

# PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS NEW FRONTIERS OF CERTIFICATION TO ENHANCE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

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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.

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) is promoting the concept of Participatory Guarantee Systems as one of the most promising tools to develop local organic markets.

PGS is a relatively new methodology, started in 2004 and developed in different countries and cultural contexts in response to various challenges faced by organic producers:

- The number of certified organic farmers is hardly growing, creating an ever-increasing competition in the markets for organic farming.
- Barriers to entry for third-party certification, including direct costs and paperwork, are a constraint for many of the smallest farmers which have the most to gain by joining a system of committed organic production.
- Most third-party certified farms rely on distant export markets to cover the cost of certification, so products from those farms are not available to local consumers.

By relying on the relationships between farmers and consumer groups, Participatory Guarantee Systems are proving to be engines of development particularly in remote rural areas. PGS offer a complementary, low-cost, locally-based system of quality assurance, with a heavy emphasis on social control and knowledge building.

Today IFOAM estimates that 109,317 producers and processors of 72 countries are currently involved in PGS worldwide, out of which 46,945 are certified through PGS. More than 60 initiatives are under development. IFOAM - Organics International is compiling, systematizing and disseminating comprehensive information about PGS worldwide in a [Global PGS Map](#).

The adoption of Participatory Guarantee Systems in many different contexts, where they are adapted to local conditions, has generated a great deal of knowledge in applying the method. However, Participatory Guarantee Systems share the following features of the certification process:



- Norms: conceived by the stakeholders through a democratic and participatory process, but always in accordance with the commonly understood sense of an organic product. The shared and agreed vision is also based on national or international organic standards.
- Grassroots Organization: the Participatory Certification should be based on an active organization of all stakeholders.
- Principles and values that enhance the livelihoods and well-being of farming families and promote organic agriculture.
- Documented management systems and procedures: minimal paperwork required of farmers to demonstrate their organic commitment and integrity.
- Mechanisms to verify farmer's compliance to the established norms, able to stimulate organization and allowing a learning process for all the stakeholders.
- Mechanisms for supporting farmers to produce organic products, including field advisors, newsletters, farm visits, web sites etc.
- Seals or labels providing evidence of organic status.
- Clear and previously defined consequences for farmers not complying with standards, actions recorded in a data base or made public in some way.



The main benefits and advantages of adopting the Participatory Guarantee Systems are the following: the *affordable direct cost* as compared to individual third-party certification; *price negotiation, shared transports and venue* to farmer markets; *partnering* with existing agricultural structures; support *seed sovereignty* and protection of *indigenous knowledge*. PGS can also provide support for farmers *promoting the label* to consumers and other buyers or by providing market information such as pricing etc. Finally they are *sustainable*, because they are owned and maintained by PGS members.



The [IFOAM PGS Recognition program](#) evaluate whether a PGS operates in accordance with the [Key PGS Elements and Features](#) and verify the integrity of a PGS envisaging the [Principles of Organic Agriculture](#). The evaluation process is entirely free of charge. PGS initiatives that have received IFOAM PGS Recognition are granted access to the IFOAM PGS Logo, which can be used in communication materials, such as websites and brochures, but not on products.



Main best practices of Participatory Guarantee Systems are implemented by [ANPE \(Asociacion Nacional de Productores Ecologicos\)](#) and [IDMA \(Instituto de Desarrollo y Medio Ambiente\)](#) in Peru; [Bryanston Organic & Natural Market](#) in South Africa; [Ecovida \(CETAP\)](#) in Brazil; [Green Foundation](#) and [Keystone Foundation](#) in India; [MASIPAG \(Association of Sustainable Agriculture Practitioners of Palimbang\)](#) in Philippines; [Nature et Progrès \(COMAC Lozère\)](#) in France; [Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos](#) in Mexico.

## To know more

[PGS in IFOAM website](#)

[IFOAM guidelines to PGS](#)

[Introduction to PGS in Youtube.com](#)

[PGS in theorganicfarmer.org](#)

[PGS in greenfoundation.in](#)

[PGS in framtidsjorden.se](#)

[Manual in psindia-ncof.gov.in website](#)

[PGS in anpeperu.org](#)

[PGS in Brazil Slideshare.net](#)

[PGS in Brazil pt.slideshare.net](#)

[PGS Latin America in maelac.wordpress.com](#)

[PGS Spain and Mexico in eljilote.org](#)

[Video in downtoearth.org.in website](#)

[PGS in spg.sramaganta.info](#)

[PGS in Bolivia in aopeb.org](#)

[PGS in Uruguay in fidamercosur.org](#)

[PGS in natureetprogres.org website](#)

[PGS in agroeco website](#)

