

## PGS around the world: results from the Global PGS Survey 2017



By IFOAM - Organics International PGS Team

IFOAM – Organics International is the only organization collecting, compiling, systematizing and disseminating worldwide data on PGS. Bi-annually<sup>1</sup> we run a global survey aiming to update our PGS database and to share PGS statistics and trends within our network and beyond. In 2017, the online survey was conducted from June to November. Additional data was collected through bilateral communication with PGS initiatives, competent authorities and PGS experts. If no data was received, we used data from the previous year or older. When PGS are recognized in a national organic regulation we referred to data provided by the competent authorities. This is the case of Brazil<sup>2</sup>, Chile<sup>3</sup>, Bolivia<sup>4</sup>, Costa Rica<sup>5</sup>, Mexico<sup>6</sup> and India<sup>7</sup>.

We estimate that PGS initiatives exist in 66 countries; among them 43 countries have operational<sup>8</sup> PGS initiatives in place. Furthermore, a number of new countries have started implementing PGS during the last two years, including: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Vanuatu and Cook Islands. We estimate that there are at least 241 PGS initiatives of which 116 are under development<sup>9</sup> and 125 are fully operational, with at least 307,872 farmers involved<sup>10</sup> worldwide and at least 76,229 producers certified. This includes mostly small-scale farmers and processors. Some of these PGS initiatives consist of several local groups that organize themselves under a local or national network or scheme and use the same procedures and standard; thus, they were considered as a single initiative.

### Global PGS development and highlights

Between 2015 and 2017, in countries where PGS are recognised by the governments in the national organic legislation the annual growth rate of PGS certified producers was significant as shown by the cases of Bolivia (+21%), Brazil (+38,5%) and India (+48%). Globally, the annual growth rate of certified producers from 2016 to 2017 has been +34%.

Asia is the leading region with 260,279 producers involved, 49,038 of which are certified. India is the leading country, with 46,598 PGS certified producers, representing 60% of the total producers certified globally. In Latin America, where many

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governments recognize and acknowledge PGS, especially as a tool to certify small-scale peasant farmers, the number of PGS certified producers increased substantially, from just under 3000 in 2015 up to almost 17,000 in 2017. The leading countries in this process are Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. In Oceania, we also see an increase of certified producers from 278 in 2015 up to 1385 in 2017. Most of these producers are in the Pacific Community where PGS is currently the most commonly used option for local organic certification and also gives access to the organic label.

More information about global data on PGS is available at our [PGS MAP webpage](#) and will be published in the next edition of the “The World of Organic Agriculture” yearbook 2018.

- 1 Up to 2015 the Global PGS survey was carried out on a yearly basis, now it is reduced to a biannual base.
- 2 <http://www.agricultura.gov.br/assuntos/sustentabilidade/organicos/cadastro-nacional-produtores-organicos>
- 3 <http://www.sag.cl/ambitos-de-accion/certificacion-de-productos-organicos/132/registros>
- 4 Consejo Nacional de Producción Ecológica (UC-CNAPE), email communication, data for 2016.
- 5 [https://www.sfe.go.cr/DocsARAO/Lista\\_inscritos\\_Certificacion\\_Participativa.pdf](https://www.sfe.go.cr/DocsARAO/Lista_inscritos_Certificacion_Participativa.pdf)
- 6 <https://www.gob.mx/senasica/documentos/padron-de-organismos-reconocidos-para-otorgar-certificacion-participativa-de-productos-organicos-a-pequenos-productores>
- 7 <http://pgsindia-ncf.gov.in>
- 8 Operational: the initiative is fully working and has put into place all the necessary procedures to manage the guarantee system, thus at least some farmers involved have received the certification
- 9 Under development: the initiative has started to set up the PGS, but still requires some time to develop and consolidate the system, thus farmers are not yet certified.
- 10 Includes the producers already certified and those who have not yet received a certificate, but who are nevertheless involved in the PGS operations.

## A South African Standard Story



By **Audrey Wainwright**, Member of the PGS Committee of IFOAM – Organics International

In December 2017, the World Board of IFOAM - Organics International approved the South African Organic Organisation (SAOSO) Standard for Organic Production and Processing to be included in the IFOAM [Family of Standards](#).

The history of organic standards in South Africa has been long and arduous. Konrad Hauptfleisch, Academy Manager at IFOAM - Organics International, wrote an article on the subject which was published in *The Organic Standard* in 2016. In it, Hauptfleisch describes the collaboration of stakeholders in the sector who, with the South African government standards body, developed a solid enabling standard. The standard satisfied the local and international certification bodies and included PGS, ensuring smallholder farmers could participate in the organic market. In 2015, on the cusp of publication, the standards were for the

second time blocked by the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) desk dealing with queries from the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The standard was deemed a TBT (Technical Barrier to Trade). “The South African Standard, well-constructed, in accordance with the best practice recommendations of standards experts worldwide, was to be rewritten at the eleventh hour,” wrote Hauptfleisch, “All references to equivalence based on the IFOAM Family of Standards, logos belonging to the sector body SAOSO and imports allowed on the basis of their international accredited certification, were to be removed.”

It was the turning point. Hauptfleisch suggested that SAOSO develop its own standard based on the IFOAM Standard, and so in 2016 the next and final phase began. The sector was galvanised into action and again began the work of consultation on the



Participants at the SAOSO/PGSSA/GIZ workshop, September 2017

new standard, but this time without government involvement. With assistance from IFOAM – Organics International, the committee members from SAOSO, PGS South Africa (PGSSA) and the experienced sector professionals who had been working on various forms of the standard for over twenty years, they used the IFOAM Standards as their base and developed the **SAOSO Standard for Organic Production and Processing**.

Diana Callear and Stephen Barrow from Afrisco, a local certifying agency that closed its doors in 2016, generously shared their wine standard, making the new standard locally relevant. PGS groups shared their experiences and contributed to the criteria and procedure for approval of PGS groups, which was based on the IFOAM Organic Regulation Template and the East Africa versions. There was great debate on many aspects of the SAOSO standard, particularly animal husbandry which has additional animal welfare requirements than those in the IFOAM Standard.

The SAOSO Organic logos – for third-party certification and for PGS endorsed products, are similar in structure to the Brazil example. The same logo, but with different wording that identifies the organic assurance method used.



In September 2017, with funding from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), SAOSO and PGSSA held a nationwide two-day PGSSA workshop titled: “Investigating the Potential for a Project to Support Micro Farmers to Market”. The outgoing PGSSA committee took the opportunity to hold the PGSSA AGM and the newly elected committee are preparing to accept the first application from a PGS group for approval to use the SAOSO Organic PGS Endorsed Logo.

Mthetho Mkhungo, Chairman of PGSSA said: “There is a great range of dynamic experience among the people who support PGS in South Africa. Young people, academics and most importantly smallholder farmers. All of these people contribute their time and share their knowledge. At the centre of everything, we are all passionate about smallholder farmers; we are here, not because of self-interest but because of our commitment to smallholder farmers and their role in growing healthy food for our society.”

SAOSO see the standard as essential for supporting the adoption of organic agriculture in South Africa. Current third-party certifiers active in South Africa need a local standard for the domestic market and the inclusion of PGS supports smallholder organic farmers’ right to reclaim their role in the food system. Currently there are seven active PGS in the country and six emerging groups. The acceptance of SAOSO’s standard will support the adoption of PGS in South Africa for smallholder farmers and conscious consumers.

Although spirits are high, accessing funding from the government and corporate sector to support

the adoption of PGS is difficult. Government pays lip service to the organic sector but puts its resources in the hands of proponents of chemical agriculture. The corporate sector is interested in projects that reach large numbers of smallholder farmers and has not yet recognised the potential power and reach of a replicable system such as PGS. These are challenges for the sector to address in 2018.

Alan Rosenberg, Chairman of SAOSO said: “We must come to an objective realization that the standard manages two things. It assures the consumer that product, produce or commodity meets the requirement of being labelled as organic. Perhaps more importantly, it offers the practitioner a set of

guiding parameters that, should they be followed and implemented, will allow him or her to leave the land they are custodians of in a better condition than that in which it was received. Let us not forget that the old world paradigm stated that the task of the farmer - practitioner was to grow food. The new world paradigm suggests that the task of the farmer is to grow soils. After all, we heir the soil to the seventh generation, not the product, produce or commodity. So when we refer to organic standards are we doing so to promote trade or are we wanting to advocate for a new sustainable form of agriculture that acknowledges the sustainable development platform of people, planet, prosperity... all rightfully based on ethical governance?”

## PGS at the 19th Organic World Congress and General Assembly of IFOAM – Organics International in Delhi

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By **Cornelia Kirchner**,  
PGS team IFOAM – Organics International

Conferences are a space to discuss, to listen and to share and gather information. They are also a space to meet old friends and to make new ones. In the organic sector the Organic World Congress (OWC), which takes place every 3 years, is the most important gathering bringing together members of the organic family from around the world. The 19th OWC took place in Delhi, India, from 9 to 11 November 2017. For this occasion, more than 9,000 people came together, including around 2500 international participants from 121 countries. On 12 and 13 November, the General Assembly (GA) of IFOAM – Organics International took place. The core of our members – this time 350 people - came together for two days to discuss and make important decisions about the future of the organization.

PGS have become increasingly well-known and popular. At the 19th OWC PGS were well covered in the program and present in a variety of congress tracks. The Indian government presented their

governmental system which already involves hundreds of thousands of farmers in PGS. Students from the University of Natural Resources and Life Science in Vienna presented their research work on PGS in Latin America. Representatives from Brazil, Bolivia, Vietnam, Philippines and other countries talked about their initiatives, challenges and achievements. We also had a workshop to discuss synergies between PGS and CSA. Many of the fishbowl conversations on Organic 3.0, food systems, trust and integrity also brought up PGS. Such a presence shows that the PGS model is increasingly known, understood and recognized as an alternative method for certification, holding a lot of potential.

The GA of IFOAM – Organics International elected a new World Board and again we have strong PGS representation. Among them, Karen Mapusa, who was crucial to build PGS in the Pacific, and Bablu Ganguly, the Secretary and founding member of the PGS Organic Council in India. Together with





From left to right: Chris May, Laércio Meirelles, Cornelia Kirchner, Mathew John, Pipo Lernoud

other board members also supportive of PGS, they will surely be a strong voice in favor of PGS and smallholder farmers in the next three years.

For me, working as part of the PGS team of IFOAM – Organics International, these events are a great opportunity to meet and discuss PGS with people who already implement PGS in their countries, who just started or are interested in adopting the model or who are researching it. It is also a wonderful opportunity to meet with some of the PGS pioneers. A very special moment was when Chris May from New Zealand, Laércio Meirelles from Brazil, Mathew John from India and Pipo Lernoud from Argentina

were happily united. As many of our readers know, they are among the PGS pioneers, who built and practiced PGS even before the term PGS was created'. They attended the famous Torres meeting in 2004 on alternative certification, when it was "discovered" that PGS existed in several countries. They were all part of the first PGS Task Force at IFOAM – Organics International, the predecessor of the PGS Committee. They worked to define the PGS concept and to come up with the common features and key elements of PGS. Did they predict how many people they would inspire?

The PGS concept has grown and with this growth it has also changed. More and more governments are open to recognize or adopt the model. Stakeholders increasingly talk about PGS beyond local markets, for long-distance or cross-border trade. Some PGS initiatives are adopting more hierarchical and less grassroots or bottom-up structures. Thirteen years have passed since the first international PGS meeting in Torres took place. Since then, the number of PGS initiatives and the number of farmers involved in PGS has multiplied and spread to many new countries. Meeting and discussing in Delhi, I felt it may be time for "Torres 2", an event to bring together PGS pioneers and newcomers to reflect on the past and look into the future of PGS. Let's see what 2018 brings...

## India: a new organic regulation for the organic sector



By **Flávia Moura e Castro**, IFOAM – Organics International, with contributions from Mathew John (Keystone Foundation) and Ashish Gupta (Member of the PGS Committee of IFOAM – Organics International).

India has been an open market for organic products, where compliance with the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP), launched in 2004, was only compulsory for products exported as organic. This open approach, combined with significant government support, has allowed PGS to develop in an impressive way. Thousands of farmers became members of local PGS groups especially in the past 3 years, through PGS initiatives promoted by NGOs, such as the PGS Organic Council, as well as through the government-led PGS-India. In fact, India is

currently the leading country in terms of producers involved in PGS all over the world, counting more than 250,000.

This year, on 9 November, in the framework of the 19th Organic World Congress of IFOAM-Organics International, a new setup for the organic sector in the country was unveiled. This is composed of a new compulsory regulation, including PGS as one of the two possible systems for conformity verification, a new national logo and an online portal that

provides information about producers and allows traceability of organic products. Let's look into these components in detail:

- The unified regulation: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released the "[Food Safety and Standards \(Organic Foods\) Regulations 2017](#)". FSSAI has the mandate to regulate the production, distribution, sales or imports of organic foods, as per the provisions laid under Section 22 of the Food Safety Standards Act (2006). In 2016, FSSAI initiated the development of this regulation through extensive consultations with various stakeholders including related ministries, agencies, NGOs and farmer organizations. The Policy and Guarantee department of IFOAM-Organics International also provided comments to the draft. The final version approved includes significant changes to the legal framework for organic in India. First of all, the regulation is mandatory, except for direct sales of organic food by small farmers, producer or producers' organizations to the end-consumer. There are two recognised systems for compliance verification: NPOP (third party) and PGS-India, but provision is also made for possible recognition of other systems in the future. The new regulation will come into force in July 2018.
- A common logo for Organic Foods - 'Jaivik Bharat': The unified logo is an identity mark to distinguish organic from non-organic products, joined by the tagline "Jaivik Bharat" at the bottom for easy identification of organic foods from India. Labelling requirements still specify the use of the two different logos for each verification system, i.e. NPOP or PGS-India, together with the unified logo. The idea behind the different elements of the logo, and the logo itself, is well explained in a [video developed by FSSAI](#).
- [The Indian Organic Integrity Database Portal](#): jointly developed by FSSAI along with the

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and PGS-India, this portal allows consumers to access information about the producers, the certification system used and the availability of certified organic food from India. Further information provided includes: relevant regulations, standards, links to online portals for NPOP and PGS-India, a FAQ's section and a useful "Consumer Guidance" section, with a brief explanation of what consumers should look for on the label of an organic product.

The launch of the new regulation has been widely reported also in non-specialized media and, although the reactions have been mostly positive, some stakeholders are concerned about possible bottlenecks. In particular, there should be no questions regarding the fact that third party certification and PGS are equally credible, the main differences between them being the process that leads to the certification and their suitability to each operator. Nevertheless, the current edition of [the NPOP \(Seventh Edition: November 2014\)](#) includes the requirement of a minimum conversion period for PGS certified land, implying a difference in credibility between PGS and third party certification. This is in direct conflict with the fact that PGS and third party are the two recognised systems for verification of compliance for organic food products. One option to address this problem is to completely remove the requirement in a future revised version of the NPOP.

India is poised to be one of the biggest markets for organic smallholder producers in the world. As the new regulation will only start to be enforced in 2018, there is still some time to address issues related to implementation, with further consultations and involvement of all the stakeholders. This promising setup should provide an enabling framework for the Indian organic sector, which is in line with the spirit of 'One Nation, One Food law' that has guided the launch of the unified regulation and logo.



# CONTINENTAL NEWS: WHAT'S NEW IN...

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## Global

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FAO is organizing the 2nd International Symposium on Agroecology which will be held in April 2018, in Rome. As part of the Symposium, FAO will co-organize and host a 'Market place on innovation for agroecology. There is an open call for examples of innovative agriculture and food systems. To be eligible, innovations should be co-created, co-designed or developed based on local needs, resources, knowledge and capacities; benefit smallholder and family farmers, respect food producers' ownership and intellectual property rights.

Thus, the concept totally fits with PGS. If you want to share your experience with FAO, please fill in the following [form](#). The deadline to submit proposals is 23 December 2017.

## Africa

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**West Africa:** The project "Organic Markets for Development (OM4D)" is currently being implemented by IFOAM – Organics International with the support of its partner organization AgroEco – Louis Bolk Institute (LBI) and numerous local partners in four West African countries: Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo and São Tomé and Príncipe. OM4D aims to create opportunities for the poor by their inclusion in domestic and international organic markets and the adaptation to local and global challenges such as inequity, climate change, scarcity and depletion of natural resources. It uses the opportunity of an increasing demand for organic products as an engine for development. PGS constitute an important component of the project, which focuses on the stimulation of the organic domestic market. One of the four planned outputs of the project is that PGS are established as a food system linking 8,000 producers directly with consumers. For more information on PGS within the OM4D project, please contact [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio)

**Mali:** The 4th West Africa Conference on Organic Farming took place in Bamako, Mali, from 5 to 6 December. Over 150 participants met with the objective of contributing to a better integration of organic agriculture in national agricultural development programs and to influence agricultural policies. PGS is recognised in the declaration of the conference as a tool promoting the development of local organic markets, thus deserving institutional support. If you want to read the full declaration (in French) [click here](#).

## Asia

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**South Korea:** Thanks to Isidor Sustainability Research Institute, we now have Korean Subtitles for the documentary on PGS produced by IFOAM - Organics International in 2016: "PGS: A guide to Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture". You can view the documentary on our [YouTube channel](#): French and Spanish subtitles are also available. If you are interested in organizing a public screening, we can provide you with an offline version. Please contact [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio)

**Cambodia and Lao PDR:** On 7 December 2017 the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (RAP) organised a regional conclusion workshop in Bangkok for its Technical Cooperation Programme implemented in Cambodia and Lao PDR: "Small-Scale Farmer Inclusion in Organic Agriculture Development through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)". The workshop aimed to present the project results, to share lessons learnt and best practices and to raise awareness about organic agriculture development and PGS. The workshop was also a moment to present newly published PGS videos and stories from the field that were created in a cooperation between IFOAM – Organics International and the FAO RAP. The videos are available online: [Laos](#) and [Cambodia](#).



**Nepal:** The 2nd International Conference on Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture in Mountain Areas will take place on 27 and 28 February 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The conference invites different actors to come together and share their knowledge and experiences about nutrition sensitive agriculture initiatives that improve livelihoods of rural communities and engage policy makers at national and global discourse. PGS initiatives that operate in mountain areas can apply by explaining how their PGS delivers multiple benefits for sustainability and nutrition in their areas. How PGS, as scalable solutions, can work for nutrition-sensitive agriculture? What policy changes are needed and/or have been achieved by your PGS initiative at the local/national level which enable agriculture to be more nutrition-sensitive? The deadline for abstracts submissions is 12 January 2018. To learn more about the conference and the details for abstract submission [click here](#).

## Europe

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**Switzerland:** On 1 December, PGS was on the agenda of the **Forum Origin, Diversity and Territories** organized in Bulle with the support, among others, of FAO and Slow Food. Many international speakers, met for one day to discuss sustainability and innovation in mountain food systems. In the afternoon IFOAM-Organics International joined a PGS workshop where we had the opportunity to learn from old and new initiatives. Mountain labels look with interest at the guarantee system provided by the PGS approach and new collaborations are in the pipeline.

**United Kingdom:** *Everyday Experts* is a project and a book bringing together activists, farmers, practitioners, researchers and community organizers from around the world to take a critical look at how knowledge is created and shared among those people whose knowledge has been marginalized in the past and others who are recognized as professional experts. In this book, PGS initiatives will find examples of how participatory approaches, decentralized governance and peasant-citizen partnerships can transform the food system towards greater social and environmental justice. To download the full book free of charge, please [click here](#).

## Oceania

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**Australia:** Close to 100 people came together for the Inaugural Food Sovereignty Conference held in Canberra on 23 and 24 October 2017. The meeting provided a space for the movement to come together in solidarity and map out a future of food sovereignty for Australia. One of the discussions centered on the importance of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and the need for more PGS models as an alternative. You can read the full report [here](#).

## Latin America

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**Brazil:** PGS and CSA in the south of Brazil - The Agroecology Center (CPRA) of the State Secretary for Agriculture in Paraná is promoting the project “Cestas Solidárias”, an organic CSA with currently 38 working groups, mostly in Curitiba. With no middle-man, the project satisfies both sides of the market chain: producers, who earn more and can better plan their production through pre-financing and consumers, who pay less for organic products and have a closer relation to the producers they support. Certification is mostly carried out through PGS and the consumers are invited to visit the farms and to communicate directly with the producers, in particular through mobile applications such as WhatsApp. CSA awareness is increasing in the country and the link with PGS is very common. To learn more about the project, please visit this [link](#) (in Portuguese) or contact [Manuel](#).

**Peru:** On 31 August, within the scope of the project Nutrition in Mountain Agroecosystems, the International Seminar “Agroecology, Value Chains and Food Systems”, organized by UNALM, ICROFS and IFOAM – Organics International and featuring representatives from the new government and authorities as keynote speakers, was the perfect opportunity to advocate in favour of PGS and introduce it to the news Ministry of Agriculture. ANPE has been advocating for the official recognition of PGS for the past twelve years and has been implementing different regional PGS with its members throughout the country. The event succeeded in securing the



Government's commitment to create a PGS task force to develop a proposal. Several organizations were represented in the PGS task force: Ministry of Agriculture, the national competent authority for organic agriculture (SENASA), UNALM, ANPE Peru, PGS National Council (ANPE Peru, IDMA and ASPEC) and IFOAM - Organics International. This process of information sharing and analysing took almost 6 months until SENASA decided to end the meetings and work on a proposal. A final draft has been circulating among the key stakeholders. The National PGS Council (ANPE Peru, IDMA and ASPEC) sent an official letter to the authorities of the Ministry of Agriculture expressing the need to introduce changes in the draft for a better legal device to facilitate PGS recognition and implementation for organic smallholders. This letter represents the political position of the National PGS Council. For more information, please contact ANPE PERU [contacto@anpeperu.org](mailto:contacto@anpeperu.org).



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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome at any time. Please send your PGS-related articles in English, French or Spanish to [pgs@ifoam.bio](mailto:pgs@ifoam.bio).

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