure of the flight carrying the Resource Persons from Chennai to Colombo, a one-hour flight in normal circumstances. Wrote the Druze poet, Khalil Gibran, “No Problem approaches a man except with an Opportunity in her hands.” The baby ‘Opportunity’ grew

well at the PGS workshop at the Sewa Lanka campus in the wetlands of Piliyandala, near Colombo.

Mathew shared the IFOAM world vision of PGS and gave the background in which it was formed. He also briefly touched upon the process of setting guidelines for wild collections such as honey, wild fruits, mushrooms, etc which are not truly farmed but, rather, are collected. He also shared his experiences in packaging, branding and marketing PGS organic labelled produce.

Miguel shared the success story of PGS Organic India Council in facilitating the setting up of “Local Groups” and helping existing groups through the transition to the PGS standards. The PGS procedures were simple and rooted in the socio-cultural context of the local farming communities. Some ‘Local Groups’ had their members take a pledge on the soil where ‘Mother Earth’ is revered as God, or on a coconut where it is considered the ‘*shree-phal*’ or on a flame where fire is considered holy. It is not a ‘one size fits all’ system, except where it comes to the adherence to the commonly accepted 14 Basic Standards of Organic Agriculture.

Robert Leo shared his field experiences in facilitating “Local Groups” of PGS for Keystone Foundation among the tribal communities of the Nilgiri Hills that straddle the three states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. Farmers collect honey, grow coffee and other crops. They also manage local marketing within

the community while Keystone has set up “Green Shops” for sale in the towns.

It was decided that NGOs and GOs are to be involved in this. These include NGOs such as Sewa Lanka, Practical Action, SL Nature Forum, Oxfam – Australia, NFSCTAR, MMEF, GSS, NEW ERA, NSRI, EFTC, Waligepola WF and GOs such as the Provincial Dept of Agriculture, Accreditation Service [AS] and Export Agriculture [EA].

An “Interim Committee” with 10 members including 4 GOs (DoA, MOP, AS and EA) and 6 NGOs will be constituted as under: 1. SLNF (+ MMEF Waligepola WF), 2. Practical Action, 3. Sewa Lanka, 4. Oxfam Australia, 5. NFSCTAR and 6. GSS (Gami Sewa). The representatives of these six NGOs who were present will take forward the process of calling for the first meeting of the ad hoc “Interim Committee” for PGS in Sri Lanka and thereafter as per the agreed mandate. NGOs not represented in the “Interim committee” will also promote PGS in Sri Lanka and also send suggestions & recommendations to a PGS-IC.

PGS Organic National Council of Sri Lanka

It was decided that the National Council will consist of Farmer Representatives, Government representative, Lanka Organic Agriculture Movement [L.O.A.M.] representatives, Local Facilitation Council [PGS-OFC] representatives and Group Conveners. It will be the governing council for the

policies and implementation PGS in Sri Lanka. Its role and functions will include:

- Set PGS standards
- Formulate Appraisal Forms
- Build Market Linkages
- Devise Awareness Programmes
- Organize Training in OA & PGS

Provincial PGS Councils

They will do the regional implementation on behalf of PGS National Council of Sri Lanka.

Facilitation Councils

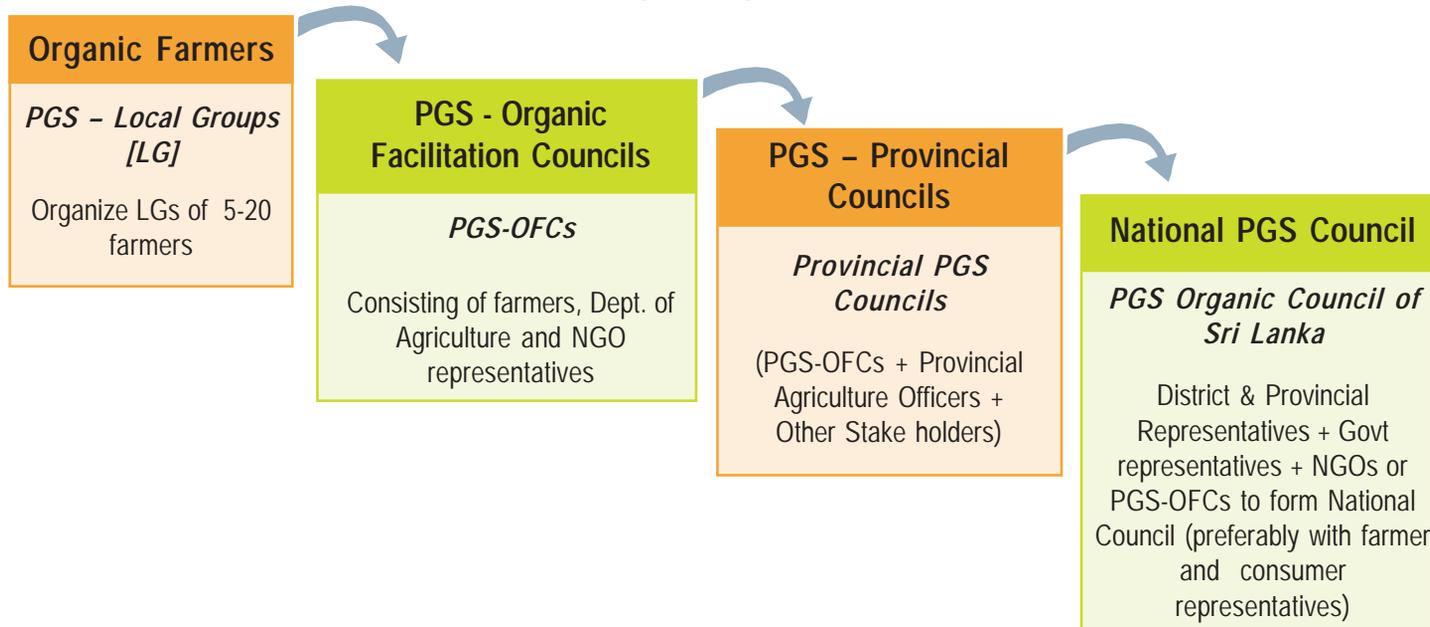
They will undertake the formation of LGs and training of their members.

Local Groups

They are the foundation of the PGS set-up and will consist of 5-20 farmers committed to use only organic practices and inputs on all their farms. They will share information and skills and will be trained, where needed, in better production, processing and marketing techniques.

Each Local Group will be linked to a Facilitation Council [PGS-OFC] for hand-holding, enabling and empowering in order to promote a better quality of life through eco-friendly, biodiversity supporting organic farming practices. The number of Facilitation Councils in each Province will be as per need and conditions.

With the Organic Farmer as the driving force and showing the hierarchy in a Bottom-to-Top, as it is supposed to be, the model proposed is as under:



contd on Pg. 4

KAPAS - The Organic Cotton Project

(Organic & Fair Trade Cotton production leading to khadhi and handloom fabric)



The Covenant Centre for Development (CCD) started (in 1989) to address climate induced migration and associated social and economic impacts with three interlocking platforms: technical, human and natural resource capitals. It sees communities as clients and partners to revitalizing dry-land farming through LRTS (Local Resources & Traditional Skills) based enterprise promotion aiming at cost cutting for inputs supply, shortening the supply chain and better marketing. It works towards social mobilization, establishing BDS (Business Development Services) and establishing common infrastructure for value addition and marketing.

The reach of CCD is 9 districts in Tamil Nadu, northern Indian states like Orissa, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh as well as the Great Nicobar Island. It has federated 10 commodity based activity groups and federations, covering around 20,000 households. CCD works mainly with medicinal plant gatherers and small agriculture producers (growing mango, rice, chilly, cotton, coconut fibre, tamarind, etc). It has promoted 3 companies to address enterprise needs (Gram Mooligai Company Ltd for herbal gatherers and cultivators, Aharam Traditional Crop Producers' Company Ltd for small agricultural producers and Adharam Energy Pvt Ltd for alternative energy products).

The Organic Cotton project started in 2006, among the small and marginal cotton farmers based in the southern block soil region of Tamil Nadu particularly in Madurai and Virudhunagar districts. The majority of these lands, including cotton, are rain fed. The key feature of cotton cultivation in this region is the ancient practices with local seed varieties - at least 6-9 types of mixed crops in a plot including few vegetables and natural manure. Due to reduction of cattle in the recent years, some farmers started applying small amounts of chemical fertilizers as basal application. CCD felt the serious need of intervening in this phenomenon to prevent intrusion of chemical applications and GM seeds.

This project was initiated with 107 small holding farmers formed into 7 organic farmer groups with 280.50 acres in 2 villages namely T.Arasappatti and Veilukandapuram in the year of 2007-08. Series of trainings were conducted on the merits of organic agriculture, organic agriculture methods, ill effects on chemical applications and GM seeds. After a year's experience in 07-08, the farmer groups decided to form a federation and named as "Sevaiyur Iyarkai Vivasayikal Koottamaippu (SIVIK) meaning Sevaiyur Organic Farmers' Federation in April 2009. The Federation started concentrating on value addition aspects and decided to enroll for Organic

certification through PGS. Training was conducted for federation leaders and the staff team on PGS concepts and methodology. 7 group level trainings were also conducted at the same line.

In the month of November 2009, the peer group appraisals were completed and certification approved for 94 farmers. In the appraisal, buyers were also involved in the process. The buyers expressed full satisfaction about the practices of organic cultivation and the PGS certification processes. Thus, the Federation decided to expand the certification process to 6 more groups with 100 farming families, who are involved in organic agriculture from 2008-09.

At present, the SIVIK Federation along with the Aharam TCPCL Company has also established a decentralized cotton yarn production mill in the nearby village around the producer villages. After a careful trail process, the production has begun with the target of producing 40,000 meters of organic khadi and handloom fabric and market it under the brand name of "Kapas" in 2010-11.

After these successful experiences with 7 Organic cotton groups in Tamil Nadu and 3 Organic vegetable groups in Orissa, it is planned by CCD to expand the PGS certification process in to other federations in Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Great Nicobar Island.



contd from Pg. 2

Mr.Thilak Kariyawasam summed up the tasks before the PGS National Committee of Sri Lanka (Ad hoc) with a term of one year:

1. Initiate the process for setting up a PGS Organic Council of Sri Lanka
2. Draft bylaws of the PGS Councils
3. Prepare a draft "Peer Appraisal" form for farm appraisals

The terms of reference [ToR] would be:

● **Neutrality:** Each PGS-OFC will be made up of representatives from one or more NGOs working in that area. The designated representative will be neutral about his/her NGO priorities while working in the OFC. Dept of Agriculture representative to be a part of OFC.

● **Facilitation Councils:** Selection of NGOs to serve as OFCs for each of the nine provinces of Sri Lanka as per existing strengths found suitable NGOs for 7 of the 9 Provinces at the workshop itself. NGOs have to be selected for the two remaining constituencies.

● **OFC's Roles:** A majority of the participants present supported the collaboration of Government agencies, NGOs, Organic Farmers' Organizations [OFOs] and private companies.

● **Private participation:** The involvement of the private sector in marketing of PGS produce will be only upto district level companies level. National level companies, MNCs or corporate bodies would not be eligible to enter the PGS trade.

● **Standards:** Use SL National OA standards or the International organic standards as the basis for PGS organic standards for SL.

Sectors to be represented in PGS standards and groups: paddy, tea, vegetables, herbs, spices, fruits & plantation crops, NTFP & agro forestry, root crops, animal husbandry, organic farming inputs.

The organizations participating in the workshop decided to form a netgroup to continue the interaction and to bring the process to a logical conclusion for the benefit of the organic farming communities in Sri Lanka and, where possible, to link with similar movements in South Asia.

Aims and objects of PGSOIC

- i. To promote Participatory Guarantee System (PGS Organic) as a means to strengthen the organic movement in India;
- ii. To own, set up, register, maintain and implement PGS Organic as a credible and transparent organic quality assurance system in India;
- iii. To deal with all agencies and statutory authorities both within India and abroad for the purposes of implementing, furthering, improving and protecting the PGS Organic system of organic certification;
- iv. To ensure food security and improved livelihoods of organic producers through effective and efficient implementation of PGS Organic;
- v. To provide nutritive and guaranteed organic produce to consumers with primary focus on domestic consumers;
- vi. To involve consumers in the implementation of the PGS Organic;
- vii. To take concrete steps to ensure that organic producers in the Local Groups can eventually take over the management and leadership of the PGSOIC;
- viii. To organize or help organize all manner of workshops, seminars, conferences and related meetings and functions in respect of promoting the PGS Organic system in India;
- ix. To receive funds, grants, financial assistance, fees, and to obtain loans, etc., to promote and further the aims and objectives of the Society;
- x. To take all necessary actions to register and enforce the required trade marks, labels, logos, connected with the PGS Organic system;
- xi. To draw up the norms and standards and the total system of Local Groups and PGS Organic Facilitating Councils for implementation among the producers, with special emphasis on poor, marginal farmers, share croppers, NTFP collectors and harvesters;
- xii. To enable PGS Organic Facilitating Councils (PGSOFC) to mentor, collaborate, network, and carry out other activities in promotion and implementation of PGS Organic;
- xiii. To promote PGS Organic and build awareness through the use of publications, multimedia, and engagement with media;
- xiv. To federate and engage with other organizations or agencies promoting PGS as may be decided by the Society from time to time;
- xv. To subscribe or give donations to and financially and otherwise aid any other registered societies or trusts with similar objects.

Growth of PGS Local Groups

SN State	Jan-08	Jan-09	Jul-09	Mar-10
1 OFAI				
a. Kerala (INFACT)	1	1	1	1
b. Uttar Pradesh (KVK)	1	1	2	2
c. West Bengal (DISHA)	0	0	0	7
d. Maharashtra (MOFF)		29*	44*	*
2 Covenant Centre for Development (CCD)				
a. Orissa	0	0	0	3
b. Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	7
3 GREEN Foundation				
a. Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	1
b. Karnataka	0	0	0	3
4 Keystone Foundation				
a. Tamil Nadu		13	13	13
5 IIRD				
a. Maharashtra		78	78	78
b. West Bengal	0	0	10	53
c. Karnataka	0	0	5	5
d. Tamil Nadu	0	0	0	16
6 Timbaktu (Andhra Pradesh)	17	17	17	53
7 DDS (Andhra Pradesh)	40	41	41	41
8 Chetna Vikas (Maharashtra)	0	0	16	21
9 Grassroots (Uttarkhand)	0	0	0	31
10 MOFF (Maharashtra)		29*	44*	51
TOTAL	59	180	227	386

* Independent OFC from December 2009

BHUTAN - The Land of Gross National Happiness

The PGS Committee of IFOAM held its first meeting after it was constituted in Aug 2009. Previously, it functioned as a IFOAM Task Force from 2004 till 2009. The committee held its meeting on the 15th & 16th of January, 2010 in the beautiful city of Thimphu, followed by a 2 day workshop with the govt of Bhutan - it was an opportunity to work with the govt as they are building the national organic strategy.

Travelling within the continent of Asia seems to have its fair share of surprises and excitement. After the experience at the Chennai airport while travelling to Sri Lanka, the visit to Bhutan did not nearly come off but some last minute efforts ensured that the entire committee as well as the IFOAM World Board

Bhutan's economy is based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and the sale of hydroelectric power to India. Agriculture provides the main livelihood for more than 80 percent of the population. Agrarian practices consist largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. The Bhutanese government has prepared a national organic action plan and would like that the entire country turns organic.

Extensive work has taken place to develop the organic programme based on standards from all over the world but the PGS committee members felt that for the internal market, a simple and relevant system should be put in place so that a large number of small farmers could be brought into the system. It would also

PGS Organic India Council Meeting in Ranikhet

The 8th committee meeting of the PGS Organic India Council took place in Ranikhet from the 11th to the 13th of March, 2010.

The meeting was held in the premises of Umang, the producer company, promoted by Grassroots, which provides production and marketing support to small producers.



It was an opportunity for farmers from Anantpur region of Andhra Pradesh and Marathwada region of Maharashtra to meet and interact with the farmers of the hills of Kumaon.

During the past few months, PGSOIC has had interactions with MUSE, Spiti (wild collection of seabuckthorn in the trans Himalayan area) and AVANI, Kumaon (fabric and vegetable dyes). Protocols for wild harvest have been published by Keystone Foundation and standards need to be set. Feedback on these need to come in soon. Guidelines need to be developed for fabrics as well as processed foods.



representative, Ms. Vanaja Ramprasad, were all there.

The PGS committee meeting was an opportunity to review all processes that have been initiated around the world (the last Task Force committee meeting was held in June 2008 in Modena, Italy on the sidelines of the Organic World Congress and the IFOAM General Assembly) as well as what kind of support could be provided to new initiatives.

The 2 day workshop brought together many stakeholders from different institutions like the Ministry of Agriculture, extension dept, regulatory services, etc. Apart from the PGS committee members (Chris, Konrad & Mathew), Gunnar Rundgren (ex-IFOAM President) and Joelle Katto-Andrighetto (IFOAM staff), also participated.

help in establishing a strong local market. It was also felt that since organic exports were limited, each of the groups could be certified based on the importing countries' standard. It would allow the markets, both local and external, to grow and expand.



UP COMING EVENTS

- National Workshop on Millets, Food Sovereignty & Climate Change organized DDS & FEDKORPSED, Hyderabad on 21st & 22nd April, 2010
- Workshop on Organic Farming & PGS at Karsog Valley, organized by MUSE in mid-May, 2010
- PGSOIC meeting at Chetana Vikas, Wardha from 28th to 30th September, 2010
- 3rd OFAI Biennial Convention at Anand, Gujarat in mid-December, 2010
- IFOAM Organic World Congress at Seoul, Korea from 26th to 30th September, 2011

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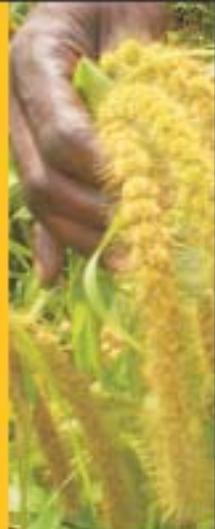
PGS Organic India Council (As on 31, MARCH 2010)

States	Code	No. of Local groups	No. of Members
1 OFAI	A 01		
a. Uttar Pradesh (KVK)	UP A 01	2	20
b. Kerala (INFACT)	KL A 01	1	10
c. West Bengal (DISHA)	WB A 01	7	48
Sub Total		10	78
2 Keystone Foundation(KF)	A 10		
a. Tamil Nadu	TN A 10	13	113
b. Karnataka	KA A 10	0	0
c. Kerala	KL A 10	0	0
Sub Total		13	113
3 Covenant Centre for Development (CCD)	A 20		
a. Orrisa	OR A 20	3	30
b. Tamil Nadu	TN A 20	7	107
Sub Total		10	137
4 GREEN Foundation	A 30		
Tamil Nadu	TN A 30	1	5
Karnataka	KA A 30	3	27
Sub Total		4	32
5 IIRD	B 01		
a. Maharashtra (IIRD)	MH B 01	78	1449
b. West Bengal (SEVA)	WB B 01	53	318
Tamil Nadu (PAF)	TN B 01	16	316
c. Karnataka	KA B 01	5	57
Sub Total		152	2140
6 Timbaktu Collective	C 10		
Andhra Pradesh	AP C 10	53	966
7 Deccan Development Society (DDS)	C 20		
Andhra Pradesh	AP C 20	41	205
8 Chetana Vikas	C 30		
Maharashtra	MH C 30	21	134
9 Grassroots [PHGDF]	C 40		
Uttarakhand	UA C40	31	391
10 MOFF	D 01		
Maharashtra	MH D 01	51	351
Total		386	4547



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- Rice, semolina & flour of:
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 - Sama (Little millet)
 - Ragi (Finger millet)
 - Jonna/Jowar (Great Millet)

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'We invite you to join hands with us'

