

The Global PGS Newsletter

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A new year ahead, and one that promises to be exciting for the PGS stakeholders: we look forward to witness the implementation of the Brazilian accreditation program for PGS schemes and to observe consumers' response to the PGS variant of the national Brazilian organic logo or the Pasifika regional organic logo. We look forward to see the setting-up of a nation-wide PGS system with government support in India. We look forward to meet each other and present our PGS experiences at the Organic World Congress in South Korea next September, and we look forward to the many other PGS news, events and opportunities that 2011 will likely bring to us.

In 2011, the Global PGS Newsletter will continue providing you with the latest PGS news from around the world, to facilitate knowledge sharing and networking. We also invite you to provide even more news and articles to The Global PGS Newsletter in 2011. You must not hesitate to share with us news, ideas, pictures, interviews, reports, videos, and information in any other form. You may send us information in English,

French, Spanish, Portuguese, German or Italian: whatever is more comfortable for you. The Global PGS Newsletter is a participatory work: we look forward to your contributions in 2011.

Please send PGS news to Joelle Katto-Andrighetto (pgs@ifoam.org).

The Organic Certification Directory Opens up to Include PGS Schemes



The Organic Certification Directory has been published annually since 2003 by The Organic Standard (TOS) as part of its annual subscription. To-date, The Organic Certification Directory is the only international listing of organic certification organizations. For 2011, TOS has revamped the directory to be published

annually in February instead of August and made available free to all interested parties worldwide. The directory will also be available as a searchable database on The Organic Standard [website](http://www.ifoam.org).

Changing from just listing third-party certification bodies, the new directory now includes private labeling and third-party certification bodies; government bodies as well as Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) scheme organizers. According to the editors of the directory, “This is both a recognition of the emerging role Participatory Guarantee Systems play in some regions, as well as the aim of the directory to be the inclusive *one-stop* global reference for organic labeling and conformity systems.”

PGS schemes should jump on this opportunity to be listed in the world’s leading organic certification directory. To be listed, organizations simply have to fill and return a questionnaire. Listing of organization name and contact details is free. Inclusion of logo and full organization profile are subject to a small fee. For more information, please contact Balan Pillai at directory@organicstandard.com.

“This is both a recognition of the emerging role Participatory Guarantee Systems play in some regions, as well as the aim of the directory to be the inclusive, one-stop global reference for organic labeling and conformity systems.”

Three PGS Organizations Receive Government Accreditation in Brazil

By Flavia Castro



In 2010, there were very significant developments in the process of accreditation of PGS groups in Brazil. Various stakeholders took steps to comply with the national regulation and to obtain accreditation by the Government, since the publication of the implementation rule (IR) No.19 on 28 May 2009, and were granted an extension of the deadline until 31 December 2010. According to the national rule, for PGS initiatives, the process of accreditation starts with a standardized application to the office for Agricultural Policy and Development (Sepdag), in the Brazilian

State where the PGS has its Head Office. Then an audit by COAGRE¹ is scheduled, takes place and the decision is made.

By November, it was still not possible to say whether any PGS initiative would have been accredited before the extended deadline. According to the agronomist Rogério Pereira Dias², coordinator of COAGRE, three organizations had applied for accreditation and audits had already been scheduled to take place before the end of the year. These 3 organizations alone involved more than 3,000 producers and consumers.

The *Associação de Agricultura Natural de Campinas* – ANC, an organization involving around 60 producers in PGS, was the first PGS organization to undergo audit by the government. ANC was accredited on the 27 November 2010. In the beginning of the following month, the PGS initiative *Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia* underwent the same process and obtained national accreditation. Just before the end of the year, the third PGS initiative to undergo audit and to receive national accreditation was the *Associação de Agricultores Biológicos do Estado do Rio de Janeiro* – ABIO.

Laércio Meirelles from *Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia* experienced this process very closely and shared with us his impressions and thoughts. Very active also during the development of the national regulations, Laércio said that the publication of the IR No.19 in 2009 “felt like a victory” to have a national law that regulates this sector. He explained:

This regulation includes historical demands, especially with reference to other possibilities to guarantee the organic quality of products as an alternative to third party certification, such as participative conformity assessment bodies (OPACs³) and social control in direct sales without certification (OCS).

The delay in the process of accreditation appears to have been due to the need for internal regularization by the applicant organizations, both in order to reconcile the interests of the various groups (producers, consumers, technicians, NGOs) that are part of a participative conformity assessment body (OPAC), but also to comply with the requirements of the legislation, that introduces new instruments (such as records and field notebooks).

¹ The department of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for organic agriculture development in Brazil, and the public national body that decides on accreditation for third party certifiers and PGS.

² Telephone interview, 12 November 2010.

³ Abbreviation of the portuguese term Organismos Participativos de Avaliação da Conformidade orgânica, the legal entity accredited to provide certification in PGS groups.

Lisa Tassi, representative of the consumers group of ANC, mentioned⁴ that the difficulties and challenges faced by PGS initiatives were caused by the new forms of relationships between the stakeholders, control instruments and information registration introduced with the new regulations. Similar challenges were faced by *Rede Ecovida*. According to Laércio:

The necessary changes were in form, not in substance. The members and regional groups in the network were obliged to effectively register the processes that they were already carrying out. Registration is the big dilemma in certification when we refer to smallholders, in its broadest conception, which includes families that were settled by the agrarian reform, original communities, indigenous peoples and others. This sector is not used to writing and to registration, which are so dear to certification. So, in the network, the search for accreditation required an extra effort in this sense, which is still ongoing.

The fact that the network involves so many stakeholders, in a vast territory, was also relevant, said Laércio:

We had to pay more attention to the standardization of procedures. The network is big. There are 3000 producers' families, plus consumers associations, NGOs, other organizations, distributed in a quite large territory, that is almost 20 times the size of Switzerland. In this sense, to have standardized procedures has been our main challenge.

But the groups seem to have been able to overcome such difficulties also because of a good relationship with the competent authorities, marked by cordiality and mutual understanding. "It is important to stress," Laércio said, "the good will of the competent authority (MAPA) in dealing with this internal difficulty and in recognizing our efforts in complying with the legal demands." This aspect emerged again when Laércio described the audits, which took place between November and December 2010:

We have received the visit by COAGRE, accompanied by representatives of the MAPA from Santa Catarina (SC) and Rio Grande do Sul (RS). First our OPAC's office was visited and audited and then we visited a few production units from the "Litoral Solidário", in the north of RS. Once more, it must be mentioned that cordiality guided the relations between MAPA and Rede Ecovida, and that the Ministry was able to understand the ongoing process of adaptation within the network.

The Brazilian Law has allowed for the first process of accreditation of PGS initiatives by a government ever to take place. Laércio, who actively participated in the development of the regulations, shared the following belief:

The Brazilian law is bold, but there is still room for further improvements. This law opens different possibilities of generating credibility for organic products. (...) Certification shouldn't be an obstacle for organic producers to be part of the market. Rede Ecovida is moved by the principle that if a producer adopts organic production, this producer has the right to be in the organic market. Neither the market nor the national legislation should create barriers against this, but should actually facilitate this access. In this sense the Brazilian Law is progressive. For the consumers the advantage is to have alternatives. I believe that it is up to them to choose what kind of certification they perceive with more credibility."

South African Analyst Sees a Place for PGS Certification in Mainstream Retail

In an [article](#) published in the international online newspaper *Meat Trade News Daily*, Hans Klink, marketing agent for Agro-Organics in Somerset West, commented on the long overdue organic policy currently under discussion in South Africa. The article concludes by stressing the importance of PGS in bringing more producers into the organic supply chain.

"Woolworths and other retailers are generally applying EU regulations, but at the informal retail level, producers simply can't afford to get EU-certified" explained Klink. "The Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), for which there are guidelines on the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements [website](#), will solve this," he added.

"It basically boils down to peer management, where a group of people keeps an eye on one another, getting around the certification cost problem. It's definitely something that needs to be looked at from a policy point of view. At the moment, SAOSA - the South African Organics Sector Association - is working hard to make sure that there's balance in quality, that everyone is catered for, and that it's fairly done."

"There should be a place for PGS certification in mainstream retail," he concluded.

⁴ Interview to The Global PGS Newsletter, November, 2010.

MASIPAG Lobbies for PGS Recognition at the 7th National Organic Agriculture Conference in the Philippines

The National Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Products Standards (BAFPS) held its 7th National Organic Agriculture Conference from October 16-18, 2010 at Lucena City. The conference was attended by different organic stakeholders, including NGOs, producers, local government units and academic people. This year, the conference focused on the development of the OA sector in the country, in the light of the recently passed law promoting Organic Agriculture (RA 10068). MASIPAG, represented by its National Coordinator Dr. Charito Medina, was invited to discuss the developments and prospects of the Participatory Guarantee System in the Philippines and the world.

One of the main points discussed was the two-year “grace period” stated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 10068, allowing non third party certified farms to label their products as organic. After this grace period, only third-party certified products will be recognized as organic.

MASIPAG advocated for the government to use the transition period to provide a window of opportunity to strengthen other certification systems such as PGS, reminding the audience about the potential of PGS to contribute to poverty alleviation and rural development. This and other positions defended by MASIPAG (such as on GMOs) were included in the final recommendations presented by the organic movement to the government. The recommendation on PGS recognition reads:

During the 7th Organic Conference, we the supporters of the industry resolve (...) that the Department of Agriculture creates a framework that supports Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), including its acknowledgement of PGS as an alternative method of certification.

However, MASIPAG believes that apart from the said recommendations, the Philippine organic movement should lobby to have the law amended as soon as possible, so that farmers and producers can benefit from the grants and incentives accorded in the law.

Continental news: WHAT'S NEW IN...



...EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

- **Spain:** La Universidad Popular de Huescar in Andalusia, has included training on PGS as part of its 2011 training programs. The courses will be provided in the locations of Castelléjar, Castril, Galera, Huéscar, Orce and Puebla. For more information contact universidadpopularhuescar@gmail.com.
- **USA:** Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) is working to develop local farmers networks among its members (but also including non-members). CNG would like to draw on the experience of other PGS programs to develop a how-to guide, a menu of possible network activities, and other support materials. The objective is to make it as easy as possible for farmers to develop their own local networks and maximize the chances that they will succeed. Please share your experience, reports or guides (preferably in English or Spanish, but French and Portuguese will be helpful too) with the CNG coordinator (alice@naturallygrown.org).



...LATIN AMERICA

- **Brazil:** accreditation of PGS organizations is ongoing (see long article).
- **Mexico:** Gabriela Ortiz (pajaroluis@yahoo.com), representative of Red de Productores y Consumidores Responsables Comida Sana y Cercana, in Chiapas, south of Mexico, visited in December the Keystone foundation in India. Her organization is a member of the Mexican Network of Organic Markets, and has been working on setting up a PGS system to guarantee the products being sold on their market. Their network started with 5 producers and 7 consumers and today has grown to 30 producers and 200 consumers, with a wide variety of products. Face to face sharing of lessons learnt in Mexico and in India has been a fascinating experience for both the host and the visitor!



...ASIA AND OCEANIA

- **New Caledonia:** Bio Calédonia, the first PGS established in the Pacific Community in 2009, has obtained official approval by the POETCom (Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community), the governmental body managing the use of the Pacific Organic Standard and its label "Organic Pasifika". An official ceremony took place on 27 October 2010, during which a contract was signed between SPC, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (body hosting the POETCom) and Bio Calédonia. The ceremony was organized alongside a meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations at the SPC headquarters in Noumea, and was hence witnessed by 80 representatives of the Pacific states and territories. As a result of this contract, Bio Calédonia can now offer PGS-certification to the Pacific Organic Standard in New Calédonia.

Imprint

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IFOAM Head Office

Charles-de-Gaulle-Str. 5
53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 10

Fax: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 99

Email: headoffice@iffoam.org

Web: www.ifoam.org

Trial Court Bonn, Association Register no. 8726

PGS coordination at IFOAM

Joelle Katto-Andrighetto

Email: pgs@iffoam.org

Phone: +49 - 228 - 92650 - 24

IFOAM PGS Committee members' contacts

Europe: Eva Torremocha (Spain), evatorremocha@hotmail.com

North America: Ron Khosla (USA), ronkhosla@gmail.com

Oceania: Chris May (New-Zealand), biomays@clear.net.nz

Africa: Konrad Hauptfleisch (South Africa),

konrad@bryanstonorganicmarket.co.za

South America: Janet Villanueva (Peru), jvillanuevaescudero@speedy.com.pe

Asia: Mathew John (India): mathew@keystone-foundation.org

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