

Updates on Participatory Guarantee Systems worldwide.

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Good for the Planet, Good for the Country, Good for You: Sri Lanka's Good Market PGS

by Amanda Kiessel (Good Market Organizer and PGS Committee Member)



Sri Lanka has many organic farmers, social enterprises, and responsible businesses that are creating products and services that are eco-friendly, socially responsible, and healthy. It also has many well-educated consumers that want to feed their families natural and organic food and choose products that match their values. The Good Market was started in Sri Lanka's capital city of Colombo as a place for these two groups to come together.

The response has far exceeded expectations. Good Market began in December 2012 as a small volunteer-driven event with 32 vendors coming together every Thursday. Now it has more than 100 approved vendors, a waiting list for stalls, a Facebook following of more than 40,000 people, and a Sunday event at a second venue. Stalls with organic produce tend to sell out each week within the first few hours and many customers have started pre-ordering so they do not miss their favorite products.

The Good Market is a curated event. All vendors go through an application and review process to ensure they meet Good Market standards. Standards were developed for multiple product categories including farm products like fruits, vegetables, legumes and rice, prepared foods and handicrafts. Every product in the market must at least meet the minimum level (Level 1) standards for its product category. The current standards for farm products at the Good Market are given below.

Level 1: Organically Grown

Poison free. No synthetic fertilizers or pesticides used. No genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In transition to Organic PGS or Organic Certified.

Level 2: Organic Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)

Organically grown. Organic practices verified by a local Participatory Guarantee System that is transparent, and includes farm visits. PGS standards that are based on the IFOAM standard.

Level 3: Organic Certified

Organically grown. Organic practices independently verified by an accredited certifying body.

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Level 4: Forest Garden Product Certified

Organically grown with analog forestry practices that increase biodiversity and ecosystem health. Independently verified by an accredited certifying body.



Good Market vendors with their produce.

When the Good Market first started, a few producer groups that had a long history of organic cultivation but no third-party certification were included in the Level 1: Organically Grown category. Good Market customers would ask these vendors “How do I know this is really organic?” After a while they began to see the value of having a system to guarantee their products.

The initial documents for the Good Market Organic PGS were drafted in March 2013 and translated into Sinhala, Tamil, and English. In May, nearly 50 Good Market producers, consumers and agriculture service providers came together to review the documents and finalize the system. An interim PGS Committee was established to launch the system and the Level 1 vendors began taking steps to transition to Level 2 or Level 3.

After speaking to the organic vendors, the Good Mar-

ket Committee decided that there would be no Level 1 vendors at the Good Market from February 2014. All Good Market vendors would either have PGS or third-party organic certification. Setting this deadline has created a strong motivation to move forward with the process. Producers signed the organic PGS promises and began to organize internal evaluation visits within their own clusters. There are currently 176 producers in seven clusters working towards Good Market Organic PGS certification.

The response from consumers has been equally enthusiastic. When the Good Market asked for volunteers to help with organic farm visits, 112 people responded. The Sri Lankan office of Control Union, the international certifying body, offered to help train volunteers for the external evaluation visits. More than 65 Good Market consumers and producers came for the first training program in December. The event was hosted by a local college and Good Market vendors provided lunch and refreshments.

Four external evaluation visits were completed in January 2014. The original plan was to have evaluation teams of three people including at least one technical specialist, but due to consumer interest, the evaluation teams were expanded to 5 - 6 members. The volunteer evaluators organized transportation and the farmers provided meals and refreshments. For long-distance evaluation visits, overnight accommodation was organized on a homestay basis. The PGS Committee expects to issue the first certificates in early February 2014.

To see more photos of the Good Market, visit <https://www.facebook.com/thegoodmarketcolombo>

For a Pedagogy of the Earth: A Report on the Situation of a PGS project in Brianza/Italy

by Davide Losa, farmer involved in the PGS



In March 2013 an article by Joseph Vergani about the project *Per una Pedagogia della Terra* was published in The IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter. The project aimed to develop and launch a Participatory Guarantee System in the DES¹ of Como, Varese and Monza-Brianza in Lombardi (Italy). I refer to this article to report about the current situation of the PGS.

After the project-launch in the beginning of 2012, the project officially concluded after one year with a General Assembly in February 2013 and celebration in June the same year. During a year of meetings and gatherings, with the support of technicians and initiators, we

¹ Solidarity economy districts (DES) are geographically based networks linking people with a common ‘solidarity’ approach in order to develop an alternative local economy. In Italy, these networks are often promoted and created by members of GAS and similar initiatives.

began to unravel fundamental issues regarding the development and implementation of our PGS, such as general principles, rules of operation and organization structure, to start the path of true participatory certification. At the organizational level, three local committees were established (Varese, Como and Monza-Brianza), which form the heart of the PGS as a meeting point for producers, consumers and other stakeholders. These local committees shall meet once every year in the central Assemblea (assembly), a sovereign body of the PGS, discussing, developing and adjusting the rules of operation of the PGS. Further institutions allowing the operation of PGS practices include the Gruppo di Coordinamento (coordination group), responsible for providing technical support and communicating inquiries from the assembly, the Gruppo di visita (visiting group) as well as the Commissione di Garanzia (guarantee commission), monitoring and verifying the compliance of producers.



Pedagogy of the Earth PGS assembly.

As of February 2013, the local committees have begun to work out a PGS management strategy and respective procedures; visits to farmers were organized. Furthermore, the issue of animal husbandry certification was addressed and, to simplify the development of the PGS, it was decided that only plant based products such as fruits and vegetables shall be certified through PGS for now. The first year of experimental practice to run the PGS showed severe difficulties in maintaining the local committees active on a regular basis, especially those in Varese and Monza-Brianza, due to the lack of consumers and producers willing and being able to devote enough energy to the PGS network.

Within the Como committee the implementation pro-

cess has been significantly easier and more successful since the local area is already organized in a cooperative, short circuit structure. Here, all fruit and vegetable producers are part of the PGS path and have been developing practices of participation among consumers and producers and among producers themselves for several years. This so called Cooperativa Corto Circuito (short circuit cooperative), established in May 2009, currently comprises around 40 joint buying groups, 25 producers and 135 consumer members. It is an association of producers and consumers involved in a long-term process of collaboration in the context of solidary economy, short food chain and responsible consumption. This is not only realized through education and training, but also with the help of well organized logistics and distribution as well as responsible consumption in the Como area, supporting both the network of GAS² and local producers including farmers, processors and artisans. Taking all this into consideration, it is clear that the local Como committee has had little problems to adopt the dynamics of PGS; farmers that are already strongly involved in the cooperative have been assisting and visiting other producers wanting to join.



Pedagogy of the Earth members in the field.

So far, the PGS development has not yet been finalized and participation of stakeholders in the management decisions needs to be further and continuously promoted. Yet, a stable accomplishment of PGS development is our weekly happening short circuit organic market, organized by the PGS management and supplied through our producers.

The path of Per una Pedagogia della Terra will be taken

2 Solidarity based purchasing groups; usually, a purchasing group is set up by a number of consumers who cooperate in order to buy food and other commonly used goods directly from the producers (especially small-holder and family farmers) chosen on ethical basis. Click [here](#) for more information.

to another level, a big step further, in order to protect and recognize the PGS work, the network of relationships and the commitment of the participants over the past years: in 2014 we will take up the work to define a PGS trade mark and fully implement participatory certification, also for the livestock sector. Furthermore, a website will be created, displaying information about our products and solutions addressing our current challenges. Our path to a fully implemented and operational PGS is still quite far and we know that we will be facing complicated situations. However, we remain convinced of the infinite goodness of PGS dynamics, based on trust and relationships among people, on re-

spect for the hard work of small local producers, on understanding and recognizing the needs of consumers and on the exchange of knowledge among producers.

If you are interested in knowing more about our project, please visit

www.cooperativacortocircuito.it

www.desbri.org

www.lisolachece.org

PGS for Papaya Export

by Stephen Hazelman (POETCom's Organic Extension Systems Officer and project manager for the IFAD project supporting the PGS development)



On the Western side of Fiji's main island, twenty young farmers, including five women, have been working towards the organic certification of papaya for both local and export markets. With the assistance of the POETCom³, the "governance" body of the organic movement in the

Pacific, they have formed the Sabeto Organic Papaya Association and developed an organic PGS, which provides a credible guarantee to organic produce. Farmers participating in the PGS can use the Organic Pasifika logo when marketing their products, both in Fiji and in nearby markets of Australia and New Zealand.



The project builds on the Fiji Papaya Project, implemented by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research through the Koko Siga Fiji and Nature's Way Cooperative, which successfully developed organic production practices for papaya, taking the knowledge and experience gained from the Fiji Papaya Project and moving it into a commercial phase.

In Fiji, organic certification offers niche export market opportunities to farmers but it also addresses important issues of the Pacific: enhancing biodiversity, protecting soils, improving the nutritional quality of food and providing more employment in rural areas. To develop the pilot PGS certification, POETCom has secured assistance to help with organic inputs, production and planting from the IFAD⁴ as well as the Enhanced Climate Change Resilience of Food Production Systems USAID initiative.

When commenting on PGS as a method of certification, Livai Tora, the papaya PGS coordinator said: "PGS is a useful certification system for us because it allows us to develop management systems and farmer coordination that work for us and that we implement and manage ourselves. Our farmers need strong, clear coordination, and they need to be well motivated and



Papaya members of the Sabeto Organic Papaya Association gathering information on organic certification.

³ Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community, hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)

⁴ International Fund for Agricultural Development

“PGS is a useful certification system for us because it allows us to develop management systems and farmer coordination that work for us and that we implement and manage ourselves.”

have a goal in mind. The PGS structure can help with that.”

Discussions are now under way regarding potential support from the EU-funded Improving Key Services to Agriculture project to expand the number of farmers in the PGS by another 20. This will take the total number of organic papaya growers up to 40, providing them with a viable livelihood option. POETCom’s vision is that organic and ethical trade will be the key contributors to sustaining local cultures and communities; improving farmer livelihoods, communities, people’s health and the environment in the Pacific.

Stephen Hazelman identified commercialisation as an element often missing in development projects: “Frequently, agricultural development

projects address one issue, such as a production question, but the steps required to translate this into action are missing. Farmers need the links to markets and the tools to access the markets, such as certification and capital for inputs and land development. Otherwise, the agricultural developmental research is never implemented and no change results from it.”

Realizing the Business Idea of Organic Smallholders: Feria Verde and PGS in Costa Rica

by *Mónica Cordero Sancho*, journalist at *EL FINANCIERO*; Translated from the Spanish article published in *EL FINANCIERO* in November 2013 by *Anne Thieme*, IFOAM Value Chain Intern



Four years ago, Faviana Scorza had “never touched soil with her bare hands before” and did not value the amount of work required to grow a lettuce for sale. In 2010, she was looking for a job knowing that she wanted to work with smallholder companies. While having break-

fast at a farmer’s market one Sunday, the opportunity arose to lead a project that was yet little planned but vivid in the minds of a group of 20 SMEs⁵: a green farmer’s market.

Today, the Feria Verde (Green Fair) includes over 110 SMEs, among them 27 farmers, promoting the fair trade and sale of natural and organic products. It is a multicultural space that unites about 2000 people every Saturday at the local sports center in Aranjuez, a neighborhood in San José, offering environment-friendly grown vegetables and products such as goat cheese and artisan breads.

Faviana Scorza, graduate in Business Management at

the University of Costa Rica, has been the head of this outstanding project explains: “This is a horizontal organization. No one is subordinate to anyone, my job is just a key position.” She concludes that starting a project in an unfamiliar area without any financial resources was a challenge: “I was very scared, but I went ahead first.”



Ferira Verde.

One of Faviana’s key work elements was “understanding and becoming familiar with the farmer”, which helped her comprehend how a green farmer’s market functions and recognize the concerns of participants. Therefore, her first self-assigned task to begin with was to learn about how to grow crops without the use of

5 Small and medium enterprises

“We need to establish a network within the food system from which the crops come and understand that agriculture is a profession.”

arrived at home my hands were full of cuts and blisters. The following weekend at the fair, I was sold a lettuce for 300 CRC (about 0.60 USD), but I paid 1000 CRC because I knew its value was much higher”, Faviana remembers. “We need to establish a network within the food system from which the crops come and understand that agriculture is a profession.”

chemicals in the National Training Institute INA⁶. “In my first class I had to dig in the earth all day long. When I ar-

The Feria Verde has casually become a model and incubator for agricultural and environmentally sustainable business ideas, which are expanding to the west of San José and Guanacaste, helping farmers to improve their produce. Faviana points out that “producers being involved in a fair need to be well organized and learn how to handle and manage their produce under their particular brand. We are currently working on the development of a logo and a supply chain for hotels and home deliveries.”

The case of Faviana Scorza shows that not all entrepreneurial ideas require professional expertise but evolve from commitment and taking risk as well as learning and passion.

6 Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje

Continental news: What's new...



...in Africa

- **East Africa:** The OSEA II project, funded by the Government of Sweden and implemented by IFOAM and the National Organic Agriculture Movements in East Africa, was completed in December 2013. After 3 years of project implementation, the PGS component of the project showed a very good outcome, with more than 5,000 farmers now involved in PGS in East Africa. 82% of those farmers are women. Some examples of successful PGS cases from Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya are described in a new Case Studies publication, accessible for free download [here](#). A new video was also published to present the case of the Maendeleo Farmer Group in Tanzania. You can view it on the [IFOAM PGS video page](#).
- **Africa/UK:** The Open University Business School based in the United Kingdom **is receiving applications for full-time funded PhD studentships for the academic year beginning 1st October 2014**. Among the research topics proposed by the university is a project to explore the opportunities and implications of PGS for small scale farmers in Africa. The deadline for applications is 11th March 2014. For more information check the university [homepage](#).



...in North America and Europe

- **USA:** The Certified Naturally Grown PGS is having its first ever farmer gathering event on 8 March 2014 at Wilson College, home of Robyn Van En Center in Chambersburg, PA. Brian Snyder, Executive Director of PASA, and author of the [Write to Farm blog](#), will provide the keynote address for this day-long event. The day's programming will include Short Takes on Real Farm life, a series of entertaining, prepared six-minute presentations accompanied by photos, delivered by farmers and others immersed in farm life. A handful of workshops will be offered on practical topics related to farming to keep us sharp and growing strong. Putting a twist on an American tradition - the church revival - the gathering is billed as an “agricultural revival”, and is designed to strengthen participants' commitment to and engagement with the values of the organic movement. If you would like to participate in the Certified Naturally Grown farmers event you may purchase your ticket(s) [here](#). To learn more about the Certified Naturally Grown PGS please click [here](#).



...in Latin America and the Caribbean

- **Mexico:** On 29 October 2013 the Government of Mexico published guidelines for the implementation Organic Products Regulation. These guidelines come with a delay of 7 years as the original law was released already in 2006. PGS in Mexico is recognized by the government, but only for small and family-farms selling directly to the consumers. A whole chapter in the new guidelines elaborates the structure and operation required from initiatives to gain government recognition. They are for example required to have a Certification Committee, to create a minimum structure for human resource and documentation to guarantee consumer confidence and to conduct regular on-farm inspections. Also in the import section of the guidelines PGS is mentioned as recognized certification option.



...Internationally

- **IFOAM:** After having compiled all data received through the IFOAM Global PGS Survey in October 2013 we have now launched the updated PGS Map, which can be accessed [here](#). This interactive map illustrates the distribution of operational and developing PGS initiatives worldwide, providing information about the number of producers certified and involved in PGS activities in each country. The map tool offers many ways of exploring this set of data by giving you the opportunity to view the information in different kinds of charts and arrangements. Take some time to click through the different features to learn more about the PGS implementation and development worldwide.

Imprint

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