

Overview of Participatory Guarantee Systems in 2012

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Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. According to the definition of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), they certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders, which is built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.²

IFOAM is the only organization that compiles global data about PGS. IFOAM's efforts to compile comprehensive data on PGS worldwide have recently started and are ongoing, so the data provided here can be considered a reasonable approximation of the situation in 2012 rather than an exhaustive appraisal.

Some of the organic producers involved in PGS may be included in overall national organic agriculture statistics presented in this book. This might be the case for example in the following situations:

- If they are linked to, or recognized by, a national organic agriculture association which compiles national data on the organic sector (e.g. in New Zealand).
- When some of the producers involved in PGS also have a separate third party certification and are therefore included in the data reported by certification bodies. This is, for example, the case in France, where 50 percent of the PGS-certified farmers have double certification.
- When entire PGS groups are connected to the third party certification system by being audited and certified as a group (where the PGS manages an Internal Control System). In this case, they would also be included in the data provided by certification bodies. This is, for example, the case for a few PGS in Latin America.

However, in several cases, organic producers certified through PGS are not yet included in the national organic agriculture statistics because they are not sufficiently recognized by other institutions and they might even be denied the right to call themselves "organic" according to the regulations in place.

It is estimated that at least 41 PGS initiatives exist now on all continents, and a similar number of initiatives are currently under development. Asia and Latin America remain the leaders in terms of both the number of farmers certified through PGS and the level of recognition achieved by the national governments.

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² Editors' note: Other than PGS, an internal control system (ICS) is the part of a documented quality assurance system that allows an external certification body to delegate the periodical inspection of individual group members to an identified body or unit within the certified operator. More information is available at <http://www.fao.org/organicag/oag-glossary/en/>

PGS in the international agenda

The IFOAM definition of PGS was adopted in 2008¹, but the concept had been applied even before third-party certification became the most common organic guarantee system. In the past seven years, the number of initiatives implementing PGS has been growing steadily, as well the number of producers involved in them.

This growth is a result of the recognition by governments in many countries, and especially in Latin America², of PGS as a tool for organic guarantee. In some cases, such recognition is restricted to accessing the domestic market, which PGS are in any case more likely to serve. In Bolivia, for example, the National Technical Rule of PGS for the local and national trade of organic products was approved on 17 January 2012.

The potential for boosting the domestic market for organic products is one of the many reasons why PGS have been promoted as a tool for sustainable development. PGS have received increased attention between 2011 and 2012, and have been included in the international debate on food security and sustainable development. The concept was discussed and PGS initiatives were presented as examples and references in sessions that took place during major international conferences, from the IFOAM OWC in September 2011, to the high level 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20).³

To facilitate identification of PGS initiatives around the world, IFOAM has developed a PGS Logo⁴ that is granted to applicant PGS once they have passed an evaluation conducted by the IFOAM PGS Committee.



Figure 52: The IFOAM PGS logo

¹ Agreed upon for the first time in 2004, in the framework of the first International Workshop on Alternative Certification in Torres, Brazil, the PGS concept was further defined by an international PGS Task Force. The definition, which is now used by IFOAM, was established in 2008 by the PGS Task Force in the framework of the 16th IFOAM Organic World Congress on Modena, Italy.

² For reference, please see: *The World of Organic Agriculture, Statistics and Emerging Trends, 2012 and 2011.*

³ For reference, see the IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter, issues 10 (September, 2011), 14 (January 2012) and 19 (June, 2012). The newsletter is available here: http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/18479.php

⁴ PGS initiatives officially recognized by IFOAM are allowed to use the PGS logo on their websites, flyers and other communication materials, but not on the organic products. For more information on application and conditions for use of the PGS Logo, please consult: http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs/PGS_LOGO.html

As of September 2012, four PGS have been officially recognized by IFOAM and have been granted access to the logo (Table 41).

Table 41: PGS initiatives officially recognized by IFOAM

Name of the PGS initiative	Country	Number of producers involved	Number of producers certified
Associação de Agricultura Natural de Campinas e Região – ANC	Brazil	58	54
Associação Brasileira de Agricultura Biodinâmica – ABD	Brazil	50	50
Certified Naturally Grown – CNG	USA	900	750
Organic Farm New Zealand – OFNZ	New Zealand	150	130

Source: IFOAM Survey 2012

PGS worldwide in figures

IFOAM conducted a worldwide survey of PGS initiatives during 2012. Some PGS initiatives did not provide detailed data to distinguish between “producers involved” and “producers certified” and so are not included when calculating the number of producers certified per country. Therefore, the number of certified producers might be higher than the figures presented here. This information was provided directly by PGS initiatives in the respective countries, as of 14 September 2012.

There are more than 31'000 small operators who are currently involved in PGS worldwide. This includes mostly small farmers and a few small processors.

- The leading countries are the Philippines, with over 10'500 producers involved and 850 certified, followed by India, with over 5'370 producers involved, of which at least 2'512 are certified, and Brazil, with over 3'692 producers involved and at least 2'754 producers certified.
- Asia is the continent with the highest number of producers involved in PGS, with over 16'000 producers involved and more than 3'860 producers certified.
- Latin America is the continent with the second highest number of producers involved (over 9'600). The total number of producers certified in Latin America is at least 5'600.
- More than 3400 farmers are involved in PGS in Africa. Figures related to PGS certified producers are available only for South Africa and Namibia, 252 and 4 respectively.
- Despite the unfavorable legal framework, PGS initiatives exist in Europe and North America and there are at least 2000 farmers involved in both continents combined. Most are based in France and the USA but there are also many strong initiatives either being implemented or under development in Canada, Italy and Spain. The European CSA¹ movement and the European PGS community have been working closely together to define alternative marketing approaches and to strengthen the link between producers and consumers.

¹ CSA is the abbreviation for Community Supported Agriculture.

- More than 250 producers are involved in PGS in Oceania, where there are about 170 PGS certified producers, mostly based in New Zealand.

Other details on PGS initiatives are available on the IFOAM Online Global PGS Database and regularly updated.

Online references

- The IFOAM Participatory Guarantee Systems website:
www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html
- The IFOAM Online Global PGS Database: a comprehensive database accessible from the IFOAM PGS website
www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs_projects/pgs_projects/index.php
- The IFOAM Global PGS Newsletter: a free electronic monthly publication. To subscribe, please contact pgs@ifoam.org.