

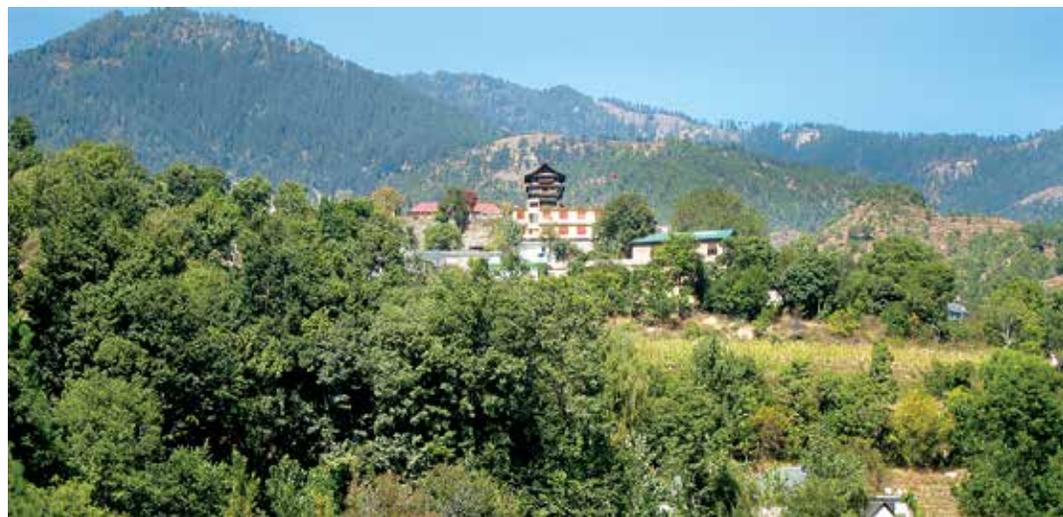
PGS at International CSA conference in California

Andre Leu and Joy Daniel presented on the PGS in the International conference on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) that was held in California from Jan 22-24, 2013. Joy is a Board member of URGENCI, an international network of CSA organizations. Andre Leu is the President of IFOAM.



PGS at the National Organic Summit in China

Andre Leu and Joy Daniel also presented PGS at the National Organic Summit that was held at Xingyi Organic ecotown, Chengdu city, Sichuan Province, China. The Organic Summit was organized by Organic Trade Union of China (OTUC) from November 17-18, 2012. At the summit, Joy Daniel presented on the PGS story in India and the case study of Mahagreen Producer Company. Andre Leu presented on the certification for small farmers - particularly PGS. The summit dealt with organic farm production, certification and marketing for ensuring sustainable food production around the world.



When Deodars Call – PGS in Himachal Pradesh

Accidental discoveries are at times providential, and such discoveries catalyze change. One such discovery was the meeting of two individuals, AG and VR, out of casual acquaintance. It is not important who these individuals are but the change that was catalyzed as a result. The year 2009, July, in a small mountain hamlet called Kalasan, a farmer and an ex-computer engineer (and budding jaivik farmer) discussed possibilities to galvanize sustainable agriculture in the area. The farmer has since 2006 been an active part of “Karsog Valley Farmers Group” which is a farmer cooperative working on IPM methods and cooperative marketing of vegetable produce of the region to markets such as Delhi. However, apart from the farmer himself, not many farmers were organized in sustainable agricultural practices. The valley being an apple belt, the discussions in a meeting were on biodynamic farming options as well as on grafting techniques, good

cultural practices, importance of mulching and drainage.

This meeting encouraged the farmers to organize a larger forum to invite many stakeholders for a Jaivik Farming and Watershed Management conference. The meeting was held at a village called Thandapani in May 2010 for over two days. This meeting was a turning point for the region since it galvanized activists (such as Dr. Bharatendu Prakash of OFAI and Magasaysay Awardee, Sh. Rajender Singh of Tarun Bharat Sangh), jurists

(sitting high court judges), Vice-Chancellors and scientists of both the agriculture universities of the state and farmers to a common platform for taking the movement forward.

While these events galvanized the minds of the farmers, the biggest issue remained on how to market the produce. This was a challenge, since there was neither a local or remote market for the produce they would grow. The idea is that only surpluses move outwards, which means that the first right of clean food is that of the village. The



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supply goes to neighboring villages, then outwards to closest towns, city and so on. Exports are the last option.

However, the team had to go the other way around. Now, AG was partly Delhi based and it was collectively decided to open a small scale retail store in Delhi. The rationale used was that since the market is nascent and a lot of money is to be raised, it will be best to begin with a market which will help us raise those funds. However, this was 2 years ago. Today, despite tribulations we have successfully opened the store in the Village which runs well with the local population as well as visiting tourists to the area. The store acts as a collection point for produce gathered from local farmers growing various kinds of crops organically. Grading and packaging also takes place. However, the most important part is that this is a farmers run initiative. To do this we have created a structure called North Harvest Organic which runs like a Self Help Group, mostly by the women farmers of the group.

To further add strength to this collective it was decided that we will start with attempting PGS certification to small groups

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of farmers who have been traditionally growing organically in the area. This will offer much credence to the whole movement as well as ensure that the farmers continue to grow as a community. As of September 2012, we have two small groups of farmers registered under PGS through the PGS Organic Council. The main marketed produce from this region and groups are – pulses such as rajma, vegetables, fruits such as apple, apricots, pears, persimmon, plums, and dried fruits such as almonds, pine nuts, dried apricots. In addition, since each farmer have their own cows, ghee from those farms is also marketed through this system.

The sister store in Delhi called – Jaivik Haat (www.jaivikhaat.com) helps with the supply chain, marketing, and statutory requirements. However, our scales are quite small and cost of operation still high but slowly and surely we would like to build a market momentum. Other small scale enterprises similar to ours in different states such as Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra have shown interest in marketing the products from Himachal.

Of course, there are many challenges working at the village level, where the demands of urban professionalism on rural minds demands structures and strictures, whereas in the village the most basic element of any operations works on trust. It will be worthwhile to note that this entire structure has been built without any professional help or external funds. All

the efforts and funds have been generated within the village by virtue of participation and sale of products. It does lead to restrictions and hence reduced scale of operation, but whenever that pinch is felt, we remind ourselves – Small is Beautiful!

So this is the story till date of the first PGS registered groups of Himachal Pradesh - the production, supply chain and small scale marketing effort. The ongoing goal is to now build a model farm or a Krishi Ashram



where all allied works related to seeds, biomass, trainings and sustainability are built from the point of view of a small land holding farmer. So in the nearby village of Pangana we are in process of building a 1 acre farm as a demonstration of how a small scale but collective of growers can showcase safe agriculture, market fairness to farmers and reliable supply chain to small scale retailers across the country.

Small truly is beautiful, to know more you can contact Ashish Gupta (AG) and Vikram Singh Rawat (VR), who would like to remain behind the scenes to keep the engines chugging along!

- Ashish Gupta

Partnership with Indira Gandhi National Open University

IIRD recently collaborated with Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI) to build capacity among rural youth for their employment and to get better incomes from their farms. With this collaboration, IIRD conducted 6 weeks training in two courses -

1. Organic Agriculture
2. Water Management

These courses were designed as an internship programme where the students are closely linked with farms for practical implementation of their skills. Thirty youth participated in these courses. The certificates for these courses were provided by the Indra Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). IGNOU is the top ranked open university in India and this partnership will make a difference to the rural youth as they gain skills that are required to build their villages and the environment.



Feria Verde

The atmosphere in the fair is electric and it completely pulls you in – this organic fair, started 3 years ago has made an impact in the city of San Jose. Run every Saturday, it has expanded from 13 shops to close to 45.

It was great to meet Faviana Scorza, one of the key persons who helped initiate the market and see the enthusiasm to keep and expand the work. The fair has developed a PGS system which gives people an opportunity to visit farms and be part of the learning exercise. Today, the weekly fair is looking to expand and soon, open another fair in a

different section of the city.

The fair is divided into different sections – one, dealing with fresh fruits and vegetables and another dealing with processed foods. Another section provides



a sit down space where you can have food that is being cooked and served - this includes juices, coffee. There is also a small section of interesting handicrafts from different regions of Costa Rica.

The Feria Verde was able to send Faviana to Brazil (sponsored by Inter-America Foundation) and spend time with Laercio, one of the pioneers in the PGS movement who was able to guide and help in building the system.

As the PGS movement builds through the Feria Verde and other groups of producers and consumers, the movement



should be able to retain its freshness and enthusiasm that it generates today. Hopefully, Feria Verde will be able to continue its efforts with enthusiasm and vigour. All the best to them.

This article should be read in conjunction with the article that appeared in the Global PGS Newsletter, Oct 2012, which provides a background to the market and the many issues surrounding organic legislation vs PGS - http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/pdfs/2012_10_PGS_Newsletter.pdf.

Low cost Quality Assurance of toxin-free food at source

21st & 22nd February, 2013, New Delhi

A two-day conference was organized by The Centre for Science and Environment on the 21st and 22nd of February 2013 on the theme of "Food as Toxin: Regulating for Good Food and Good Health". The second day of the conference was dedicated to Organic farming and one session in particular was dedicated to Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). Members of civil society, Kheti Virasat Mission (KVM), Organic

Farming Association of India (OFAI), Botanical Society of Goa (BSG), APEDA and National Center of Organic Farming (NCOF) were stakeholders in this discussion. Miguel Braganza made a presentation on 'Participatory Guarantee Systems and its mainstreaming'.

Dr. Sunita Narain of CSE and Willienn Bissel of FabIndia, presided over this session. After the presentations, there was a discussion on the various measures taken by the PGSOC and NCOF in promoting PGS as a viable certification system and the logo that can be used for such a system. PGS was sought as a farmer friendly system which offers an alternative to the third party certification system which is expensive for most small and marginal organic farmers.

PGS as a system involves group based peer certification mechanism and as such enhances trust between farmers and with consumers. As a system it is most suited to local markets and reduced food

miles. The basis mechanism of Organic System remains the same as the country (in Indian National Program on Organic Production or NPOP), the actual process of certification by a third party is replaced by the farmers themselves.

The NCOF has 20 regional councils and 2500 farmer members enrolled. Soon, a web based mechanism for registration is expected to be rolled out by the agency. In addition the PGS Organic Council, a collective of NGOs engaged in PGS certification, has about 471 groups and about 5000 farmer members associated with them.

As it stands today, the need is to create more sustainable market processes to cater to PGS certified produce across India. In addition, government policies such as the FSSAI should also recognize it as a viable certification system. Government provide large agricultural subsidies for fertilizers and pesticides, however, since organic farmers save the exchequer costs by avoiding such facility, the government should create a better level playing field by providing markets and supply chain incentives for PGS certified produce.



PGS Promotion in the North East



6th & 7th Feb, 2013, Guwahati

Two PGS meets were held, one for the small tea growers and the other for small paddy, fruit and vegetable growers. Farm2Food Foundation, a local NGO in Guwahati being run by two young men, Samir Bordoloi and Gaurav Gogoi made the arrangements for holding the two meetings on the Directorate of Agriculture's campus in Guwahati. Hostel accommodation was provided to farmers who had come to attend the meet. There were approximately 45 participants for the meet on each day, representing almost all the states in the northeast.

Dr. Claude Alvares of OFAI, Samraj from Keystone Foundation and Dr. Anjali Pathak were the resource for the meets. The fact that small farmers had showed up for the meets indicated that both farmers and consumers were

becoming aware of organic produce. Some of the growers were default organic and wanted an organic certificate to validate their produce. Others wanted an organic certificate in the hopes that it would fetch them better prices and better markets.

Peggy Carswell of Fertile Ground had come with a number of small tea growers from upper Assam. Several growers had come from Bodoland. Peggy demonstrated a variant of *amritapani* to the growers. Peggy buys organic tea directly from the small producers and exports it.

In Guwahati, an organic grocery store called FARMERS' MARKET has opened up in February 2013. Claude and Anjali visited the store and made useful suggestions to Anjan Thakuria, the owner.

Facilitation Councils for Assam and Nagaland are in the pipeline and once they are up and running, PGS groups will soon come up and be registered in the northeast. This is only the beginning as the northeast is a vast, untapped area that is eager to open up and connect to the rest of India. Only time will tell how deeply the organic movement and PGS certification can penetrate in the northeast.

- Anjali Pathak

Training for farmers network of TEDE Trust

4th December 2012, Mayiladuthurai

A one day intensive training program on forming Local Groups under Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) for farmers from the Mayiladuthurai region of Nagapattinam District under the network of TEDE Trust was held at the farm of TEDE Trust, Palaiyur village. About 24 farmers were in attendance. Most farmers are paddy cultivators with some of them growing vegetables and fruits. Other farmers have sugarcane, banana, coconut and turmeric as major crops. The meeting had interesting discussions on using PGS certificate to create local markets and popularising the system by conducting traditional *shandi* (weekly market place) at nearby villages. It was heartening to see that such farmers who are in their late sixties (five of them women), putting up a brave fight to revive traditional rice varieties with less water intensive irrigation methods. They have successfully convinced the local farmers in the nearby villages of the benefits of organic farming and the increase in yield and the quality of the produce.

Markets that Empower Farmers and Consumers

ASHA and XIMB organized a meeting on the topic "Markets that Empower Farmers and Consumers" on 30th & 31st July, 2012 at Bhubaneswar. The idea of this meeting was to bring together a wide diversity of stakeholders in the Organic Agriculture space to understand the situation from the farm to the market. The aim of the meeting was to come up with issues at various levels of farmer, markets and policies which impact the area of Sustainable agriculture. Various issues and their required redresses would subsequently be brought out to relevant stakeholders and the government to impact the overall space of sustainable agriculture.

Ashish Gupta from the PGS Organic Council made a presentation on PGS, which set the historical perspective of the Council and how it played a crucial role in formation of the national PGS by the NCOF. In addition, the fact that PGSOC is the currently the sole representative of the PGS initiative in India with IFOAM. A number of organizations who are members of PGSOC, like Timbaktu and Grassroots also participated in this conference. As of Jan '12 PGSOC had 502 local groups and 5270 members under PGS certification. The recent ongoing initiatives of PGSOC are to create "A Thousand Brands" and encourage small participation. In addition PGSOC is trying to address the impact of laws such Food Standards and Safety Act of India (FSSAI) on PGS certification.

PGS for Non Timber Forest Products workshop in Costa Rica



4th - 6th Feb, 2013, Quepas, Costa Rica

The International Analog Forestry Network (IAFN) organized a 3 day workshop to look at PGS for non-timber forest products (NTFPs). IAFN works towards the promotion of Analog Forestry worldwide, as well as in the promotion of a sustainable marketing of anthropogenic forest products. They hold the label for Forest Garden Products (FGP) and as part of a larger consortium called the Rich Forests Initiative would like to begin with a process to develop a PGS for NTFPs that can enable partners and the communities where they work to enhance local markets while restoring biodiversity and improving livelihoods. This workshop will bring together people from Latin America, both members and not from the IAFN, in order to discuss and highlight the main aspects to be considered and draw a road-map towards the PGS. Mathew John from Keystone Foundation, member of the IFOAM World Board and PGS Committee, has been invited to join this workshop and share his experience. Mathew has been working with NTFPs for the past couple of decades and building systems for certifying wild produce through PGS.

PGS and the efforts of Kerala Government

22nd & 23rd Aug, 2012, Trivandrum

Two day National Seminar on Organic Farming was held at SAMETI, Trivandrum by the Department of Agriculture of Kerala. It was a chance encounter and an opportunity to explore the possibilities of using PGS in the process of converting large areas like an entire district into organic. Inaugurating the National Seminar, the Chief Minister of Kerala, OommenChandy said that Kerala would follow the organic method of farming practiced in Sikkim.

The event acquires particular significance as it was attended by the Honorable Chief Minister of Kerala and the Agriculture Minister. Both the ministers in their address to the audience repeatedly mentioned the catastrophe in Kasaragoddistrictand the need to reverse to organic and sustainable agricultural practices. The Chief Minister expressed his concern about pesticide residues in food in the state and urged the Department of Agriculture to come up with a roadmap to convert the state into a organic farming state, in line with what is being done in Sikkim which is already progressing towards becoming 100% Organic.

The inaugural function was presided over by the Minister for Agriculture, K P Mohanan. Others who were present include the Director of Agriculture, Sikkim, CorleoBhutia, Secretary for Agriculture, Jyothilal, Director of Agriculture, R Ajith Kumar and other officers.

Samraj was invited to make a presentation on PGS. He emphasized that the PGS certification system was not a service provider like third-party certification bodies but more of a marketing tool in the local market to promote organic farming and practices. The NGO who is playing a facilitator role for PGS in one region can help another NGO in a different region to form Local Groups and be the facilitator in the process. In the meeting, the general assumption was that PGS would provide the same services as third-party certifiers. As they went through the presentation, many ideas unfolded on how to make the best use of PGS.

Key areas of interest were how to provide organic food locally and how to address the needs of the local populations. As most of the organic agriculture products that are certified are meant for the export markets, the need to import organic food into the state and the cost of such an exercise and other social implications were discussed in detail.

Sam's understanding of the situation in Kerala has helped him have an insight into how to integrate PGS in the process of converting large geographical areas, be it agriculture land or forests. In any geographical area, there will be small and marginal farmers who will be organic by default, who will not get any certification from any agency. This will either leave them out of the organic movement or make them enter into contract farming which is not for the local/domestic market. Now, the question of how the local markets' needs are addressed and how organic they

are becomes a vital question. PGS has the potential to address this through local markets and local economies with close-knit networks of producers, traders and consumers.

The effort of the Government of Kerala and the Department of Agriculture is laudable and I hope a work-plan along with strong feasibility studies can convert

the severely pesticide affected district of Kasaragod and infuse new life into the environment and its people.

The original article appeared in the IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter, Oct 2012 - http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/pdfs/2012_10_PGS_Newsletter.pdf

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PGS Presentation to Govt Officers in Tamil Nadu

16th & 17th Nov, 2012, Chennai.

The Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation organized a workshop under Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana to promote Sustainable Agriculture Based Livelihoods for women farmers in Tamilnadu. Sam attended the sessions on 17th Nov 2012 and made a presentation on PGS certification and the implications of it on women farmers. The participants were Project Officers from various implementing agencies from all districts of Tamil Nadu.

The topic of PGS was completely new to the Govt officers and a lively discussion on implementation of PGS with women

farmers without land holding, without entitlements, access to markets, nutritional security, local marketing and pricing mechanisms, took place.

Project Officers were also open to project proposal ideas in Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and value addition as part of the project proposals in hilly regions where Scheduled Tribes are dependent of forests for their livelihoods during particular seasons of the year.

The overall agreement of women as traditional seed keepers and the need to strengthen this traditional system was the highlight of this workshop.



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PGS Organic Council (As on 28th February 2013)

	Facilitation Councils	Code	State	No of Groups	Total number of Organic Farmers under PGS	Total number of Farmers in transition under PGS
1	Organic Farming Association of India	HP-A-01	Himachal Pradesh	2	12	
		KL-A_01	Kerala	1	8	
		UP-A-01	Uttar Pradesh	4	31	
		WB-A-01	West Bengal (DISHA)	7	49	
2	Keystone Foundation	TN-A-10	Tamil Nadu	14	118	
3	Covenant Centre For Development	AN-A-20	Andaman & Nicobar	6	90	
		MH-A-20	Maharashtra	6	58	
		OR-A-20	Odisha	9	152	
		TN-A-20	Tamil Nadu	7	107	
4	Green Foundation	KA-A-30	Karnataka	8	54	577 (88 Groups)
5	Institute For Integrated Rural Development	KA-B-01	Karnataka	5	57	
		MH-B-01	Maharashtra	79	1470	
		TN-B-01	Tamil Nadu (PAF)	16	316	
		WB-B-01	West Bengal (SEVA)	53	318	
6	Timbaktu Collective	AP-C-10	Andra Pradesh	51	797	
7	Deccan Development Society	AP-C-20	Andra Pradesh	37	185	
8	Chetna Vikas	MH-C-30	Maharashtra	14	84	
9	Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation	UA-C-40	Uttarakhand	40	485	
10	Institute For Cultural Research & Action	KA-C-50	Karnataka	68	496	
11	Maharashtra Organic Farmers Federation	MH-D-01	Maharashtra	44	304	
			Total	471	5191	577

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