

Organic Agriculture & Participatory Guarantee Systems



Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. (IFOAM, 2008)

IFOAM - Organics International recognizes the full diversity of Organic Agriculture, including in terms of verification systems. Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are verification systems alternative and complementary to ISO-type independent third-party certification.

Thousands of organic producers are now verified through PGS initiatives across the world. Growing from the same ideals that guided yesterday's pioneering organic farmers, PGS not only guarantee the credibility of the organic produce, but also are crucially linked to local and alternative marketing approaches. Varying in methodology and approaches, a Shared Vision and Shared Ideals bring together different PGS initiatives on a common platform, in which PGS key elements and key features remain consistent worldwide.

Participatory Guarantee Systems

KEY ELEMENTS

FEATURES



NORMS conceived by all the stakeholders



Clear, pre-defined CONSEQUENCES for non-compliance

DOCUMENTED management systems & procedures



Mechanisms To VERIFY compliance



Suitable to SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURE



Mechanisms to SUPPORT Farmers



Seals or labels as evidence of ORGANIC STATUS



PRINCIPLES & VALUES that enhance livelihoods



MORE THAN A CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Participatory Guarantee Systems, just like third-party certification systems, aim to provide a credible guarantee for consumers seeking organic produce. The difference is in approach: direct participation of farmers, consumers and other stakeholders in the verification process is not only encouraged in PGS, but may be required. Such involvement is realistic and achievable given that PGS is likely to serve small farms and local, direct markets. Costs of participation are low and mostly take the form of voluntary time involvement rather than financial expenses. Moreover, paperwork is reduced, making it more accessible to small operators.

PROMOTING EMPOWERMENT, COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND LOCAL MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Active participation on the part of the stakeholders, as foreseen by PGS, results in greater empowerment and responsibility. PGS place a high priority on knowledge and capacity building – not only for producers, but for consumers as well. Because they are based on direct personal relationships and often carry 'endogenous development' values, PGS help consumers and producers to establish and favor direct or short-distance market relationships.



THE PGS LOGO OF IFOAM - ORGANICS INTERNATIONAL

IFOAM - Organics International offers a logo to PGS initiatives recognized by the PGS Committee of IFOAM - Organics International. The idea behind the logo is to help build a sense of belonging as well as a community of practices for the PGS initiatives around the world, under the IFOAM - Organics International umbrella.

STAY INFORMED

For updated information about PGS initiatives worldwide, please refer to the PGS Portal at: www.ifoam.bio/pgs. Here you can subscribe to the The Global PGS Newsletter of IFOAM - Organics International and access archived issues. The IFOAM - Organics International Policy brief "How Governments Can Support Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)" is also available for free download.

