

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS TO ENHANCE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES

By Kim Assaël

In December 2020 [the Senate in the Philippines has approved a Republic Act](#) recognizing [Participatory Guarantee Systems \(PGS\)](#) as an alternative and complementary tool to third-party certification of the organic agricultural products in the country.

The signature of this innovative Act is the result of almost a decade of dialogue and lobbying with the national government, made by producers, local NGOs and other actors advocating for PGS recognition. The new Act is an amendment of the previous Organic Agriculture Act approved in 2010, allowing only third-party certification to label as “organic” the agricultural products. This legal framework created a damage to small-scale farmers comprising 80% of the practitioners of organic farming in the country, who have been organic since long before, but couldn't afford to pay third party certification costs.

The new bill was celebrated in the world of organic producers and their supporters in the Philippines and the news was disseminated internationally by various media.

PGS are locally focused quality assurance systems, are inclusive and recognize the role of small farmers in ensuring safe, affordable and accessible food. PGS 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.

Since 2011 the farmer-led network of people's organizations [MASIPAG](#), NGOs and scientists working towards the sustainable use and management of biodiversity in Philippines, started advocating for PGS by discussing with the stakeholders how to strengthen the mass base that would support the amendment of the law. Strong of their decade-long experience in organic rice production, MASIPAG involved today almost 60 farmers organization in the development of Organic Standards for crops, livestock and processing, accepted as equivalent to the [Common Objectives and Requirements of Standards \(COROS\)](#) of the IFOAM Platform and the Masipag Farmers' Guarantee System itself.



In 2013, [PGS Pilipinas](#), the network of PGS farmers and practitioners advocating in the country was born, and a position paper was produced and handed by IFOAM to the Department of Agriculture who was responsible for the implementation of the National Organic Agricultural Program. Guidelines for PGS development were also drafted in 2016 and presented in National Organic Agriculture Congresses until the approval of the Amendment on June 1, 2020, by the Senate.

In this framework, the [Declaration of Policy](#) of the Senate presents an innovative panorama of related policies to be put in place to increase farm productivity and farmer incomes, reduce pollution and destruction of the environment, prevent the depletion of natural resources, encourage the participation of indigenous organic farmers promoting their sustainable practices further protect the health of farmers, consumers, and the general public, such as genuine agrarian reform, protection of the environment and stoppage of land use conversion.

With Participatory Guarantee Systems recognition by law, organic farmers will be able to get training and certification for their organic produce, without incurring in heavy costs.

PGS Pilipinas members are now discussing the vision and the strategies post amendment. The implementation of Rules and Regulations of this alternative and complementary tool to third-party certification plays a vital role in rural development and farmer empowerment through their active engagement in the whole process of verification, decision making, and marketing. PGS shall be now reinforced by the provision of appropriate support in terms of production, processing, prioritization of local distribution and marketing in order to have a positive impact either on biodiversity and the livelihoods of organic farmers in the Philippines, and to further develop the domestic market.

With the passage of this law, PGS Pilipinas Federation of municipal, provincial and national NGOs, Independent organic market Groups (i.e. OPTA Organic Market), Agro-Eco Philippines PGS, among other stakeholders, will be giving a more systematic support to the problems of the organic farmers like processing, post-harvest facilities and handling, marketing, extensions and community-based trainings, use of locally-adapted seeds and technologies, among others.

By bringing more farmers into the Participatory Guarantee Systems programs, implementing the capacity building at community level, empowering the small farmers' sector through organic agriculture training, the needs of small-scale farmers and local low-income consumers are both met, fostering inclusive progress that helps building a sustainable food system.

To know more

[Republic Act 2020](#)

[News in organicwithoutboundaries.bio website](#)

[News in IFOAM bio website](#)

[News in FAO website](#)



[News in agroecophilippines.org sitio web](http://news.inagroecophilippines.org)

[Participatory Guarantee System – PGS Pilipinas in Facebook](#)

[Article in core.ac.uk website](#)

[MASIPAG Document](#)

[Philippines National Standards Guidelines](#)

[MASIPAG website](#)

[PGS in IFOAM website](#)

[IFOAM guidelines for PGS](#)

[Common Objectives and Requirements of Standards \(COROS\)](#)

[PGS in FAO website](#)

[PGS document in FAO website](#)

