

PGS HANDBOOK FOR THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

*How Participatory Guarantee Systems
can develop and function*



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Definitions

Certification

The procedure by which a producer or a group of producers received written and reliably endorsed assurance that a clearly identified process has been methodically applied in order to assess that the operator is producing specified products according to specific requirements or standards.

Compliance

Compliance means conforming to a rule, such as a specification, policy, standard or law.

Internal Control System

Part of a documented quality assurance system that allows the external certification body to delegate the annual inspection of individual group members to an identified body unit within the certified operation.

Local and domestic markets

These markets are found within national borders. Generally, local refers to markets in which a producer might link directly to consumers whereas domestic is a broader term that might include more distant or indirect marketing (through an intermediary).

Quality Assurance System

System that provides demonstrable evidence that specified requirements relating to a product and/or production process are fulfilled and controlled in a consistent way.

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.

Peer Review

A process whereby people in similar situations (in this case small holder producers) in some way assess the production practices of their peers. The process can be formal or informal.

PGS Stakeholder Group (PGS-SG)

PGS Stakeholder Group (PGS-SG) is the group of farmers and other stakeholders who are responsible for the day-to-day management of a PGS.

Producer/farmer

In this document, the term producer is used to describe farmers and may in some situations also include small-scale processors or handcrafters. In most PGS situations, the raw materials used in processing are produced by the farmers and their families or by other PGS producers within the same community.

Smallholder

For this document, the term refers to producers with small land parcels or part-time producers. It also describes producers who run family farms as opposed to large scale farms (plantations etc.).

Abbreviations

CNG	Certified Naturally Grown
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
ICS	Internal Control System
MAELA	Latin America Agro-Ecology Movement
OFNZ	Organic Farm New Zealand
N&P	Nature et Progrès (France)
NSOP	National Standards for Organic Produce (India)
PGS	Participatory Guarantee Systems
PGS-SG	PGS Stakeholder Group
TF	Task Force
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

1. Introduction

The terminology and conceptual framework for describing Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) was first developed from the *International Alternative Certification Workshop* that was held in Brazil in 2004, sponsored by IFOAM - Organics International and the MAELA. During this event, the dynamics of different alternative organic certification systems from around the world were shared and their common features documented, allowing for a common definition to be identified. The current officially adopted definition states: “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 - Organics International, 2008)

Since 2004, PGS have gained recognition throughout the world as a credible, relevant and cost effective mechanism through which producers can guarantee that their products have been produced organically. IFOAM – Organics International recognizes the full diversity of organic agriculture, including in terms of verification or quality assurance systems. PGS are alternative and complementary to ISO-type independent third-party certification: just like third-party certification systems, PGS consist in quality assurance systems that aim to provide a credible guarantee for consumers seeking organic produce.

PGS differ from third party certification in the 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.

There is indication that PGS have the potential to make a significant contribution to the reduction of food insecurity and to improved nutrition among farmers in rural areas¹. PGS have therefore been described as a pro-poor development tool: 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 carry endogenous development values, PGS help consumers and producers to establish and favor direct or short-distance market relationships.

IFOAM – Organics International and MAELA have supported this process and helped to ensure that organic producers may access organic guarantee options that best suit their needs. Thus, alongside individual and third-party certification, PGS are now regarded as a viable option to guarantee the organic quality of products for local organic markets. The PGS model has also been adapted to non-organic production, such as low-pesticide farming².

¹ Global Comparative Study: Interactions between Social Processes and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) – IFOAM, 2014.

² VECO PGS Vietnam

This document should be read in conjunction with the publications of IFOAM - Organics International: *Participatory Guarantee System. Case Studies from Brazil, India, New Zealand, USA, France* and the *PGS Self Evaluation Form (SEF)*.

2. Background

Since there are various approaches to the development and application of these common features, it is not possible, nor the intention of these Guidelines, to prescribe a single approach.

This document aims to describe the key concepts of a PGS and explains how this guarantee system has been developed and applied in different settings around the world, drawing from established and well-documented as well as recently developed PGS models.

2.1 Getting started - Motivating factors

Usually PGS emerge after a group of people comes together who feel the benefit and/or need of having an organic guarantee. A guarantee through PGS provides recognition in local markets but it is not constrained by the compliance requirements and costs of third party certification (usually geared to anonymous markets and often long supply chains). Other motivating factors for PGS may include a desire to:

- Reduce bureaucracy in the organic guarantee process
- Promote equity and fairness through the production chain
- Engender community values and support the potential for community development through organic agriculture

The group structure can provide a framework through which group marketing and various community building activities can be facilitated.

Most individual producers join a PGS because they want to sell their organic products locally (usually a farmers market or a retail outlet) and they need a label. A PGS can provide an affordable way of getting such a label. The benefits of belonging to a group may also be important particularly once the PGS has been in operation for a period of time and the full benefits can be appreciated.

Thus, as the initial motivating factor, NGOs might be inspired by the opportunity to support the development of a PGS through which community development objectives can be achieved, whereas, most farmers will see the opportunity to access markets and secure better returns.

Another approach to start a PGS begins with a market already in place: established organic farmers together with the support of a farmers market, retail outlet, company, etc. develop a guarantee system to cater for increased demands for integrity and quality. Below, some examples of motivations that led to the set up of PGS initiatives that are now well established.

- For Ecovida (Brazil) there was strong socio-economic impetus for the development of their PGS. It was rooted in the idea of social justice for the rural poor by providing them with access to markets and with an alternative to large-scale commercial

agriculture and factory farming. The PGS development process was supported by NGOs, the Provincial Government, the Church, food cooperatives and producer groups and it was formalized in 2001. Ecovida's example had an important role in the definition of the Organic Regulation adopted by the Government in Brazil. Ecovida promotes the idea that an ecological product goes beyond technical standards and embraces agro-ecological principles along with social inclusion, environment protection and healthy food production.

- For OFNZ (New Zealand) the impetus was largely economic. Farmers wanted an organic label for the local market but could not afford the high cost of third-party certification. An NGO (Soil and Health Association) facilitated the development process with funding support from the New Zealand Government. The development process involved a series of stakeholder workshops throughout the country, which led to the development of working model for a PGS. OFNZ was then tested in 5 pilot sites and launched in 2002. (www.ofnz.co). OFNZ adopted the standards of BIO-GRO NZ (certifier accredited by IFOAM - Organics International) for the production rules and they developed their own set of norms (compliance criteria).
- For CNG (USA) the need for PGS arose as a practical response to the US Department of Agriculture's move to control the use of the word organic. Many small-scale producers were being excluded from using the term organic and needed to develop a system for market recognition. The NGO (www.naturallygrown.org) launched their PGS in 2002 after a lengthy period of consultation with key stakeholders. CNG adopted the USDA NOP standards.
- In Vietnam the PGS concept was introduced in 2008 by the Agriculture Development Denmark Asia (ADDA), an international NGO, as part of a pro-poor development project. They introduced PGS to assist smallholder vegetable farmers near to Hanoi to compete more effectively in the Hanoi market. The PGS is now known as the Vietnam PGS: It is recognized by IFOAM - Organics International and their production standards (Vietnam PGS Organic Standards) are approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards. Currently there are 39 groups.
- In India the drive came from NGOs involved in the wider issues of community development and Organic Agriculture. They recognized the potential of PGS to provide an organic guarantee label to millions of poor farmers. They created the PGS Organic India Council (www.pgsorganic.in). The council adopted the National Standards for Organic Produce (NSOP) and developed the PGS model that was trialed through 4 organizations in many locations across the country and then officially launched in 2007.
- In France Nature & Progrès (N&P) set up a type of PGS in the 1980's as a local and community based organic guarantee system. This was even before official recognition of organic agriculture in France and Europe and the regulation of the term "organic". PGS was not included in the organic regulation European Certification Norm EN NF 45011, thus being excluded from the claim to "organic". Since then consumer recognition of Nature & Progrès builds only on its historical influence, the stricter

private standards (than the CEE n°2091/92), a global code of ethics and the PGS. N&P producers have no access to organic conversion or maintenance subsidies, neither to organic market retailers and processors, nor can they use the term "Agriculture Biologique" ("Organic Agriculture" in French). For these reasons, many of N&P farmers get third-party certified in addition to their PGS certification. In 2005 IFOAM - Organics International initiated its pilot project on group certification in Europe, to test third-party group certification (through Internal Control Systems) as an option for some European organic producers. N&P joined the project with their Tarn regional group, testing the implementation of an ICS on top of their existing PGS.

2.2 Adopt and or Adapt

Given that there are many successful PGS initiatives operating around the world that have well documented systems, the question, for a new group is whether to design their own system from scratch or to adopt and adapt one of the existing systems.

Regardless of the approach there will be a lot of work to do.

When deciding on standards it is important to differentiate between production rules and norms and compliance criteria. Some standards include both while others simply describe production rules.

- Production rules describe those factors, which relate to the inputs and general management of the organic production environment.
- Compliance criteria describe the operational aspects of a PGS, such as the requirements for application and membership, the procedures to be followed in the organic verification process, the documentation requirements and the sanctions relating to non-compliance.

National standards are commonly just production rules whereas the EU Regulations for example contain both production and compliance criteria that prescribe arrangements for quality assurance systems (third party certification and provisions for accepting group certification). Standards developed by certification bodies or third-party certifiers also normally contain both production rules and compliance criteria.

Many PGS have adopted national organic standards and designed their own compliance criteria to suit their own situation. If national organic standards are not available then the IFOAM Standard could be adopted as such or adapted to the local conditions.

Where national standards are a legal requirement (by regulation) they might also contain norms that restrict or control the use of the word organic or biologique. If this is the case the pathway for PGS could be complicated. To meet this challenge the options could include:

- Lobbying or application of political pressure to provoke changes to the laws which open the way for PGS to operate

- Following the example of CNG (USA) where new wording is used for describing the PGS that does not include the word organic (e.g. “certified naturally grown”).

The most likely scenario for a new PGS is to adopt a mix and match of the different PGS components to best suit the situation. But whether you adopt or adapt, the development process must be supported by the collective participation of the key stakeholders. It should also be subject to trial and evaluation by the key stakeholders before they are adapted to suit your ‘unique’ situation.

The trialing process will enable a PGS initiative to:

- Identify and strengthen gaps in your existing skill base and systems (administration, management and technical)
- Review paper work and modify as required
- Develop an understanding of the organic guarantee process and the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in the process
- Consolidate the feeling of ownership of the PGS amongst the stakeholders through participation in the trial process

2.3 PGS and Internal Control Systems (ICS)

PGS and ICS can be complementary. The concepts of participatory certification through PGS and group certification/Internal Control Systems (ICS) are the two main types of certification, which are particularly relevant to smallholder organic farmers. They share a common goal in providing a credible guarantee for consumers that organic production standards are met. Technically, PGS and ICS share some similarities in that they both have collective certification tools, standards/norms, mechanisms for verifying compliance, documented management procedures and farmer’s pledge and seal. As a result, they can look quite similar on the surface and are therefore sometimes confused. However, in theory and approach there are some key differences, as summarized in this section. Despite these differences, there is no absolute barrier preventing an ICS from operating fairly similarly to a PGS initiative or for a PGS initiative to operate similar to an ICS. Indeed some local groups of PGS initiatives in Latin America have been recognized as operational ICS by external certifiers.

How do PGS differ from Third-party ICS organic certification systems?

- Philosophically the difference between PGS and ICS lays in the emphasis placed on participation and horizontality. Ecovida talks about PGS certification as part of a ‘broad process that begins with the conscience of each producer. This conscience grows into a conviction. This conviction is actively reinforced through the stakeholder’s engagement in a holistic process. Even though ICS may also try to shape a collective ethic, the process is more mechanical and usually driven from outside by NGO’s and exporters. The system is set in place with the expectation that with time the producer’s philosophical commitment will grow. ICS is mostly geared towards export markets for

commodities such as coffee, which the producers themselves might not even consume. PGS, in contrast, are usually focused around providing food for local markets. In many cases the producers and consumers are directly engaged in selling and buying, for example at farmers markets or cooperatives. In ICS, products are usually sold to faraway places, which the producers are unlikely to ever visit. The products themselves (usually commodities) are processed and mixed with others so that the links to the producers become invisible.

- Technically the key difference between PGS and ICS lies in the relationship to third-party certification. An ICS has to operate within the overall context of third party certification and in accordance with the organic regulations of their target export markets. PGS to the contrary are self-governed systems that operate outside the frame of third-party certification and very often also outside the frame of organic regulations. In PGS there is not one set of rules, which must be followed by all PGS. For each PGS the key stakeholders are engaged in the design and operation of the PGS. The ownership and control of the process is coming from inside the overall group not from an outside agency, as is the case with third-party certification.

Other differences include:

- A desire by PGS to minimize paper work. This is helped by the fact that PGS do not usually attempt to track product flow once it leaves the farm gate
- Certification in PGS is for the whole farm, not a single product
- Individual farmers own their PGS certificates, whereas in ICS the certificate is owned by the group or the processor/trader
- PGS producers can market their products on their own behalf
- Consumers or buyers are often involved in PGS, while they are not normally involved in ICS
- Generally speaking, the ambition for transparency is greater in PGS. Indeed, an ICS is not designed to provide information to any external stakeholder, except to the certification body that certifies them. In PGS, on the contrary, open access to information is the norm, particularly for the consumers whom the PGS is serving, but also for other stakeholders.

In ICS, with its export focus, the baseline entry requirements in terms of paperwork and infrastructure are far more exacting compared to PGS. ICS do not easily allow for a step by step evolution of the infrastructure and documentation. While PGS are able to sprout out of local initiatives where resources might be limited but enthusiasm high, ICS requires both technical support and funding to cover the costs of building the infrastructure and paying fees to a third-party certifier.

3. Key elements and Compliance

PGS do not simply consist on a certification system: PGS are about a collective commitment to a set of principles, reflected through practical actions that demonstrate, in a measurable way, how the principles are complied with.

An important feature of a PGS is the dynamic ways in which various stakeholders can be engaged in the process. Particularly for farmers this refers to the various possibilities to demonstrate compliance. Recognition and involvement of different stakeholders in design, implementation and day-to-day operation, is integral to the overall effectiveness and credibility of a PGS.

Farmers are encouraged to demonstrate their capacity to follow production standards by actively engaging in the process to make their system work. At the same time, flexibility in the ways farmers demonstrate compliance, to ensure relevant cultural and social aspects are considered, is an essential component of PGS. For example, PGS can apply local social control and culturally appropriate mechanisms that demonstrate their commitment to follow the rules of their PGS; depending on literacy levels, oral pledges can replace signed, written ones; forms and templates can be translated into local dialects or simplified in order to be more accessible; etc.

This dynamic compliance makes it so that each PGS initiative develops in their own unique way. Nevertheless, all PGS initiatives comprise key elements and features, which are consistent throughout the world. In this session, the key elements of PGS will be presented and discussed.

3.1 A Shared Vision

A shared vision is the starting point of a PGS: this is where the key stakeholders (producers, consumers, NGOs, traders, religious institutions, governments, etc.) collectively agree to support the principles guiding what the PGS is trying to achieve. The shared vision can embrace organic production goals, as well as goals relating to standards, social justice, fair trade, respect for ecosystems, the autonomy of local communities, cultural differences, and so on. These principles are used to guide both production standards and the rules of how the PGS will operate.

Shaping the vision in a participatory process is an essential step in the PGS development. During this process, the stakeholders come together to discuss relevant issues like access to markets, prices, yields and organic practices. They also come together to learn about the PGS concept and, once the concept has been outlined, they discuss how PGS may be applied to their specific situation to address the issues they face.

How the stakeholders collectively share their vision will vary, depending on the local circumstances and the ways in which stakeholder groups are engaged. For example:

- Initially stakeholders of a PGS could embrace the vision through their participation and support in the design process, later on by becoming members of the PGS

initiative. This may include committing in an appropriately binding way; for example, signing a registration document or a pledge, that refers to the ‘vision’.

- Each stakeholder organization could adopt the shared vision as part of their organization’s ‘vision’.
- Farmers and consumers can commit by agreeing to produce organic products, while consumers can also commit by consuming these organic products.
- The vision can be articulated to consumers via labeling and publicity and directly at points of sale.

No matter how complex the themes behind the shared vision are, it is essential that all stakeholders are able to express, in order to ensure that it is accepted and understood by all members. Below are some examples of the shared visions of some PGS initiatives, summarized in one sentence:

‘Everyone has the right to know what they are eating [...] we do very little alone, but together, in cooperation, we can build something stronger and broader’. (Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia).

‘We accept the “spirit of organics” to imply a deep understanding, empathy and acceptance of the beauty and wholeness of our planet and the potential of the human race to till the soil [...]’ (Bryanston Organic Market, PGS, South Africa).

3.2 Participation

Participation is an essential and dynamic part of PGS and is reflected through the active engagement of stakeholders who share a common vision, including producers and consumers, retailers and traders and NGOs among others. All stages of the planning, the development and the operation of PGS are facilitated by these stakeholders, in various capacities.

The concept of participation embodies the principle of a collective responsibility to ensure the organic integrity of the PGS. This collective responsibility is reflected through:

- Shared ownership of the PGS;
- Stakeholder engagement in the development process
- Shared understanding of how the system works
- Direct communication between producers and consumers and other stakeholders

Together, these help shape the integrity-based approach in this way developing a formula for trust. In order to promote this trust, it is highly important to have transparent operational processes. This includes transparency in regards to decisions and decision-making processes,

easy access to databases (e.g. via a website) and farms being open to be visited by consumers and other stakeholders.

Who participates and how?

Different people and groups have different skills, technical knowledge and access to different resources. Therefore, they may play diverse roles in the development and management of PGS.

It is important that producers are directly engaged in the day-to-day operations of their PGS, particularly in the certification, verification and monitoring of the other farms and farmers. In the case of small groups, all producers should be directly involved in all these activities. In large groups, all producers should participate in peer reviews. However, elected persons may represent sub-groups of farmers in final approval processes.

Consumers may be actively engaged in the PGS. Their level of involvement depends on whether the products are marketed directly or via other agents, distances to population centers and the extent to which consumer groups are organized able to participate, among others. There are many examples showing that consumers are members of PGS groups³, especially when the farms are close to urban centers. They do not only buy the PGS products but also engage in decision-making processes, peer review and management. Generally, it is important to create and foster bridges between producers and consumers that are appropriate to the respective situation.

The key questions for the group that is responsible to facilitate the development of a PGS are:

“Who are the key stakeholders?”

“Have we done all we can to ensure that all key stakeholders are able to participate in the PGS development process?”

Ron Khosla of Certified Naturally Grown (CNG, USA) wrote “One big strength is that we didn’t give up on trying to include as many people as possible in the discussion about how the (PGS) program would run. Even when the first efforts to get feedback are rejected [...] you can’t stop trying to include other people even when they initially reject you or your idea.”

If consumers are not directly engaged in our PGS, can we call ourselves a PGS?

Consumers and producers have complementary interests. The producer provides organic products on one side, the consumers buys and consumes them on the other. The engagement of consumers has many benefits and is a feature of many established PGS. These benefits include:

- The integration of producers and consumers, providing strength to the credibility of the PGS and broadening the market opportunities for the certified products.

³ CSAs can also provide insights for the ways in which consumers and producers can support each other.

- Consumers share the workload of managing a PGS, providing valuable expertise in management and playing a supporting role in the peer review (farm inspection) process.
- Through their involvement in the PGS, consumers acknowledge the value of organic food and happily pay fair prices for the produce.

In the ECOVIDA PGS (Brazil), consumers can be members of the Ethics Committee that monitors the activities of the PGS, including farm inspections. In Organic Farm New Zealand (OFNZ), consumers can be simple members, part of a committee or also be engaged as part of the farm inspection process.

Due to circumstances it may not be possible to have consumers directly involved in the PGS. It is nevertheless, what is important is that the principle of including and involving key stakeholders is understood and applied as far as possible.

Producers may be reluctant to have high consumer involvement in their PGS as they feel that consumer interests might work towards keeping the prices low. There are ways to manage this phenomenon:

- Having all stakeholders engaged in the development of the PGS and committed to its principles of trading fairly⁴ from its inception;
- Ensuring that the roles of all stakeholders, including consumers are clearly defined and cover voting rights and responsibilities.

3.3 Transparency

Transparency is created by making all stakeholders, including producers and consumers, aware how exactly the guarantee system works. This includes the standards, the organic guarantee process (norms) and the decision-making processes. **This does not mean that every detail is known by everyone but rather they have at least a basic understanding of how the system functions or have a way to find out.**

Transparency is enhanced by having:

- Clearly defined and documented systems
- Public access to documentation and information about the PGS, such as lists of certified producers and details about their farms and non-compliance actions. These may be available through websites, public notices and stakeholder meetings.

At the grass roots level transparency is developed through the active participation of the producers in the organic guarantee process, which can include:

⁴ The idea of trading fairly is based on consumers agreeing to pay a fair price and farmers agreeing to supply and honoring the arrangement.

- Information sharing at meetings and workshops
- Participation in peer reviews)
- Involvement in decision-making.

3.4 Trust

The integrity base upon which PGS are built is rooted in the idea that producers can be trusted and that the organic guarantee system can be an expression and verification of this trust. Trust is built through the collective development of the shared vision by the key stakeholders and maintained through the continuation to collectively shape and reinforce the vision through the PGS. This idea of ‘trust’ assumes that the individual producer has a commitment to protect nature and the health of consumers through organic production.

The ways trust is reflected in the PGS may vary and will depend entirely on factors that are culturally specific to the PGS group.

Mechanisms for expressing trustworthiness can include:

- A handshake or a self declaration (a producer pledge) via a private or witnessed signing of a pledge document.
- Where producers are organized as groups both the individual and collective conscience can be expressed through group acclamation of the pledge (written and or verbal). In the Indian Organic Labelling Scheme (OLS) the pledge process is videotaped and a record held in an archive.
- Purchase or supply contracts.

Whatever process is followed it should be decided upon by and with the key stakeholders. Like any other formal record of an event and written arrangement it should be possible to revisit.

3.5 Horizontality

PGS are intended to be non-hierarchical. This is reflected in the overall democratic structure and through the collective responsibility of the PGS:

- Sharing and rotating responsibility
- Engaging producers directly in the peer review of each other’s farms
- Transparency in decision making processes

3.6 Learning Process

Through the exchange of ideas and experiences a *learning process* unfolds and becomes an ongoing dynamic of a PGS. This can include technical aspects, for example to build knowledge on organic standards and organic practices. A social learning process happens when different stakeholder groups get to know each other and gain awareness of each other's situations through the participation in the PGS. The obtained knowledge is fundamental for the PGS and contributes to how the components are designed. It is key in the development of trust between stakeholders and in the PGS process itself.

The initial learning process is usually facilitated by a third party such as an NGO, private company or a government agency. It should be someone who has an understanding of PGS. The implementation process is always 'hands-on' and might involve field days or learning events (workshops) facilitated by a specialist.

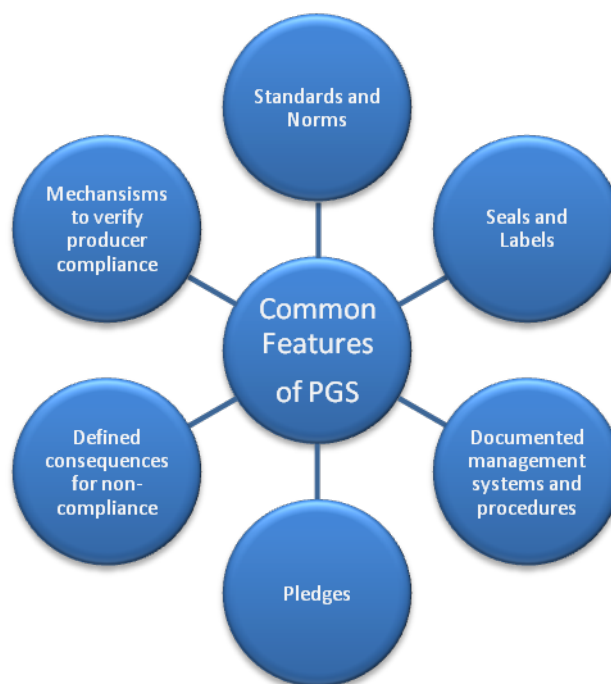
Important points about the learning events:

- The learning events are integral and essential to shaping the way the PGS operates.
- Those who participate are acknowledged through an attendance register.
- All the producers in a group should participate in the learning events.

In situations where producers may be unable to read and write, mechanisms will be set in place to engage them in ways that are appropriate to their culture, capacity and situation. This might involve culturally specific ways of expressing group solidarity. It might be pictorial, a video or some other hands-on activity. In any case, the mechanisms should fit with the situation.

4. Key Features and Implementation

Although PGS have developed independently in different countries and cultural contexts they share a common set of structural (core) features, which underpin the guarantee process. This includes the use of organic standards and norms, individual pledges, and the implementation of documented management systems. Furthermore, PGS have several operational procedures like the development or adaption of seals and labels, mechanisms to verify producer compliance, and defined consequences for non-compliance in place.



Features of PGS

The common features shown in diagram 2 are regarded the baseline indicators for PGS. Depending on the context, the level of documentation of these features may vary among different PGS.

4.1 Norms conceived by all stakeholders

In order to measure organic integrity of a product a reference point is needed. For organic, this reference point should be a generally recognized⁵ set of organic production rules. Commonly in PGS these rules are inspired by the IFOAM Standard/IFOAM Basic Standard⁶ (e.g. ECOVIDA). In other cases, the PGS use the national organic standards (e.g. the USDA

⁵ Organic standards that are „generally recognized“ are for example those that are approved in the IFOAM Family of Standards (international recognition), as well as government-approved organic standards (national recognition).

⁶ The IFOAM Basic Standard was abolished in 2012 and replaced by the IFOAM Standard, an internationally applicable certification standard.

Organic Standards for CNG, the NSOP for PGS-India). In some cases, they adapted from the standards of a recognized third-party certifier (OFNZ).

The compliance criteria (norms) describe and define the rules of operation of the PGS, including the procedures to be followed in the organic verification process. They should be agreed upon by the key stakeholders involved in the PGS. This process can take a little time to work through but it is important, as stakeholder participation in this process is integral to developing ownership and commitment to the PGS. For example the producers may be required to engage in a peer review process of each other's farms. It is important to trial this process in order to identify and discuss social and cultural issues that might complicate this process and require redesign.

The standards can be lengthy documents which producers are unlikely to read in detail but it is vital that:

- They are aware of what the standards entail
- They have access to the principals and key messages in these standards
- They have access to a copy of the full standard.

For most PGS initiatives a Summary Standard is prepared and given to each producer in the language they commonly speak and can read, or is presented to them so that they can understand what it entails. This document usually accompanies the Farmer Pledge. If the farmers are unable to read or write other mechanisms should be used to convey and develop the understanding of the details in the standards. Commonly workshops and hands-on practical approaches are used, during which key points are described to the producers and they are encouraged to discuss them. Producers should understand the importance of reporting non-compliances they might observe. They should have easy access to a technical support person. This person may live in the same community or visit the community regularly. While telephones may work in some situations it seems that face-to-face communication is the most effective way to share information.

Linking with ICS

Standards that are linked or drawn from recognized international standards have some advantages particularly for situations where a PGS certified producer may wish to supply an export market and therefore need a link to a third-party certification either as an individual or part of an ICS. If the standards used are similar to a third-party certifier's it can make the transition from PGS to third party certification easier. In some cases PGS and third-party operators have been able to agree on arrangements that enable a transition to take place. Such arrangements might include the sharing of paper work or in some cases spot audits of the PGS by the third-party certifier. In situations where a PGS may later involve a third-party certifier for exports, it may be useful to involve them already in the initial design of the PGS. This can help to build trust and cement a future working relationship. Whether this happens or not is entirely up to the PGS stakeholders. It is important that the PGS stakeholders are careful to remain in charge of the processes and decision-making. There is a danger that when third-party certifiers get involved, that even with the best of intentions, they introduce

additional procedures and ‘requirements’ that are part of the third-party approach but not required in PGS.

4.2 Grassroots Organization

In PGS the term ‘grass roots’ relates to those stakeholders that are most involved in producing and consuming the PGS products. A PGS will be built on local initiatives with and for the people it is designed to serve as far as possible. This does not mean that in some situations a government body or external organization cannot be involved or even initially take a lead but rather that the grass roots will be integral to the PGS development process and operation.

4.3 Suitable to Smallholder Agriculture

What is a smallholder? There are various definitions of smallholders, which can be applied to different socio-economic and cultural situations. Generally speaking a smallholder is one of the millions of producers worldwide who produce low volumes of product as compared to larger producers. While many ICS operators apply the EU criteria for defining smallholders for their third-party certification there is no one single definition for PGS purposes and it is a widely held view by PGS-SGs that there should not be any specific criteria applied.

Being suitable for smallholder agriculture means that a PGS will be designed to be affordable for small farmers and appropriate culturally as well as in terms of the paper work and the procedures and processes applied.

4.4 Principles and Values that enhance livelihoods

PGS are characterized by clearly defined principles and values that are documented and may be expressed through the standards, operations manual, public meetings and via the farmer pledge. These principles and values focus on enhancing livelihoods: principles and values are aimed at the well-being of farming families, fair relations with consumers and the promotion of organic agriculture. They may include fair-trade, social justice as well as being environmentally orientated and culturally appropriate.

4.5 Documented Management Systems and Procedures

For an organic guarantee system to be transparent and to be able to deliver on a consistent and equitable basis, the systems and procedures should be documented. The depth and complexity of this documentation will vary between PGS and can evolve over time. It is important that there a system in place and that it can be measured in an objective and consistent manner. As with any quality assurance system there is an expectation of ongoing improvement as lessons are learned and the organization gains experience. It is better to begin with something basic that can be built on than to not start at all. Find examples of PGS procedures from the PGS Organic India, OFNZ, Ecovida, CNG and others on <http://www.ifoam.bio>.

The extent to which producers are expected to complete documentation and engage in record keeping can vary from PGS to PGS and might include a simple filing system (a folder) where receipts are filed through a written log cross-referenced against receipts. In some cases a group leader might manage the filing process on behalf of other group members.

PGS documents can include:

- Standards (full standard and summary standard, if required)
- Data base – list of members, status, products; details of each farm - crops, history, field sizes etc. either as a management plan or a record of each farm (could be a written document or a video recording)
- PGS Operations Manual - application and organic guarantee process and arrangements (steps in obtaining the seal/logo and use of it); sanctions for non-compliance; roles and responsibilities of key actors; peer review template (farm inspection) checklist.
- Technical notes for advisors.

4.6 Mechanisms to verify farmer compliance

Mechanisms to verify farmer's compliance to the established norms should actively stimulate participation and encourage the stakeholders to embrace cooperation and provide learning opportunities.

Mechanisms can include:

- Description of the farm and farming activities (management plan): This is a declaration (written or oral recording) by the producer or technical support person on behalf of the producer. It covers farming activities and how they plan to follow the standards and norms adopted by the PGS. To work through this process is often seen as onerous by the producer. But it is important because it encourages the producers to think about the specifics of the standards and through this process to develop a better understanding of them. Also by personally signing or declaring that the statements the producers make are true, they are affirm the commitment to the PGS and the other stakeholders.
- Peer reviews (farm inspections): The dynamic of this process is that it provides a mechanism through which compliance to the standards and norms can be verified by peers and also provides for an exchange of ideas whereby all parties learn about the standards and each other's farming practices. The output from this process is a record of the peer review visit (dated and signed) with details of what was seen and any non-compliance activities. ECOVIDA requires at least three persons in the PGS to take part in the review process. OFNZ requires all the group (pod) members to be present at each other's review. This equates to between four to eight producers depending on the size of the group/pod). For its annual visits, the French National Federation Nature & Progrès relies on around 20 "professional" surveyors. These are farmers from N&P

being more involved in the peer review and financially compensated for their additional work. For each farm visit the federation tries to select the surveyor that is most competent in the production system inspected. The surveyor is usually accompanied by a consumer to ensure transparency in the process.

- Knowledge building: Regular meetings and workshops to discuss technical and marketing issues is a useful mechanism for building the knowledge base and general collective capacity of a group. Experienced producers can share information and their experience with less experienced producers. Attendance records for meetings and workshops can be useful as they can show who participated and can be used to demonstrate commitment.
- Sharing responsibilities and reinforcing the idea of horizontality at all levels of a PGS:
 - in many situations the producers are part of a group, which has an elected leader. Ideally the leader's role is rotated so that each member of the group learns the skills and responsibilities that go with this role.

4.7 Farmers' Pledge

Each farmer joining a PGS states his/her agreement with the established norms through a bottom-line document, such as a signed declaration or a video recording depending on what is culturally and socially acceptable in each context.

The pledge can be made as a self-declaration that is ideally witnessed and signed by another producer or via a group process. This is particularly useful when farmers cannot read or write. A group pledge endorses both the individuals and groups commitments to follow the norms and standards.

4.8 Mechanisms to support farmers

There are several ways through which a PGS can provide support for farmers.

Facilitation of market access: The PGS on its own or with the support of an NGO might facilitate market access via activities such as organizing the venue for farmers markets; promoting the label to consumers and other buyers or by providing market information such as pricing. To find examples how PGS and markets are facilitated refer to the Ecovida Network in Brazil and the Bryanston Organic Market PGS South Africa.

Information and technical support - producers can also be supported through input from technical advisors, newsletters, farm visits, websites. The ability of producers to take advantage of these will depend on their levels of literacy and access to the media as a whole. For producers who have low levels of literacy it seems that regular interactions with technical advisors are important.

In addition to the ones described many other support mechanisms are possible. In the Global Comparative Study on the Interaction between traditional social processes and PGS, it was found that PGS is an important platform for the development of parallel social processes such

as collective seed management, collective work or small-scale savings systems. These processes may take an important function in supporting farmers.

4.9 Seals and labels

A seal (official stamp) is used by a PGS to provide an official endorsement of key documents such as producer's certificates. Such certificates are usually renewed each year and the period of validity of the seal is usually noted on the same document. The use of the seal is controlled and managed by nominated persons (such as the PGS management committee).

Labels have a different purpose. They are attached to final products and their intention is to provide the consumer with a guarantee that their product is organic. The label usually carries the PGS logo and the producer's number or code. This way the consumers are able to trace the origin of a product. Labels are of particular relevance when producers and consumers are isolated by distance. When the producer does not have direct contact with the customers the label becomes the 'face' of the producer.

Examples of PGS labels



Pour notre santé et celle de la Terre



4.10 Clear pre-defined consequences for non-compliance

There will always be circumstances where producers are unable or fail to comply with the standards and norms of their PGS. In most cases it seems these non-compliances are minor, mostly they are centered on the perennial challenge of record keeping. However, in some cases the non-compliance might be more serious, such as the deliberate use of a prohibited input or the mislabeling of product. It is evident that the consequences for non-compliance will be graded to fit with the seriousness of the non-compliance.

Whatever the consequences might be, they are:

- Agreed upon by the producers in advance. This way a level a commitment and understanding about consequences for non-compliance are established.
- Documented and presented to the producers as part of the agreement they make to follow the standards and norms. Often they are included with the farmer pledge.

It is vital that the consequences are practical, for example, where a fine might be imposed on a producer, the level of the fine should fit the socio-economic situation and the capacity of the producer to pay the fine. There is no value in having consequences for non-compliance that are not ‘owned’ by the stakeholders and cannot be applied or respected by stakeholders.

Where consequences for non-compliance are applied:

- The consequences for non-compliance will be handed out consistently and without favor.
- The process of applying them will be transparent.
- The outcomes publicly available through an appropriate pathway such as a website or public notice.

Non-compliance	Sanction
Farmer fails to attend training.	Reminder/Fine
Farmer has no receipts for inputs purchased or products sold.	Reminder/Fine
Farmer uses farm inputs not approved by the PGS without permission.	Organic certification withheld for a period of time/Fine
Farmer uses prohibited inputs that are never allowed in the standards.	Removed from PGS group, certificate cancelled, never allowed back into the group

Examples of sanctions for non-compliance

4.11 Role of Peer Review in the PGS process

A significant aspect of PGS is the way the producers can be engaged in peer reviews of each other's farms. Peer review is a process whereby people in similar situations assess the production practices of their peers. In PGS, a peer review takes place when farmers, often accompanied by consumers and other stakeholders, visit a farm of one of the farmers in their group, to conduct an inspection. Peer review is at the very core of PGS.

In the beginning the producers will have limited skills to conduct peer reviews and there is a risk that all parties feel very uncomfortable conducting the peer review, unless there is a well-described process, which is understood by all the participants. This process should include:

- Clearly worded documentation and instructions;
- Training for the participants before the event (or a practice event);
- Technical backup to include the presence and participation of advisors through the first peer reviews, and then on a regular basis to give the producers confidence.

While the term peer review is commonly used by PGS, the process may also be called “farm inspection”, “internal inspection” or as in the case of Ecovida “the Ethical Council’s visit”. The language used is less important than the process itself, which exemplifies the participatory nature of PGS by engaging producers and other key stakeholders in the farm inspection and decision-making processes.

Care must be taken to keep the process easy to follow and understand:

- A checklist should be available to guide the participants through the review. The checklist should limit or avoid requiring subjective responses to questions.
- The checklist can be systematized by numbering and referencing the key questions against specific points in the standards, procedures, and/or a farm management plan.

This arrangement helps the participants to systematically follow the questions and to keep their focus directed to how the standards are being applied. Should any non-compliance be identified it can then be referenced to the specific place in the standards or manual of procedures.

A carefully designed checklist will help to build the participants understanding of the standards. It also contributes to standardize the review and reporting process and helps to remove some of the subjectivity that comes with the interpretations of the standards and of what is organic by individuals. A checklist also modifies the dominating influences of persons who may be present at the inspection and try to control the process. Both can confuse the peer review process.

To assess the status of a property reference points are needed. They are commonly taken from a document called “farm management plan”, which compiles details about the farm including

a map that shows the different plots on the farm. The plan describes the layout and activities on the farm, as well as future developments as planned. The plan may be completed by the producer or a technical support person who acts as a scribe on behalf of the producer before the peer review takes place.

The farm management plan has a number of functions, it provides a:

- Description of the farm (history and management practices)
- Reference point for measuring change on the farm over time and for structuring the on-farm peer review process.
- Written or in some cases verbal commitment from the producer against which they can be held accountable.

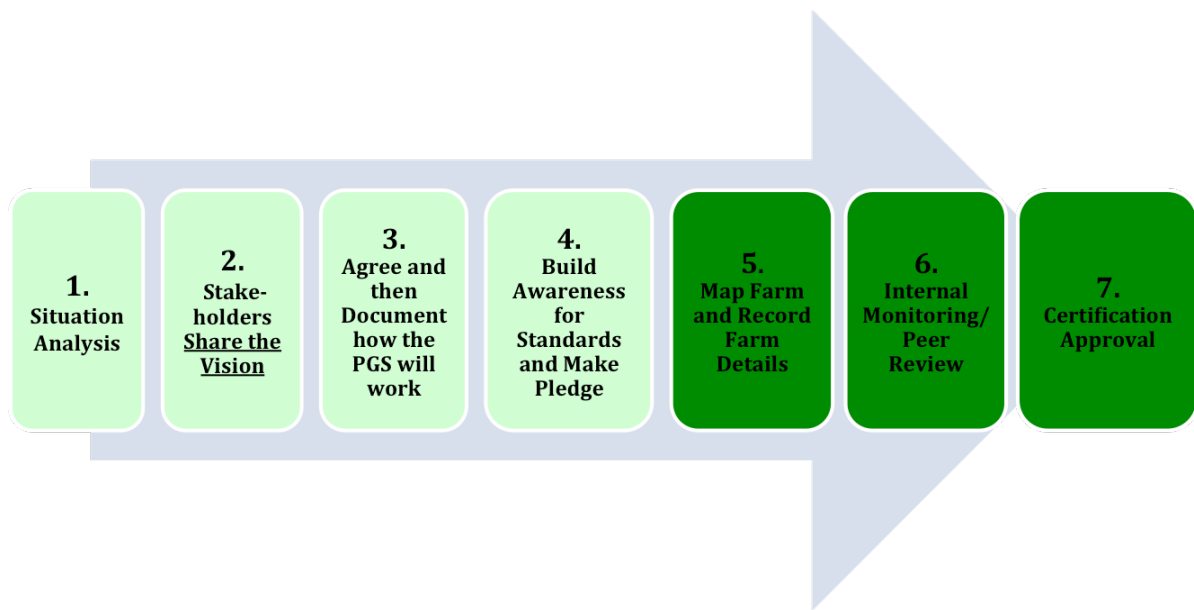
In case no farm management plan is available, the first compiled peer review checklist (or farm inspection report) can serve as a tool to keep records and information about the farm over time.

4.12 Funding the operational costs of a PGS

One of the key aims of a PGS is to keep costs with certification as low as practicable. There are always costs attached to running a PGS, but the decision whether the producers have to pay fees, for example to a supporting organization or to a collective fund running the initiative, in order to be members and participate in the PGS, will depend on the specific situation of the PGS itself. Government grants, donations from members, support from NGOs and volunteer input are all possible sources of funds to run a PGS.

Whatever the chosen source of funds, the expected operating costs for the PGS should be identified from the beginning. This is important because the sustainability and the success of the PGS may depend on having sufficient funds to sustain its infrastructure, operations and growth. Where producers are to pay for the operating costs of their PGS they should be engaged in this discussion from the beginning.

4.13 Steps in Implementation of a PGS



Summary of Steps in the Implementation of a PGS

Step 1 Situation Analysis

Before you begin to build your PGS it is important to know the strengths and challenges of the existing situation. . For example a long history of chemical use requires a different approach to a wild harvesting situation where there is no history of chemical use. Such an analysis also helps to identify the key stakeholders. With this knowledge you know whom to engage in the PGS development process and which issues that might need to be addressed.

Complete the *Developing New Participatory Guarantee System Models* Document to help identify issues and key stakeholders.

Step 2 Stakeholders Share the Vision

The biggest challenge to starting a PGS is getting started.

It is important that the benefits of a PGS are clear for all stakeholders in order for them to be able to fully commit to the idea of being part of a PGS.

When discussing a PGS with stakeholders it is important to focus on the functions of the PGS (how it will work, who will do what) rather than the form or the structure itself. It is important to keep in mind that:

PGS= People Working Together

Stakeholders working together builds mutual trust and trust in the strength of PGS itself.

The key importance of involving people in the process is the reason why the PGS process begins with stakeholders coming together to share the vision and to develop their ideas for how a PGS could contribute to the overall well being of their community. In this way a foundation can be established on which a PGS can be built. Gather the key stakeholders together to share their ideas and discuss the mutual benefits of working together (might discuss market access, product quality, better prices, consumer expectations, technical support needs etc.) and gradually build the PGS concept into the discussion and progress from there.

Sharing the vision also activates another important PGS theme, the learning process that is reflected in many ways, for example, through stakeholders learning to trust each other, the development of new technical skills and consumers becoming aware of PGS.

Step 3 Agree and then Document how the PGS will work

For PGS there is a number of recognized core components and each of them must be addressed. Each PGS will be built around these core components, but the operating details for each component can vary from one PGS to another depending on their situation, thereby, enabling them to reflect their unique characteristics such as different cultural norms that may help strengthen ownership of the PGS and commitment to the process.

Core Components

Work through each component with the stakeholders (most particularly the farmers) to help them to develop an understanding of the requirements and to take ownership of the process.

- Recognized Standard: Production Standards + Summary Standard (usually a 1 page summary of the main points of the standard).
- Rules (norms) that include a description of the mechanisms for ensuring compliance.
- Documented management system that outlines the roles and responsibilities of key persons (and agencies) and includes a description how certificates are approved and issued.
- Documented list of non-compliances and sanctions for each level of non-compliance– (agreed to by the producers)
- Pledge shaped by the producers and signed or agreed to in a transparent way
- Certificate (usually an individual certificate but could be a group certificate depending on the situation)
- Seal or logo (PGS group or National logo) available once certificates issued.

In all situations the details (however basic) must be documented and describe a process that can be checked regularly and in a consistent way and with the outputs recorded and summarized into a database.

An example of ‘flexibility’ in PGS Design

PGS can cover a range of different land-use and ownership arrangements but to cover these different situations the methods used to measure compliance can vary in order to fit the situation. For example, when the plots are contiguous and there are no internal risks for pesticide drift from the neighboring plots then no internal buffer zones may be required and only a single map showing the different plots may suffice. Whereas when plots are scattered, clear buffer zones may be required along with individual maps of each plots showing the activities on neighboring plots.

Step 4 Build Awareness for Standards and Make Pledge

Basic (introductory) training is an essential step in the development of a PGS. This training should cover awareness building and standards, using the *Summary Standard* as the guideline as well as the concept of a pledge and ideas for how a PGS operates. This process should also include the development of a list of agreed sanctions for non-compliances (see section 4.10 above).

Every farmer in each group must participate in the training and the name of every farmer attending the training is recorded (*Training Record*).

Outputs from this training and awareness building should include:

- Agreement by farmers to follow the organic standards - usually by a vote. (Note that farmers who do not agree to follow the standards should be excluded from the group until they do agree);
- Draft of a Pledge document. The PGS can develop a pledge format but the content should be shaped by the farmers. This way it can be ensured that the basis of the pledge come from their ‘hearts’.
- A list of persons who will become PGS members including the group leader identified as key contact person. Note that non-farmers may want to become members of the PGS group (it is up to the group to decide).
- Signed **Pledge** - every farmer in the organic group must sign the pledge (this can be done on an individual basis or on one page by all the group members).
- A plan for PGS implementation (for Step 5)

Step 5 Map Farm and Record Farm Details

- **Farm Details Document** and map(s) of plots registered with the PGS. Every farmer in each group must complete the Farm Details Document following the template of

the PGS and KEEP A COPY OF EACH FARMERS FILE. Ideally this is completed by the farmer under the guidance of the PGS-SG but in situations where the farmers lack the skills to complete the form, assistance from the PGS-SG or a key farmer is ok.

Note that this Farm Details document should be checked as part of the peer review process. The expectation is that the details in the document will mirror what can be seen in the field.

There are various options for map drawing – most importantly there should be a map for every plot recorded in the PGS group. For scattered plots individual lot maps are required but for wild harvesting or plots gathered together a single map may be sufficient.

- **The above details are entered** into the **PGS Database** and posted on the PGS web page to promote transparency.

Step 6 Internal Monitoring/Peer Review

The PGS-SG will coordinate a farm inspection (at least once per year, using a Checklist). The focus of this process is a peer review approach (farmers visiting each other's farms). Other participants in the review team can include buyers, local government staff, consumers etc.

The Checklist should aim to reflect and capture the specific characteristics of the production environment and group dynamics. Most importantly the Checklist should be completed, at least once per year, for every farmer in the group. In situations where there are low levels of literacy the documentation can be completed by a nominated person on behalf of the farmer.

Step 7 Certification Approval

- The PGS will establish a certification committee, which should include representation and be considered independent. The committee's role is to check that the outputs of the peer review are in order. Once checked and approved the PGS is then able to issue the PGS certificates.
- The PGS-SG (certification manager together with the group leader) will gather the documentation and check to see that the peer review process and documentation has been completed as required. In some cases a follow-up will be required due to the inexperience of the farmers and other persons involved. Thus in many situations the first peer review can be seen as a training exercise and the process repeated again soon after the first review to fine-tune the system and skills.
- The PGS-SG will document any problems that arise; follow-up on non-compliances and then update the database, noting any unresolved non-compliances.

5. Structure and Organization

There are various ways in which a PGS can be structured internally and how they relate to external agencies.

5.1. Organizational Arrangements

The basic structure of a common PGS consists of:

- **Peer review group**
This group consists of farmers and may also comprise other stakeholders, such as consumers, extension workers or NGO staff. The peer review group carries out annual farm visits of each farm. Commonly the group makes the decision about renewal of the certificate of the reviewed farms. Group arrangements such as the number of members, the sharing of responsibilities, frequency of meetings and types of additional activities vary.
- **Certification Committee**
Its role is to review the peer review reports and validate the decisions taken by the peer review groups. The committee is involved in the approval of individual PGS members and in enforcing potential sanctions for non-compliance.
- **Administrative staff**
For the day-to-day management a PGS should have a certification coordinator or manager. This is usually a group member with the technical ability and sufficient time to carry out the tasks, or can even be a paid (part-time) staff. The certification manager carries tasks such as managing the paperwork, keeping track of the peer reviews schedule, following-up on unfinished documentation and non-compliances, updating the database, and reporting to the certification committee.

In larger PGS arrangements additional structures may be necessary:

- **National Council**
In case PGS groups are consolidated into larger systems (e.g. national) a national body or council will be set up. This council is responsible for managing external relations and may take other roles such as the approval of the individual groups, maintenance of central documentation and procedures, logo management or the organization of trainings and capacity building.

5.2 The Role of Governments

There are various options for how government can be engaged in PGS but most importantly their role is to create an enabling environment for PGS to operate. Other important functions are to promote regulations and policies that recognize PGS as a guarantee process and the establishment of national organic standards that PGS groups can also use. In a regulated situation, the authorities may also create a register of the PGS, establish a National PGS database, provide a national PGS logo to be used by the registered PGS or maintain a register

of approved commercial organic inputs (this will also facilitate the work of operators and PGS in identifying allowed and non-allowed commercial inputs).

For governments that intend to regulate organic certification and PGS, there are various options depending on the stage of development of the organic sector in the country and the regulatory framework. IFOAM – Organics International has published a policy brief on how governments can support PGS. This Policy Brief includes the following possible scenarios:

1. Promote, rather than regulate, an emerging organic market
2. Leave compliance with the organic regulation voluntary
3. Include exemptions in the organic regulation
4. Adapt group certification, with PGS-compatible requirements
5. Include PGS as one of the conformity assessment systems permitted under the regulation

6. Final Remarks and Recommendations

6.1 Lessons learned

The following comments have been taken from feedback received from some of the established PGS in response to the question ‘since your PGS began what are the key changes or lessons learned?’

- Right from the beginning engage as many stakeholders as possible. This process might be slow and feedback may be negative but work through this. As often many of the early opponents become advocates over time.
- Plan for the organization to grow and become self-sustaining. At first the organization will be developed on a volunteer basis but after a while the volunteers will burn out. You need to be able to pay key people to carry the organization forward.
- Often the people who begin new things (such as a PGS) are not the people to manage them once they are established. Be aware of this and bring new skilled people into the organization.
- Producers are busy people and often reluctant to complete paper work. Reduce paperwork to a minimum and apply patience and encouragement if such things are part of your PGS.
- As the PGS grows and new regions become part of the organization they will bring new ideas and different approaches onto the table. It is vital that this diversity of ideas and approaches is embraced, recognized and included.
- In the beginning there are likely to be doubts about how the PGS will be received in the market. However, for OFNZ this has not been the case, once consumers saw their products and were introduced to the logo, they quickly began to select the OFNZ products and OFNZ is now recognized as an organic guarantee throughout the country.
- It is important to have a sufficient number of members to help share the responsibilities and spread the costs.

6.2 Marketing and Supply Chain Management

PGS aim to help smallholders to better access local (domestic and potentially regional) markets. Markets are essential to PGS success. The success of the PGS is dependent on the market linkages and the commitment of the buyers. Consequently a marketing plan to engage and actively link to buyers should be part of the development strategy of the PGS. The marketing of PGS products is usually supported by a PGS logo and may also be endorsed by the national organic logo, whenever the national organic guarantee system allows this. As with all marketing efforts, product quality and engaged buyers are essential.

All actors in the supply chain should have systems that maintain the integrity of organic PGS certified products after they leave the farm.

This includes various aspects:

- **Product processing**
To ensure the integrity of products processed within the group (drying fruits etc.) requires the PGS to have specific rules to ensure that health issues relating to the handling and packaging of the products are addressed. On a small scale the processing can be checked as part of a peer review, but for larger scale processing additional technical skills may be required and in some cases a third party certifier may inspect a processing facility and provide a separate certification.
- **Points of sales**
In some cases the PGS has control over the points of sales of the products. This could be in the case of a Farmers Market where all PGS certified products are sold at the market or if the PGS markets its products in a limited number of local shops.
- **Market surveillance (control of misuse of the PGS logo)**
If the PGS does not control the points of sales, e.g. if products are supplied to organic shops around the country, the surveillance and verification of misuse of the logo is more difficult. All the more it is important in this case that the PGS adopts some instruments of market surveillance to protect the integrity of the products throughout the supply chain.

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Most of these publications and other many other related materials can be found on the website of IFOAM - Organics International, either in the PGS section or in the bookstore section.



THE CORE AGRICULTURE SUPPORT PROGRAM, PHASE 2 & THE PGS

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) through the Core Agriculture Support Program, Phase 2, supports countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in producing agricultural food products that comply with food safety and quality standards, and in improving market access for those products. The GMS countries are Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. ADB, through the GMS Working Group on Agriculture and with the assistance of IFOAM - Organics International, supports PGS project activities through capacity building, facilitation of market linkages, information and technical support, and national and regional policy support.