

A Participatory Organic Guarantee System for India

**PGS-India
Operational Manual**

**National Project on Organic Farming
Department of Agriculture and Co-operation
Ministry of Agriculture
Govt of India, New Delhi**

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Definitions

Accredited certification agency - An agency accredited by National Accreditation Body under National Programme on Organic Production (NPOP) for certification of organic production system.

Ayurvedic - Ayurveda is a traditional naturopathic system of medicines and health care of India.

Buffer zone - A clearly defined and identifiable boundary area bordering an organic production site that is established to limit application of, or contact with, prohibited substances from an adjacent area.

Co-mingling – Accidental or intentional mixing of organic and conventional produce

Contamination - Pollution of organic product or land; or contact with any material that would render the product unsuitable for organic certification.

Conversion period – The time period required for converting a conventional farm to organic farm.

DAC – Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture

Diversity – Creation of biological diversity by planting different types of trees, bushes and plants and by taking various types of crops simultaneously at given time

Habitat management - Practices and protocols for management of an area in which ideal environment is created for existence of various plant or animal species naturally.

Homeopathy - Homeopathy is a system of medicine based on the principle of “*Similia, Similibus, Curentur* (let likes be treated by likes)”.

IFOAM - International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

Facilitating agency – A agency hired by the Local Group to assist in management and implementation of PGS norms, including data management on PGS website on behalf of Local Group/(s).

Local Group – A group of farmers working together for participatory organic guarantee programme under PGS-India norms and guidelines

Livestock - Means any domestic or domesticated animal including bovine (including buffalo and bison), porcine, caprine, equine, poultry and bees raised for food or in the production of food. The products obtained by hunting or fishing of wild animals shall not be considered as part of this definition.

Paralla production - Means any production system where the same unit is growing, breeding, handling or processing the similar products both in organic and in non- organic system.

Part Conversion - Means when part of a conventional farm or unit has already been converted to organic production or processing and a part is either conventional or in the process of conversion.

PGS-NAC – PGS-National Advisory Committee is the apex policy and decision making body for PGS-India programme at Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.

Zonal Council – An agency authorized by PGS-NAC to coordinate and monitor the functioning of Regional Councils under PGS-India organic Guarantee programme.

NCOF – National Centre of Organic Farming, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India.

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) - PGS is a quality assurance initiative that is locally relevant, emphasize the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers and operate outside the frame of third party certification.

As per the definition of IFOAM (2008) "Participatory Guarantee Systems 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.

Pledge – Pledge is a written document by the operator or local group member committing to abide by the organic production system as per the PGS-India norms.

RCOF – Regional Centre of Organic Farming – A regional centre under National Centre of Organic Farming.

Regional Council - An agency authorized by PGS-NAC to coordinate, monitor and approve certification decisions of Local Group under PGS-India organic Guarantee programme.

Third Party Certification – An organic guarantee programme operated under National Programme on Organic Production involving an independent agency for verification and certification of organic production processes.

Unani – Ancient system of medicines and health care emerged from Europe

Veterinary – A modern health care system for animals

Participatory Organic Guarantee System For India (PGS-India)

1. Preamble

Organic producers around the world have been developing methods to guarantee the organic integrity of their products for fifty years. Today, what are generally referred to as *Third-Party Certification* systems have become the dominant means of Organic Guarantee for world trade and Indian producers have 20 respected and accredited Third-Party Organic Certification agencies to choose from. While Third Party Certification is an essential component to world trade, there are downsides to the system. The inherent expense and paperwork required in a multi-level system discourages most small organic producers from being certified at all. This limits local and domestic trade as well as access to organic products. Worse yet, it limits the growth of the Organic Movement as a whole.

In an attempt to reduce the inequality, a number of alternative methods to guarantee the Organic integrity of products have been developed for small domestic producers, and they are growing rapidly. These alternative programs are now collectively referred to as *Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)*. The term PGS embodies the active participation of producers and other stakeholders in their organic guarantee process.

2. About PGS

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is a quality assurance initiative that is locally relevant, emphasize the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers and operate outside the frame of third party certification. As per IFOAM (2008) definition "Participatory Guarantee Systems 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". PGS is a process in which people in similar situations (in this case small holder producers) assess, inspect and verify the production practices of each other and collectively declare the entire holding of the group as organic.

PGS system has number of basic elements which embrace a participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency and trust. Participation is an essential and dynamic part of PGS. Key stakeholders (producers, consumers, retailers and traders and others such as NGOs) are engaged in the initial design, and then in the operation of the PGS. In the operation of a PGS, stakeholders (including producers) are involved in decision making and essential decisions about the operation of the PGS itself. In addition to being involved in the mechanics of the PGS, stakeholders, particularly the producers are engaged in a structured ongoing learning process, which helps them improve what they do. This process is facilitated by the PGS group itself or in some situations a supportive NGO. The learning process is usually 'hands-on' and involves field days or workshops. The idea of participation

embodies the principle of collective responsibility for ensuring the organic integrity of the PGS.

3. Guiding Principles for Organic Participatory Guarantee System

In tune with the international trends and IFOAM's PGS Guidelines, PGS India system is also based on participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency and trust. In addition it gives PGS movement a National recognition and institutional structure without affecting the spirit of PGS.

3.1. Participation

Participation is an essential and dynamic part of PGS. Key stakeholders (producers, consumers, retailers, traders and others such as NGOs) are engaged in the initial design, and then in the operation of the PGS and decision making.

The idea of participation embodies the principle of a collective responsibility for ensuring the organic integrity of the PGS. This collective responsibility is reflected through:

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

Together these help shape the integrity based approach and a formula for trust. An important tool for promoting this trust is having operational processes that are transparent. This includes transparency in decision making, easy access to the data base and where possible farms are open to participation and visits of consumers. Participation of traders/ retailers or consumers in decision making may not be possible under all situations, but their participation in any form will increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the group.

3.2 Shared Vision

Collective responsibility for implementation and decision making is driven by common shared vision. All the key stakeholders (producers, facilitating agencies, NGOs, social organizations and even the State Governments) support the guiding principles and goals, PGS is striving to achieve. This can be achieved initially through their participation and support in the design and then by joining it. This may include commitment in writing through signing an application/ document that includes the vision.

Each stakeholder organization (or PGS group) can adopt its own vision conforming to the overall vision and standards of PGS India

3.3 Transparency

Transparency is created by having all stakeholders, including producers and consumers, aware of exactly how the guarantee system works to include the standards, the organic guarantee process (norms) with clearly defined and documented systems and how decisions are made. Public

access will be ensured to documentation and information about the PGS groups, such as lists of certified producers and details about their farms and non-compliance actions. These will be available through a dedicated National database websites.

But still it does not mean that entire information on National PGS database will be available to everyone.

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

- Information sharing at meetings and workshops
- Participation in internal inspections (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. The foundation of this trust is built from the idea that the key stakeholders collectively develop their shared vision and then collectively continue to shape and reinforce their vision through the PGS. The ways this trust is reflected may depend entirely on factors that are culturally/ socially specific to the PGS group.

The idea of 'trust' assumes that the individual producer has a commitment to protecting nature and consumers' health through organic production.

Mechanism for expressing trustworthiness includes:

- Declaration (a producer pledge) via a witnessed signing of a pledge document
- Written collective undertaking by the group to abide by the norms, principles and standards of PGS

3.5 Horizontality

PGS India is intended to be non-hierarchical at group level. This will reflect in the overall democratic structure and through the collective responsibility of the PGS group with sharing and rotating responsibility, by engaging producers directly in the peer review of each other's farms; and by transparency in decision making process.

3.6 National networking

PGS India while keeping the spirit of PGS intact also aims to give the entire movement an institutional structure. This is proposed to be achieved by networking the groups under common umbrella through various facilitating agencies, Regional Councils and Zonal Councils. To make the system completely transparent and accessible to traders and consumers entire data will be hosted on a common platform in the form of a website. National Centre of Organic Farming shall be the custodian of data, define policies and guidelines and undertake surveillance through field monitoring and product testing for residues. Regional councils and facilitating

agencies will facilitate the groups in capacity building, training, knowledge/ technology dissemination and data uploading on the PGS website. But at every stage it will be ensured that these agencies including apex body do not interfere in the working and decision making of the group. Even if surveillance is done and reports are made, the same will also be put on website in public domain. What action is to be taken on adverse reports will be left to the group and Regional Council.

Advantages of PGS over third party certification system

In PGS organic farmers have full control over the certification process and are able to produce far more credible and effective system of quality assurance compared to third party certification. Important benefits of this system over third party certification system are as follows:

- a. The procedures are simple; documents are basic and use the local language understandable to farmers.
- b. All the members are local and known to each other. Being themselves practicing organic farmers have high degree of understanding on day-to-day knowledge or acquaintance of the farm.
- c. Peer appraisers are among the group and live in the same village, therefore have better access to surveillance
- d. Peer appraisal instead of third party inspections reduces cost
- e. Mutual recognition and support between Regional PGS groups ensures better networking for processing and marketing.
- f. Empowers farmers with increased capacity building
- g. Bring consumers to the farm without the need of middleman
- h. Unlike grower group certification system, PGS offer every farmer with individual certificate and each farmer is free to market its own produce independent of group.
- i. Consumers and buyers are often involved in production and verification process
- j. Random residue testing at regular intervals ensures the integrity and increases the trust.

Limitations of PGS

PGS certification is only for farmers or communities that can organize and perform as a group within the village or in close-by villages with continuous territory and is applicable on, on-farm activities comprising of crop production, processing and livestock rearing (including bee keeping) and off-farm processing "by PGS farmers of their direct products".

Individual farmers or group of farmers having less than 5 members are not covered under PGS. They either have to opt for third party certification or join the existing PGS local group.

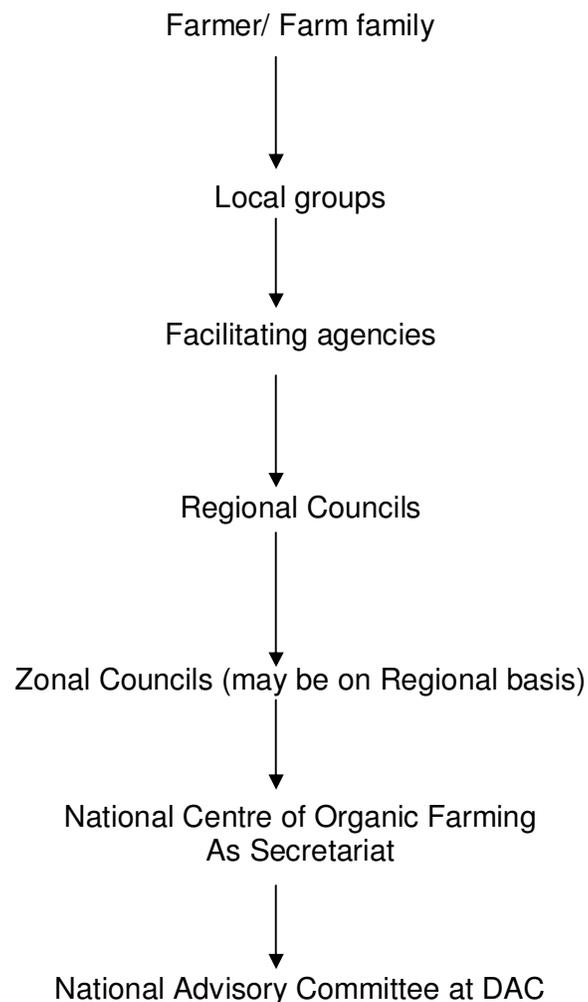
PGS is applicable on on-farm activities comprising of crop production, processing and livestock rearing and off-farm processing "by PGS farmers of their direct products". Off-farm processing activities such as, storage, transport and value addition activities by persons/agencies other than PGS farmers away from the group are not covered under PGS. Off-farm input approval granted by the group is applicable on the members of the same

group and can not be taken as a basis for universal approval for other groups. Off-farm inputs need to be approved by each group for their member's use on case to case basis.

PGS ensures traceability only up to end till it is in the custody of PGS group. Once the product leaves the custody of PGS group there is no control of PGS on its integrity, Therefore PGS is ideal for local direct sales/ direct trade between producer and consumer and direct trade of packed finished product with PGS logo between PGS group and traders/ retailers. But Local Groups and buyers in consultation with RC can devise some mechanism with full traceability records to allow use of PGS logo on products packed by traders/ retailers.

Operational Structure

Schematic operational structure of the PGS India is given below:



Structure, Role and Responsibilities of different key Stakeholders

7. National Advisory Committee for PGS (PGS-NAC)

7.1 Structure

National advisory committee shall be the apex policy making body for PGS India Programme with following composition:

1. Joint Secretary (INM), DAC	Chairman
2. Director, NCOF	Executive Secretary
3. Regional Director, RCOF I	Member
4. Regional Director, RCOF II	Member
5. Dy Commissioner (INM), DAC	Member
6. Head Zonal Councils/(s)	Member
7. Representatives of Regional Council (North)	Members
8. Representatives of Regional Council (South)	Members
9. Representatives of Regional Council (East)	Members
10. Representatives of Regional Council (West)	Members
11. Farmers representative (4, one from each region)	Member
12. Consumers representative	Member

First Six members of the committee will be permanent members, as they are represented by their position. Representatives of Regional Councils will be nominated to the committee by election for a fixed tenure of two years. Representatives of farmers and consumers will be selected and co-opted by the other members of the committee on the recommendations of RC and ZCs. The farmer representative is required to be the member of a Local Group from that region with certain standing.

7.2 Role and Responsibility

PGS-NAC being apex policy making body shall be responsible for:

- Defining operational and policy guidelines and PGS India Standards. In case of changes the committee shall ensure that the amendments/ modifications are considered "through intensive consultation with the base".
- Make changes, improvements and amendments to the programme and national coordination structure as a whole without interference in the autonomic functioning of Regional councils and local groups. Co-ordinate and monitor national level capacity building, education, outreach and surveillance activities.
- Selection and Authorization of Zonal and Regional Councils
- Surveillance and monitoring on the functioning of Zonal and Regional councils
- Sanction/ withdrawal of authorization to Zonal/ Regional councils on being found not functioning or not functioning according to the guidelines.

7.3 Meetings of PGS-NAC

PGS-NAC will meet at least once a year to review the implementation process and for authorization of new councils. PGS-NAC meetings can

also be convened at the discretion of the Chairman and/ or on the request of at least 25% members to take up important matter.

Any policy change, modification in standards and sanctions/ punishments needs to be endorsed by the majority of members present in the meeting. Minimum quorum for a meeting will be 30% of total strength. If it is not possible to convene a meeting, urgent issues can be decided by circulation. In all such cases at least 50% of responding members within the given time frame must endorse the decision.

To give the programme a head start there may a need to meet PGS-NAC at regular intervals in the initial years. Later once the programme is settled the PGS-NAC may meet only once or twice a year.

Travel expenses of non-officials (members of NGO based ZC, RC and Farmers and consumers representatives) shall be borne by PGS Secretariat.

8. NCOF as PGS Secretariat

National Centre of Organic Farming will be the Secretariat of the PGS programme with Director NCOF as the Executive authority. Key role and responsibilities of the Secretariat will be as follows:

- a. All executive and secretarial responsibilities related to execution of the programme, NAC meetings, implementation of the decisions of NAC, matters to be put up to NAC and coordination with NAC members
- b. Advise NAC on all technical and implementation issues
- c. Capacity building, education, training and outreach activities for Zonal and Regional councils.
- d. Training of local group leaders through RCOFs in collaboration with Zonal Council and Regional Councils.
- e. Surveillance and monitoring of Zonal and Regional Councils
- f. PGS India Website design, hosting and maintenance
- g. Custodian of entire PGS India database
- h. Receipt and processing of applications for authorization of NAC as Zonal/Regional Councils
- i. Facilitate election of members from RCs for nomination to PGS-NAC.
- j. Facilitate and maintain positive relationship with controllers of Third party certification system to ensure the compatibility of PGS programme with NPOP.
- k. Coordinate and liaise with different State Governments for promotion and popularization of PGS programme.
- l. Surveillance of PGS products through residue testing including collection of PGS samples, getting those samples tested for residue analysis and hosting of residue analysis results on PGS website.
- m. Appellate authority for local groups against the actions and decisions of Regional Councils/Zonal councils and for Regional Councils against the action of Zonal council.

- n. Literature development, publicity, technology dissemination and awareness creation through print and electronic media.

Except surveillance and monitoring on Zonal/ Regional Councils, the PGS secretariat in no way will interfere in the autonomic functioning of Zonal/Regional Councils and local groups. Even in some cases where secretariat undertakes monitoring of some local groups and find some non-compliance, the same will be reported to the concerned Regional Council for further course of action at their discretion. Even in the cases where the PGS samples have been found to be having pesticide residues, the report will be hosted on the website with information to the concerned Regional Council for further action at their discretion.

9. Zonal Council

As India is a large country with most of the producers as small and marginal, it is expected there will large numbers of small-small groups in different states and geographical regions. To coordinate such small groups effectively it is desirable that Regional Councils are locally placed and do not need to travel long distances for effective coordination with local groups. Under such scenario it is likely that there are numerous Regional Councils. To have effective coordination with Regional Councils it is propose to have up to Six Zonal Councils. Initially there may be only two Zonal Councils (North and South Zone) but in due course of time with the increase in number of RCs the number of NCs may be increased up to Six (North, South, East, West, North-East and Central). To start the programme, pending selection and appointment of Zonal Council, NCOF and its Regional Centres will act as Zonal Council. Once the Zonal Councils are appointed the responsibility will be transferred to these Zonal Councils and NCOF and RCOF will only be undertaking the functions assigned to it as PGS Secretariat. For State-Agency Regional Councils NCOF/RCOF shall be the Zonal councils.

3.1 Appointment of Zonal Councils

Zonal Councils will be appointed by the PGS-NAC on the recommendations of PGS secretariat. Only well established organizations with proven dedication to the cause of organic agriculture movement and well versed with the organic guarantee/ certification systems will be considered. Zonal Councils should be self dependent bodies with strong financial health. For State-Agency RCs, NCOF/RCOF shall be the Zonal councils.

3.2 Role and Responsibilities

- a. Receipt, processing and authenticity verification of application for authorization as Regional Council. On being found suitable forwarding of applications to PGS secretariat for approval of PGS-NAC.
- b. Provide up-dated documents, policies, literature and other technical input to RCs for further information of local groups.
- c. Coordinate Regional Council Training workshops

- d. Coordinate national level education and outreach activities in collaboration with PGS Secretariat.
- e. Surveillance and monitoring on the functioning of Regional councils.
- f. Complaint redressal of farmers and local groups against the functioning and actions of Regional councils
- g. Appellate authority on complaints of certificate denial by RC or sanctions imposed by RC on local groups
- h. Appellate authority on complaints of traders/ retailers/ consumers on the quality/ organic integrity of PGS products of particular group and action taken by RC or inaction of RC.
- i. Collaborate PGS Secretariat in collection of PGS certified samples for residue analysis

10. Regional Councils

Regional Council (RC) can ideally be floated by State agencies, existing NGOs, Organic Certification service providers of Central and State Governments or any other agency having adequate expertise in organic guarantee/ certification system implementation. Local groups with three years standing in PGS programme are allowed to form their own RC, provided they have support for at least 10 local groups. Local groups dissatisfied with the functioning and control of their existing RC can, any time, come-together to form a new RC, provided they have support of at least 10 local groups, and apply to PGS secretariat through Zonal Council/RCOF for necessary authorization.

Initially to start the programme the RCs will be selected by the ZC and PGS secretariat, existing PGS regional facilitators (regional councils, members of the existing PGS Organic India council) will also be considered for appointment as RCs if they apply and meet the criteria, but in due course of time the local groups will be encouraged to come forward with their own RCs. Nomination of RCs to PGS-NAC will be done by election on Regional basis. Each RC will have one vote.

4.1 Eligibility criteria for appointment of any agency as RC

- a. Must have proven record on promotion of organic agriculture and organic management practices
- b. Situated in the area of functioning with permanent office and working personals.
- c. Have access to computer, printer and internet facility
- d. At least one member is well versed with data handling and data uploading in computer on internet
- e. Adequate knowledge on organic guarantee/ certification systems and/ or previous experience in supporting Third party certification/Participatory Guarantee Systems.
- f. Should have support and endorsement from at least 10 local groups, already registered and certified under PGS since last three years (Not applicable in initial years where RCs are appointed directly by ZC and PGS secretariat)
- g. All the members have undergone necessary PGS training meant for RCs organized by ZC and PGS secretariat

- h. Have adequate financial resources to operate as Regional Council.
- i. Each RC will be initially authorized for a period of three years. Authorization needs renewal after every three years. Renewal will be considered by NAC on application by the RC and on the recommendation and surveillance report of ZC and PGS secretariat.

4.2 Role and responsibility of Regional Council

- a. Training and support to existing and new local groups in procedures and paper work necessary for each farmer's organic guarantee.
- b. Translate and print PGS paper work in local language
- c. Register local groups and issue user ID and password for data uploading on PGS-India website.
- d. Facilitate local groups in data uploading on PGS website, if local group do not have access to computer and internet.
- e. Confirms that the Local Group Summary Worksheet listing all the farms that are to be Certified Organic is complete and was conscientiously maintained by the group
- f. Can NOT pick and choose individual farmers to certify, only approve/confirms the collective decision of the Local Group as a whole and organic integrity of the system adopted by the local group.
- g. Activate and/or issue certification UID number to each approved Local Group (received from the instant UID Pool maintained on PGS Website).
- h. Print and distribute annual Organic Certificates for individual farmer.

Ideally once a Local Group summary sheet with collective decision of the group signed by at least three lead members is endorsed by the RC, the RC activates the UID. On UID activation the group can directly print the certificates for all its members, but in case if the group does not have access to computer and internet then the same will be facilitated by RC.

- i. Participate in sampling of Local Group farm appraisals
- j. Provide Local Groups with guidelines for "Non-compliance Sanctions"
- k. Participate in online system to provide Summary Worksheet information to interested parties and helps to connect interested parties with the Local Groups for access to individual farmers' Organic Guarantee
- l. To ensure complete transparency of the certification process
- m. To facilitate Mutual Recognition and Support for the various groups (and individual farmers) on a national level by allowing Regional Councils to audit the Organic Guarantee of certified farms in other Regional Councils.
- n. To quickly build trust and credibility in the system as a whole ensure access to members of the public and media.

11. Local Group (LG)

Local group is the main functional and decision making body under Participatory Guarantee System. It is a local group of farmers that live in the same village or close by villages and interact regularly with each other. Participation of consumers or representatives of traders or retailers in the group and its functioning should be encouraged as it strengthens the integrity and trust. The local group can be an existing organic group previously working under third party certification system or under the NGO-based PGS Organic India Council or a new grassroots group started and run by interested local farmers/consumers, or it can be started by a regional NGO or Government agency that has agreed to facilitate the formation of a PGS Local Group by coaching an initial group of farmers through the process. The PGS Local Group function is even easier to add on to an existing group of farmers (for example Farmer Self Help Groups or Farmer Cooperatives or Societies.)

5.1 Requirement and eligibility criteria for a local group

- a. A Local group should comprise of minimum 5 members belonging to same village or close by villages with continuous territory. Regional Councils can decide on maximum number of farmers per group keeping local situations in mind.
- b. Adequate participation of women farmers shall be ensured.
- c. At least few members of the group shall be well versed with the PGS organic guarantee systems or certification system and National Standards of Organic Production (NPOP) or have undergone training on PGS guarantee system organized by Regional Councils, Zonal Council or PGS Secretariat or have been part of the core team of other functional PGS group for at least two years.
- d. All the members in the group have signed the PGS pledge and group agreement to adhere to the group specific vision, participatory approach and collective responsibility.
- e. Although, there is no restriction on the size of holding of any individual farmer but in any case the holding of one single member should not exceed one third of the total land under the group.
- f. Under PGS organic guarantee system normally parallel production and part conversion is not allowed, therefore it is necessary that all group members need to bring their entire farm with livestock under organic management as per the PGS standards. However, Regional Councils in some cases may allow conversion in phases, but in any case the entire farm holding of the group members must be brought under PGS organic management within 24 months of joining the group.

If a farmer under PGS group fails to convert his entire land holding and livestock within the stipulated 24 months time, then he will not be eligible for PGS organic certification and shall continue to remain under conversion.

- g. Have access to PGS documents and preferably have access to computer and internet
- h. Registered with Concerned Regional Council and have obtained necessary user ID and password to upload data on PGS website.
- i. In case if farmer group is unable to operate on-line system of data up loading then the services can be availed from Regional Council or of any other facilitating agency or local NGO etc.

5.2 Role and Responsibility of Local Group

- a. Organize farmers in the group and each member individually sign PGS organic pledge and group agreement.
- b. Provide copies of PGS standards, operational manual and appraisal forms to all the members in local language. If farmers are illiterate then they need to be explained details and standards orally and through pictorial representations.
- c. Prepare necessary field documents with individual farm history.
- d. Elect Group leader and core team of peer reviewers (minimum 3 in 5 member group). There is no upper limit. It will be an optimal situation if all members of the group can participate in peer reviews, as this contributes to capacity building and information exchange between farmers, and reduces conflicts of interests.
- e. Participate in the activities of any other registered PGS group to understand the functioning of the PGS Group. Implement standard requirements on the farms of all the group members and obtain endorsement from the other registered group. This endorsement is needed only once at the time of registration.

The Local Groups need to be approved only once and no further renewal is needed. If there are repeated problems (missing paperwork, a random pesticide inspection turns up a problem, a random oversight inspection turns up a problem, etc) THEN they could get disbanded/ sanctioned and have to re-apply and could get re-entry only after taking necessary correction and thorough verification by RC.

- f. Register the group on PGS website (facility available on-line) and obtain registration approval from the nearest Regional Council.
- g. In case no PGS registered group is there in the vicinity then State Agencies (State Agriculture Department District Officer) may be requested to verify the requirement and submit necessary verification report to RC. Else request RC to do verification and grant registration approval. RCOFs can also be requested for verification and endorsements of Local Groups for their recognition by Regional Council.
- h. Obtain User ID and password from RC for time to time data up loading.
- i. Organize time to time meetings and maintain attendance register. Participation of members in these meetings is a mandatory activity and is an indication of dedication of the member to the cause of

group's guarantee scheme. There should be at least 6 times a year, compulsory meetings or more frequently as specified by the Regional council and at key times of the year depending on the season, the crops, etc.

- j. Every member need to attend at least 50% of the meetings in a year and sign in attendance register.
- k. Advise each other and share information to improve the capacity of the group as a whole.
- l. Organize regular training courses by inviting practicing organic farmers from other groups, RC members or experts of other State Govt and Non-Govt agencies.
- m. Chalk out peer appraisal strategy and ensure timely appraisal of each farm at least twice a year. Peer reviewers will ensure to complete Peer review appraisal form, sign and submit to the group leader. Each farm is to be appraised by at least a three member team. Inclusion of consumer's representative increases the credibility and trust.
- n. Inspection of peer reviewer's farms by another peer reviewer group. To increase credibility and trust the group may have any number of peer reviewers.
- o. At appropriate time the group decides which farmers are to be certified. Separate out farmers which are yet to comply with the certification requirements. List out defaulters and impose sanctions.
- p. Organize final decision meeting explain the reviewer's results to all the members. Collectively declare the group as conforming to PGS standards (in case of small groups, up to 10 members). If the group is large then elect a sub-group or certification committee, comprising of 5 or more members, which may review the results and decide upon the certification. Approval of majority group members is required only in the cases of negative decision (denial of certification or decertification). Full member body can also serve as an appeal body against the decision of certification committee.
- q. At appropriate time prepare summary sheet with list of farmers declared certified with details of crops and expected quantity of produce.
- r. Submit summary sheet to the RC with all other documents as required by RC. In case if data has already been up loaded by the Group on-line, then provide only the signed hard copy of the summary sheet.
- s. On getting the approval from RC on-line the certificates can be printed directly from the website and distributed to the individual farmers.

12. Farmer/ Farm family

As in PGS, part conversion and parallel production is not allowed, the entire family with its farm and livestock is to be converted to organic and covered under PGS within the stipulated period. Any farm family willing to embrace organic methods of cultivation and become part of Participatory organic guarantee system, the first step in the process is to become part of PGS group in the same village or in nearby village.

6.1 Role and responsibilities of farm family

- a. Develop an understanding of organic standards and participatory guarantee system. This can be done by obtaining the copy of PGS standards and understanding it through reading, participation in PGS group meetings and discussion with existing farmers.
- b. Make sure that farm practices are compliant to the standards and PGS norms
- c. Fill farm history sheet, registration form and make a pledge that they understand organic system of cultivation and commit to adhere to the organic standards
- d. Participate in appraisals/ inspections of other farms in the local group
- e. Participate in key field day trainings
- f. Participate in local group meetings and advise neighbors, share information and improve the capacity of the group as a whole
- g. Allow consumers/ buyers visits of the farms

Certification Process

Certification process with Farmer and Farm

Step 1

- i. Farmer decides to embrace organic farming and willing to be a part of PGS certification process
- ii. Reads or hear a summary of organic standards. For better understanding, participation in group meetings will be beneficial
- iii. Stops using all synthetic and chemical inputs on farm and on livestock.
- iv. Undertake adequate measures for contamination control, habitat management, diversity and livestock integration.
- v. In case farmer is unable to bring his entire land holding and livestock under organic management at the time of entry to group, then provide a time schedule in which farmer proposes to convert his entire holding to organic and obtain gradual conversion approval from group. In turn Group need to obtain approval of Regional Council.
- vi. Signs a PGS pledge committing to adherence to standards

Step 2

- vii. Regularly participates in group meetings and key field day trainings
- viii. If possible maintain a farm and livestock diary to list out farm operations. Illiterate farmers can take help of their literate sons or daughters or even the other literate members of the group.
- ix. Participate in peer appraisals of other farmers, first as shadow reviewer and then later as part of peer appraisal team.

Step 3

- x. The farmer is appraised by a group of peers from the local group, at least once in every crop season. A minimum of three (or more as

per the decision of the group) peer reviewers must be present to sign and validate the appraisal form.

- xi. If possible an external advisor or representative of trader/consumers or a local State Agriculture Department Officer may be included. But their presence is not mandatory.
- xii. To ensure consistent (i.e. complete but not overzealous) appraisals, all appraisals are scripted and include both physical checks of various parts of the farm and more importantly questions to make sure that the farmer understands the organic standards and they are complying to all the requirements
- xiii. Literate member of the appraisal group makes sure that every point in the appraisal script is completed and checked off. At the end, all reviewers present must sign off as supporting references and endorse the farmer's organic guarantee. Peer appraisals are done in the presence of the farmer or his family member and at the end of the inspection Peer appraisal sheet is also to be signed by the farmer.

Step 4

- xiv. After inspecting all the members in a group, a decision is made by the group as a whole or by the certification committee about which farmers will and won't be certified in a given year.
- xv. Group prepares local group summary worksheet on-line and sends signed hard copy to the Regional Council.
- xvi. On acceptance by RC, Group prints individual certificate and distribute to the farmers.

Note:

If a farmer has satisfactorily completed the 3 main requirements of being certified (**Attendance** at group meeting and field-trainings, Farmer's **Pledge** and Peer **Appraisal**) they will most likely be certified. PGS is an inclusive system based on trust. This is different from a Third Party system where the farmer has to convince the certifier of his/her "innocence" with huge amounts of paper "proof" as to his/her organic integrity.

In a small village, neighboring farmers know what happens on each other's farms, and these are the same neighbors empowered to make a final decision as to who is and isn't certified. A non-compliance by one farmer could influence the certification status of the group as a whole, so for that reason (among others) neighboring farmers are more likely to:

- a. Deny certification to farmers known to be cheating
- b. Proactively share knowledge, materials and moral support with a struggling farmer so they don't feel to resort to use of prohibited substances
- c. Immediately apply reasonable sanctions to farmers for a non-compliance (for example temporary suspension of Certified Organic status but the farmer is still included in the Local Group)

There are ample evidences that the power of local social control is far greater than that wielded by trained Third-Party inspectors who are outsiders and further visit only a few hours in a given year.

Certification Process by Local Group (LG)

Step 1

- i. Form a group comprising of minimum 5 farmers (belonging to close by villages with continuous territory).
- ii. Collect registration and farm history sheet from all the members.
- iii. Obtain copies of PGS Standards and PGS operational documents from nearest RC and distribute to all the members. These documents can also be downloaded from PGS website.
- iv. Convene the meeting of all the members and ask all the members to sign the pledge.
- v. Prepare Local Group operational manual detailing requirement of documents to be maintained by farmers, peer appraisal methodology and checkpoints to be assessed, based on the broad guidelines of PGS-India norms
- vi. Ensure that members have committed to convert their entire land holding and livestock to organic. In case if some members propose to convert their land in phases then draw appropriate strategies to distinctly separate such units with organic ones.
- vii. Invite already registered another Local Group to verify the group formation and obtain necessary recommendations. In case if there is no other PGS-LG close by, then contact local State Agriculture office, demonstrate the group's strength on organic and obtain endorsement. Alternatively apply to the RC and request RC to undertake verification. RCOFs can also be requested for endorsement of Local Groups.
- viii. Register the group on-line on PGS Website. In case if the group do not have access to computer and internet, then services of an local computer operator/ internet cafe can be taken. Alternatively fill all the forms and submit to RC for uploading the information on PGS website.
- ix. Enter into agreement with the RC for services to be availed on payment basis (as per mutual agreement).
- x. Request RC to grant registration, user ID and password.

Step 2

- xi. Follow the PGS guidelines on group meetings, key field trainings and knowledge sharing.
- xii. Keep vigil on neighboring farmer's farms and if some non-compliances are noticed then inform other group members during group meetings
- xiii. Ensure timely organization of training programmes in collaboration with RC.
- xiv. Invite practicing organic farmers and other local experts for problem solving in management issues such as in nutrient management, pest management etc during key trainings and group meetings.
- xv. Maintain attendance register for group meeting and key field trainings
- xvi. If member farmers are using or propose to use off-farm inputs then verify their organic status, discuss in group meetings and endorse

or prohibit their use. Use of such inputs without group's approval shall be treated as non-compliance.

Step 3

- xvii. Chalk out peer appraisal schedule and constitute peer appraisal groups. Each group should have minimum 3 peer appraisers. Depending upon the number of farmers there can be any number of appraisal teams comprising of three or more members. At least one member in the appraisal team must be literate and well versed in filling the appraisal forms.
- xxviii. Reciprocal review between two member group farms is not allowed (i.e. A reviews the B and B reviews A).
- xix. Invite other group peer reviewers or representatives of consumers/traders or local State Agriculture Department officer as invited member of the peer group (but their participation is not mandatory). This may increase the trust and credibility of the group Guarantee.
- xx. Complete peer review of all the farms at least once in each season. Ensure that all farms have been reviewed objectively.
- xxi. Discuss review reports in the meetings and decide upon the organic status of each farm one by one.
- xxii. Segregate farmers who have fulfilled all the requirements and consider them for grant of certificate
- xxiii. Discuss about the non-complying farmers and depending upon the nature and gravity of non-compliances issue sanctions.

Step 4

- xxiv. Appraisal paper work is checked for completeness and a local Group Summary Worksheet is prepared.
- xxv. Group or certification committee decides on certification and declares certification status of each group member.
- xxvi. Enter all details on-line in PGS website and send signed copy of the summary worksheet to the RC. Alternatively send all details in hard copy along with signed copy of summary sheet to RC for uploading the data into PGS website.
- xxvii. Regional Council check details provided in hard copy or on-line. While deciding on approval RC takes into consideration surveillance report (if any done), complaints received, residue analysis report etc. RC cannot decide on inclusion or non-inclusion of specific farmers based on information provided, it can decide only on approval or non-approval of certification of the Local Group as a whole. On being satisfied, grants necessary approval on-line.
- xxviii. LG prints certificate from PGS website and distribute to individual farmers. Alternatively LG requests RC to print the certificates and send to Group leader for distribution.

Only the farmers which have completed full conversion period without any major or serious non-compliance be declared as “PGS-Organic”. Farmers which which have one or more major non-compliance or are under conversion period will be declared as “PGS-Green”. Only the crops sown after joining the group, taking the PGS pledge in conformity of PGS standards and fully conforming to the PGS standard requirements as per the recommendations of peer reviewers shall qualify for “PGS-Green”. 3 continuous advisory on same issue can shift the status of member.

Certification Process by Regional Council

Step 1

- i. Receive registration applications (on-line or off-line or in hard copy) of Local Groups (LG). Check details of individual farmer history. Check for other group recommendation or endorsement by Central/State Govt authorities.
- ii. Finalize working modalities and if required enter into some sort of agreement including payment of fee for services provided. If data uploading work is to be done by RC then finalize necessary modalities for the same.
- iii. Ensure that LG has brought their entire holdings under organic. In cases of gradual conversion verify the facts and on being satisfied, grant necessary approval with time frame.
- iv. On being found adequate and finalization of working modalities/ agreement etc grant registration.
- v. If data and application have been provided on-line then approve registration on-line and provide user ID and password on PGS website.
- vi. If application is in hard copy or off-line then upload the information on website and grant registration with user ID and password.
- vii. Provide copy of PGS standards and LG operational manual guidelines.

Step 2

- viii. Time to time organize training programmes and if possible participate in some of the group meetings or key field trainings of group.
- ix. Encourage and build the capacity of the group for on-line data management (may be through internet café)
- x. If required undertake random surveillance on some groups for assessment of standards implementation and capacity of the Local Group
- xi. Receipt and redressal of complaints against the LGs and their functioning

Step 3

- xii. On receipt of entire data set and Local Group Summary Sheet, screen the details and on being found compliant to PGS standards

- and norms approve grant of certification. Approval is to be issued on-line for printing of certificate at Local Group's end.
- xiii. RC needs to endorse the certification decision of the LG, if requirements have been met and there are no complaints, adverse residue testing report or adverse surveillance report etc.
 - xiv. In case of Non-approval, reasons must be communicated in writing with justification.
 - xv. The RC needs to decide on certification request within 15 days from the date of uploading the LG-summary sheet or submitting the hard copy of the group decision to RC. If RC fails to endorse the decision of the LG or otherwise within 15 days then ZC need to intervene and decide the issue within next 7 days. In case if ZC also fails to intervene and decide in time then the group can approach PGS Secretariat for decision.

Note that the Regional Council does *not* make a decision to include or not include specific farmers based on the information provided. They can only approve or not approve the certification of the Local Group as a whole.

One example where this might apply would be if the Regional Council has a concern about Farmer X (for example because of a random pesticide residue test result) but the Local Group continues to list that farmer as Certified Organic with no sanctions and no explanation, the Regional Council may rightly be concerned and withhold certification approval of all farmers in the Local Group.

Another example could be that the Regional Council feels that some individual farmers' Peer Appraisals were faked or handled in a sloppy fashion. While the Regional Council can not hold-up the certification status of those specific farms, they can and SHOULD withhold certification approval from the Local Group as a whole.

Although the individual farmer is part of a Group Guarantee process, the Organic Certificate and identification number is given to them individually. Unlike with Third Party Group Certification, there is no requirement of common point of sale, and the farmer may sell to whomsoever they wish separately from the group.

For sales that are not local and direct to consumers, a system to maintain integrity through the chain of custody as well as to give consumers more confidence and immediate feedback about batches requires that the *code number for each Local Group* appears on every bag/batch shipped through non-direct sales channels.

- xvi. In case if the group has no access to internet and computer The Regional Council enters summary information for every local group into a PGS website database and sends a paper certificate certifying the *individual farm*. Each farmer's certificate has an individual unique identification code (UID) that includes codes for both the Local Group and the Regional Council.

- xvii. All issued certificates bear unique ID (UID) code for traceability and access to the entire information on production system, peer appraisal and decision system of the group.

Step 4

- xviii. Zonal Council and PGS secretariat also under take independent surveillance and communicate results to RC through website.
- xix. A small percentage of farms/ products are randomly selected for random pesticide residue testing each year and the results are placed on the website. Adverse results on both counts may impact the Certification status of the Local Group as a whole.
- xx. Pesticide Residue testing is coordinated by the NCOF-the PGS secretariat but it is the Regional Council and the Local Group that has to decide what to do about a positive result. The Regional Council provides Local Groups with non-compliance guidelines, but can not apply those guidelines to an individual farmer. ONLY the Local Group can sanction the individual farmers. The Regional Council can only suspend the certification of the entire Local Group.
- xxi. In PGS although there is no system of transaction certificate and traceability is ensured only up to the farm gate (or till it is in the custody of the group), but LG and RC can device some mechanism to ensure traceability till retail point.

Verification of certification by consumers

National PGS website will be the database for the entire programme. To make the system transparent entire data base will be kept in public domain. Even the surveillance reports and residue analysis reports will also be made available on the website. Consumers or public will be able to access the summary reports of LG, details of groups, products being offered by each group and their certification status. The information in respect of farmers/groups which have lost their certification will be available on the website for a period of at least 5 years after the loss of certification status occurred.

With access to unique ID code of particular product, consumers will be able to access the entire information on the group in respect of past history, cultivation practices and peer appraisal reports etc.

Efforts will also be made in the programme to launch SMS based internet traceability system in which, through SMS consumers will be able to know the certification status of the product in question with origin of the produce.

Grant of Logo and unique certificate ID code

On getting the certification approval from the Regional Council Local Group can print individual certificates from PGS website and can use the PGS logo on packets or containers of PGS certified products. Individual farmer certificate will have a unique ID code, identifying the RC, Local Group and the farmer. Each certificate will also list out the area, crops and products certified during the year as Annexure. Details in respect of quantity of each produce shall be available on PGS-India Website.

The validity of the certificate shall be 12 months from the date of decision of the group. On submission of subsequent summary sheet a new certificate will be granted with fresh 12 month validity from the date of last certification decision by the group as approved by the RC and so on.

Logo on the product is required to be printed with the unique ID code. Consumers can access the entire information about the group, its certification status, production practices, peer appraisals, surveillance reports etc by entering this unique ID code in PGS website.

Separate logo for PGS organic and PGS under conversion status

Two separate logos shall be granted for PGS organic and PGS under conversion as follows:

**PGS
Organic**



**PGS
Green**



(For detailed color specifications see page 48)

Conditions for use of logo

PGS certified products can be labeled with PGS logo along with unique ID code provided on the certificate only when they are packed under the supervision of either Local Group or by the certificate holder farmer himself. In case if packing is done away from the farm at some pack house then also the group need to ensure that it is done in their supervision and all precautions are taken to prevent the product from co-mingling.

Logo is to be used only on quantity certified as per the details provided to the RC and placed on the PGS-India website.

Use of logo without unique ID code is not allowed

Separate logos need to be used for organic and in-conversion products

PGS National Standards for Organic Production

General Requirements

Habitat Management

Habitat management is an important part of organic management system and forms the first step towards organic conversion. To ensure proper living conditions for all living beings, steady supply of green material for manuring and to create diversified plant stand it is essential that diversified plants/ trees etc are planted on bunds and other non-cultivated area of the farm. Adequate space may be provided for plantation of nitrogen fixing trees. Nitrogen fixing tree hedge not only act as biological fence but also ensure steady supply of biologically fixed nitrogen and other nutrients drawn from deeper layers of soil. These plants also provide home and shelter to friendly insects and birds.

If required rain water harvesting pits and farm ponds can also be created.

Diversity

Diversity in crop production is second most important step of organic management which not only helps in management and control of pests and diseases but also ensure balance nutrition of the soil. Diversity can be achieved by a combination of mixed cropping, intercropping, relay cropping and rotation with legumes. Use of trap crops and barrier crops also add to the diversity.

Integration of Animals/ livestock

As successful organic farming depend upon continuous supply of dung and urine, efforts should be made to integrate crop production with livestock rearing.

Conversion period

The time taken for a farm to comply with the PGS organic standards is defined as the conversion period. In other words, it is the time required by the conventional farm to attain full PGS organic status. The whole farm including the crop production and animal husbandry shall be converted to organic management. Parallel or part conversion is not allowed under PGS organic management. For newly acquired fields or fields managed conventionally, the conversion period shall be not less than 24 months in case of seasonal and annual crops while it shall be not less than 36 months in case of perennial and permanent crops from the last date of use of prohibited inputs or from the date of taking the pledge, whichever is later. However, Regional Councils in some cases may allow conversion in phases, but in any case the entire farm holding of the group members must be brought under PGS organic management within 24 months of joining the group.

Duration of conversion period can be reduced to 12 months if no prohibited substances have been used since last three years and all the members in the group are fully satisfied with past history of no synthetic input use and collectively declare so.

Conversion period for animal products shall be not less than 12 months provided they are fed with fully organic feed and fodder and all the members of group are satisfied that the standard requirements have been met since last 12 months.

In case of existing ICS groups (under NPOP) or members of such groups joining PGS, their certification status, as granted by accredited certification body and valid at the time of joining PGS shall continue, provided the group/ members meets all other requirements of PGS and have necessary documents to prove their claim to the full satisfaction of other group members (if they join an existing group) or RC (if they join as independent group).

Contamination control

All organic production units shall have effective measures to check accidental contamination with prohibited substance through drift or water flow. All organic farms shall be either protected with biological fence (hedge/hedge rows etc) or maintain a buffer zone.

Organic farms also need to be protected from contaminated water flow from adjoining non-organic fields. This can be achieved by putting appropriate bunds and escape channels.

Soil and Water conservation

Relevant measures should be taken to prevent erosion, salination of soil, excessive and improper use of water and the pollution of ground and surface water.

Clearing of land through the means of burning organic matter, e.g. slash-and burn, straw burning shall be restricted to the minimum. The clearing of primary forest is prohibited.

Standard requirements for crop production

Selection of seed and planting material

Seeds and planting material varieties should be well adapted to the soil, climatic conditions, suitable for organic management, resistant to pests and diseases and preferably of organic origin. In case organically grown seeds are not available then, chemically untreated conventional materials shall be used.

The use of genetically engineered seeds, pollen, transgenic plants or planting material is not allowed.

Fertilization

On-farm biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin shall form the basis of fertilization policy. Green manuring, intercropping or crop rotation with legumes shall be the integral part of cropping system planning. Off-farm/ purchased biodegradable material of microbial, plant or animal origin can also be used provided it is ensured that no prohibited substances have been used in their preparation.

Microbial preparations such as biofertilizers, biodynamic preparations, EM solutions etc can be used.

Off-farm/industry produced inputs approved by NPOP accredited certification body as approved input for use in organic farming can be used without further approval of the group.

Mineral fertilizers shall be used in their natural powdered form as supplementary source of nutrients.

Use of synthetic fertilizers is strictly prohibited in any form, directly or indirectly.

Pest, Disease and Weed Management including Growth Regulators

Selection of pest resistant varieties, suitable rotations, green manures, balanced fertilization, early planting, mulching, cultural, mechanical and biological control measures (including use of insect pest parasites and predators), disturbance in pest life cycles and ensuring survival of pest enemies should form the basis of pest management programme.

Thermic weed control or thermic sterilization of soils can be resorted to only when it becomes absolutely necessary.

Microbial pest control formulations such as biopesticides can be used. On-farm fermentation products and botanical extracts can also be used. Off-farm purchased microbial or botanical preparations can also be used provided it is ensured that such products are approved as organic inputs under NPOP by accredited certification agencies.

Use of synthetic herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and other chemical preparations including synthetic plant growth regulators and synthetic dyes are strictly prohibited. Use of genetically engineered organisms or products are also prohibited.

Equipments/ implements and storage containers

All farming equipments, implements and tools etc must be washed and cleaned before use on the organic farm.

Bags and containers used to harvest, store and transport organic produce must be clean and free from any chemical contamination and should not have been used for storage of conventional produce. All such containers and bags shall be clearly labeled "Organic Only".

Storage and Transport

Organic Products must be protected at all times from co-mingling with non-organic products. Use of synthetic or chemical storage pesticides/ fumigants are prohibited. Natural and traditional ways and means for storing organic produce are allowed. Use of carbon-di-oxide, nitrogen or any other such inert gas is permissible.

Standard requirement for animal production

Conversion requirements

The whole farm, including livestock, should be converted to organic within the specified conversion period. Part conversion or parallel production is not allowed under PGS after 24 months. The minimum conversion period for all animals except poultry shall be not less than 12 months. The poultry birds for egg production or for meat purpose shall be fed only on organic diet from 2 day onwards after hatching.

Rearing environment

The management of animal environment shall ensure free movement, sufficient access to fresh air, day light, water, lying and resting place and protection against excessive sunlight, rain and wind etc.

Mutilations in any form should not be resorted except for castrations, tail docking, dehorning, ringing and mule sing.

Breeds and breeding

Breeds should be chosen which are adapted to local conditions. Breeding goals should not be at variance with the animal's natural behaviour and should be directed towards good health. Reproduction techniques should be natural. Artificial insemination is allowed.

Hormonal heat treatment and induced births are not allowed, unless applied for medical reasons under veterinary advice.

Genetically engineered species or breeds are not allowed.

Animal Nutrition

The livestock should be fed 100% organically grown feed of good quality. All feed shall come from the farm itself or be produced on the farms of other group members or have been harvested from wild where no prohibited substances have been used. Products from the organic feed processing industry shall be used. Colouring agents shall not be used in organic livestock production.

The following products shall not be included nor added to the feed given to farm animals:

- Synthetic growth promoters or stimulants
- Synthetic appetisers
- Preservatives, except when used as a processing aid
- Artificial colouring agents
- Urea
- Farm animal by-products (e.g. abattoir waste) to ruminants
- Droppings, dung or other manure (all types of excreta) even if technologically processed
- Feed subjected to solvent (e.g. hexane), extraction (soya and rape seed meal)

- Feed prepared with the addition of other chemical agents
- Pure amino acids
- Genetically engineered organisms or products thereof

Vitamins, trace elements and supplements shall be used from natural origin when available in appropriate quantity and quality.

Veterinary Medicine

The well-being of the animals is the primary consideration in the choice of illness treatment. Natural medicines and methods, including homeopathy, ayurvedic, unani medicine and acupuncture, shall be emphasised. The use of conventional veterinary medicines is allowed when no other justifiable alternative is available.

Where conventional veterinary medicines are used, the withholding period shall be at least double the legal period.

Use of the following substances is prohibited:

- Synthetic growth promoters
- Substances of synthetic origin for production, stimulation or suppression of natural growth
- Hormones for heat induction and heat synchronisation unless used for an individual animal against reproductive disorders, justified by veterinary indications

Vaccinations shall be used only when diseases are known or expected to be a problem in the region. Legally required vaccinations are allowed. Genetically engineered vaccines are prohibited.

Standard Requirement for Bee Keeping

As bee keeping is considered a part of animal husbandry, general principals of animal husbandry shall also apply on bee keeping. In addition following requirements shall also be met:

- Bee hives shall be made of natural materials free from toxicity.
- Bee hives shall be placed in organically managed farms and/ or wild natural areas, away from the fields or areas where prohibited substances have been used.
- Veterinary medicines/ antibiotics shall not be used in bee keeping and no repellents consisting of prohibited substances be used when working with the bees.
- For pest and disease control and for hive disinfection use of caustic soda, lactic, oxalic, acetic, formic acids, sulphur, etheric oils and *Bacillus thuringensis* are allowed.

Standard Requirements for Food processing, Handling and Storage

General requirement

Any food processing, handling and storage of organic products, on-farm and/or off-farm or under hired facilities away from the farm can be certified under PGS, provided the entire operation is carried out under the supervision of PGS Group and the items/ materials to be processed are the direct produce of the PGS group. If required many PGS groups can make their federation and get their federation registered with RC for collective processing, handling and storage. Necessary guidelines for making federation and handling of products from different groups will be laid down by the concerned RC.

Storage

Organic products shall not be stored and transported together with inorganic products unless they are properly packed and labelled and physically separated from each other with no chances of contamination or co-mingling. Control measures should ensure that organic products do not come in contact with the in-organic products and prohibited substances during storage, transportation and processing.

No synthetic preservatives, chemicals, fumigants etc or storage aid shall be used. Use of controlled temperature, cooling, freezing, drying, humidity control through mechanical means and fumigation with nitrogen or carbon-di-oxide gas is permitted. Ethylene gas is permitted for ripening.

Ingredients, additives and processing aids

- All ingredients and additives of agriculture origin shall be PGS-organic.
- Water and salt may be used without any restriction.
- For the production of fermentation / microbiological products the medium shall be composed of organic ingredients.
- Commercial microbial formulations for use as inoculants in such processes can be used.
- In cases where ingredients of organic agriculture origin are not available or some ingredients of non-agriculture origin are to be used then the guidelines provided under NPOP be followed and the quantity of such non-agriculture additives should not exceed 5% of total dry weight (excluding water and salt) of the raw material.
- Use of genetically modified organisms or their products are prohibited
- Minerals, vitamins and similar other ingredients of chemical origin shall not be used.

Processing

- All processing equipments and machinery should be properly washed and made contamination free before using for organic processing.
- All processing equipments and filtration aids shall be free from contamination and shall not release any substance that may negatively affect the organic integrity

- Measures should be in place to prevent co-mingling and contamination of organic produce with non-organic.
- Services of NPOP certified processing units can be availed.
- Processes approved under PGS organic are: mechanical and physical, biological, smoking, extraction, precipitation and filtration. Extraction shall be done with water, ethanol, plant and animal oils, vinegar, carbon-di-oxide, nitrogen or carboxylic acids. All such solvents/ extraction liquid shall be of food grade.
- Irradiation is not allowed

Packing and Labelling

- Packing material should not affect the organoleptic character of the product
- The description of the PGS group with PGS logo and unique ID code shall be clearly printed.
- Single ingredient products may be labelled as “PGS-Organic” when all standard requirements have been met and the produce has been declared PGS-organic.
- PGS In-conversion products may be labelled as “PGS-Green” when all standard requirements for declaring the Local PGS group under PGS In-conversion have been met and the produce has been declared as PGS-Green.
- In case of mixed/ processed products if minimum of 95% ingredients is PGS-organic the product may be labelled as PGS-Organic. If proportions of organic ingredients are between 95 and 70% the products can be labelled as “Made with PGS-organic ingredients”, but in such cases PGS logo cannot be used.
- Only PGS Local groups and their duly authorized federations are allowed to use PGS Logo on the products, produced, processed and packed under their supervision.

Application form for entry into PGS Local Group

To
The Group Convener/Leader
PGS Local Group
Village
District

Sir

I am willing to undertake organic crop cultivation and livestock production as per PGS standards and want to become a member of your PGS local group for PGS organic guarantee programme.

Necessary details of my family and farm, past history of production and inputs use and livestock are enclosed herewith in the prescribed format.

I have obtained a copy of PGS Standards and Local Group operational manual and I undertake to adopt these standards on long term basis.

I also undertake to participate in all the activities of PGS Local Group including regular participation in group meetings, key field day training programmes and peer appraisals of farms of other members of the group.

I undertake to abide by the rules and regulations of the Local Group and follow all directives. I undertake to abide by the collective decisions of the Group.

On being formally inducted I undertake to sign the PGS organic pledge and follow it in letter and spirit.

Signature of Farmer
Name

Date
Place

Address

For Use by Local Group Office

Application No in sequence

Details checked and found adequate or not

Placed before the LG executive on Dated for approval

Accepted as LG member Yes / No Assigned Membership Code.....

Signature of Local Group Leader

Farm History Sheet

(To be filled by the Farmer. In case if farmer is illiterate or unable to fill the form, then other group members may help him in completing the history sheet. Alternatively 2 members of the group visit the farmer family and farm and collect the information from farmer orally and fill in the form)

1. Name of the Farmer
2. Father's name
3. Number of members in the family and name
 - i. Sh
 - ii. Mrs
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
4. Total area of the farm in acres with plot Nos.
5. Attach rough sketch of farm layout with location of utilities, facilities, trees and other permanent structures etc
6. Last date of use of prohibited substances
7. Crop and Input use history for past three years

Years	Crops taken	Fertilizer inputs used (name and quantity)	Plant protection inputs used (name and quantity)
1 Season a Season b Season c			
2 Season a Season b Season c			
3 Season a Season b Season c			

8. Whether soil testing and water testing has been done in past, if yes then attach reports
9. Irrigation facilities
10. Availability of machines, tools, tractors etc (give details)
11. Details of livestock and past three years history

Years	Name of cattle	Number	Details of feed and fodder provided	Details of medicines/ hormones provided
1				
2				
3				

12. Contamination control measures taken/ proposed (such as buffer zone and prevention of water flow from non-organic fields)
13. Storage facilities available
14. Details of on-farm input production facilities (available and proposed both)
15. Post harvest facilities available. If no facilities are available then how they will be arranged
16. Any post harvest processing facility available or not
17. If whole farm is not brought/offered for organic, then give plan and time schedule for converting whole farm to organic in a phased manner

I hereby declare that the information provided above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I have not hide any information which may adversely affect my organic status in future.

Signature of farmer

The information provided above seems to be true and the farmer can be trusted

Signature by other farmer already member of the group

Organic Farmer's Pledge

I son / daughter of of Village..... District
..... hereby declare on ... day of month... year.... that:

1. I will follow the PGS organic standards in crop production and livestock rearing/ processing to ensure synthetic input free production system for the long term sustainability, health and well being of soil, environment, crops, livestock, my family and community. I have received a copy of PGS standards and Local Group operational manual.
2. I will not use any synthetic input (such as chemical pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, chemical fertilizers, growth regulators and synthetic hormones etc) in any form directly or indirectly in my farming operations brought under PGS programme.
3. I commit to bring my entire farm operations including livestock under organic (or within a period of 24 months)
4. I will check with the Local Group before using any off-farm product that I am unsure of its organic status.
5. I will work with my fellow farmers in the Local Group and attend meetings and trainings to expand and share my knowledge of the standards and organic production techniques.
6. I will work to build the soil through ecologically sustainable farming practices such as crop rotations, composting, cover crops and green manures.
7. I will care for my livestock in ways that ensures their well-being in full compliance of PGS organic standards.
8. I will only use bags and containers that are clean and clearly labeled 'organic only' to harvest, transport and sell our organic products.
9. I will work to prevent contamination by suitable buffers and other means.
10. I will encourage biodiversity through my farming system.
11. I will sell products as Organic only when they are grown on certified land, and have been grown in accordance with PGS organic standards.
12. I will ensure that on the farm during storage, processing, transport and sale there is no contamination or mixing of organically grown with non-organically grown produce.
13. I agree to accept the decision of the Local Group in regards to my certification status.
14. I will participate in appraisals on other farms as per group norms.
15. I will report even minor or unintentional non-compliances to the organic standards on my farm to my Local Group

I hereby further declare that the information I have provided in the application and farm history sheet is true to the best of my knowledge. I also hereby declare that during peer appraisal I will fully cooperate with the peer reviewers and provide true information to the best of my and my family's knowledge and I will keep my information up to date with any changes occurred during the process.

Date & Place

Signature of farmers

Format for proceedings and attendance Register for Weekly Meetings

PGS Local Group Name

Total number of members

Date and time of weekly meeting

Important issues discussed and planning done (if any)

Number of peer appraisals completed since last meeting

Peer appraisals planned for next two months

Proposal for any input approval or query on problem solving (give brief)

Any other specific issue raised and discussed

Decisions made (if any)

Members present

S.No.	Name of member	Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Name Signature of member presiding the meeting

Format for proceedings and attendance Register for Key Field Day Trainings

Name of PGS Local group

Number of members

Location of training

Date of training and time with total duration

Subject and theme of training

Expert persons invited

Training was organized in collaboration of whom

Brief description of issues discussed

Members present

S.No.	Name of member	Signature
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

Name Signature of member presiding the meeting

Peer Inspection/Appraisal Worksheet

Peer Appraisal sheet for Season Year.....

Local Group Name

Local Group Code No.

Name of peer Appraisers with their member code

1. Sh
2. Sh
3. Sh
4.
5.

1. Farmer's details

S.No.	Component	Details
1.	Farmers Name	
2.	Member Code	
3.	Status of farmer as per last appraisal	
4.	Area of farm	
5.	Is there any change on farm in area or infrastructure	
6.	Is there any change in livestock position	
7.	Name of family member present during inspection*	
8.	Date of Inspection	

*During peer appraisal presence of at least one member of the family who is well versed with the PGS programme is a must requirement. In the absence of any representative appraisal cannot proceed

2. Background Information

S.No.	Component	Observation	Status of NC*
1.	Date of last use of prohibited substances		
2.	Since how many months farmer is doing organic		
3.	Are you satisfied that since taking		

	pledge farmer is not using any synthetic inputs		
4.	Whether farmer has adopted some measures to improve habitat If yes please provide details. If not then advise improvement		
5.	How diversity is being maintained Explain the measures initiated since last inspection or after taking pledge		
6.	If under conversion period, then what is the exact period of conversion on the date of inspection		
7	Are you satisfied that conversion requirements are being met		
8.	Do you feel any need for reduction in conversion period? If yes then specify reasons and evidences		
9.	Buffer zone is being maintained or not? If yes then specify that are you satisfied with the buffer zone If not then advise (but this advice is applicable in conversion period only). Non-maintenance of buffer zone after conversion period becomes non-compliance		
10	Are you satisfied that adequate measures have been taken to prevent contamination from water flow		
11.	What is source of irrigation? Does it meet the requirements of organic standards		
12.	Specify if any soil and water conservation methods have been adopted. If not please advise (it is a continuous process)		
13	Are you satisfied that the farmer is well acquainted with PGS organic standards and protocols?		

*Status of non-compliance – In case the nature of deficiency or non-compliance is not threatening the organic integrity; it should be rated as A (advisory). If it is threatening organic integrity it should be rated as M (Major non-compliance). If it is of serious nature and a gross violation it should be rated as Serious (S). Major NC reverts the organic status of farmer into in-conversion and Serious (S) NC necessitates sanction (such as suspension, expulsion or reversion of status to registered). Three Advisory (A) on particular issue in three consecutive appraisals turns into Major (M) non compliance and threatens certification status. Full compliance is indicated as “C”.

1. Compliance of PGS organic standards

S.No.	Item	Comments	Status of NC*
1.	Seed and planting material a. Organic (o) or conventional (c) b. If conventional whether chemically treated (CT) or not (NT) c. Genetically modified (GMO) or not (Non-GMO)		
	Are you satisfied that seed and planting material meets PGS standards		
2.	List on-farm manures used and quantity Are you satisfied that they meets PGS standards		
	List any off-farm purchased input used. If yes then give details Whether it was approved by group or not Does input is approved under NPOP by any agency (give detail)		
	Are you satisfied that fertilization process and inputs meets PGS standards		
3.	Weed management practices adopted		
	Are you satisfied that weed management process meets PGS standards		
4.	Provide details on plant protection measures a. On-farm measures b. Off-farm inputs		
	Whether off-farm inputs were approved by group or not		
	Whether off-farm inputs are approved under NPOP by any agency (give details)		
	Are you satisfied that pest management process meets the requirement of PGS standards		
5.	Whether equipments and tools used are properly washed for use in organic farming		

6.	Whether containers used for storage of organic produce meets PGS standards		
7.	Are you satisfied that requirements of storage, containers, bags etc meet PGS standards		
8.	Whether livestock are being treated in proper manner and provided with adequate facilities		
9.	Whether livestock is being fed with organic feed and fodder		
10.	Are you sure that no prohibited substances are being fed to animals		
11.	Give details of veterinary medicines given and vaccinations		
12.	Are you satisfied that veterinary medicines meet the PGS standards and were given only in emergency. Give details of with-holding period after medication		
13.	Are you satisfied that all requirements for animal production have been met as per PGS standards		
14.	Beekeeping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you satisfied that bee hives and boxes meet the standards requirement • Are you satisfied that the bee boxes have been placed under organic management/ wild natural fields • Are you satisfied that no prohibited substances have been used in bee rearing or handling Are you satisfied that all standard requirements for Bee keeping have been met		

*Status of non-compliance – In case the nature of deficiency or non-compliance is not threatening the organic integrity; it should be rated as A (advisory). If it is threatening organic integrity it should be rated as M (Major non-compliance). If it is of serious nature and a gross violation it should be rated as Serious (S). Major NC reverts the organic status of farmer into in-conversion and Serious (S) NC necessitates sanction (such as suspension, expulsion or reversion of status to registered). Three Advisory (A) on particular issue in three consecutive appraisals turns into Major (M) non compliance and threatens certification status. Full compliance is indicated as “C”.

4. Production details

S.No.	Crops/ produce	Expected yield	Requirement for home consumption	Surplus available for sale
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

2. Inspection summary and recommendations

Although the peer review team does not make the final decision on certification but now that the inspection is over, what would you recommend?

- Full Certification
- In Conversion Certification
- Farmer should make listed improvements and apply for certification next year.

Date of peer appraisal _____

How long did the peer appraisal take _____

Who was responsible for filling in the peer appraisal worksheet

Printed Name, Signatures and Date of all peer-appraisers present at this inspection

Peer Inspection/Appraisal Worksheet for Processing and Handling

Peer Appraisal sheet for Year.....

Type of processing

Details of processing and processing facility

On-Farm/ Off-Farm or Hired facility

Facility owned by

Details of other processing activities on premises

Name of peer Appraisers with their member code

1. Sh
2. Sh
3. Sh
4.
5.

1. Local Group details

S.No.	Component	Details
1.	Group Name	
2.	Group Code	
3.	Details of organic produce to be processed with quantity	
4.	Proportion of various ingredients to be used including water salt and other non-organic additives	
5.	Name/(s) of Group member	

	present responsible for supervision/ processing	
6.	Name of Group member/ representative present during inspection*	
7.	Date of Inspection	

*During peer appraisal presence of at least one member of the group who is well versed with the PGS processing standards is a must requirement. In the absence of any representative appraisal cannot proceed

2. Appraisal report sheet of processing process

S.No.	Component	Observation	Status of NC*
1.	Storage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does storage facility meet standard requirement of PGS Are you satisfied that necessary measures have been put into place to prevent co-mingling and contamination Are you satisfied that no prohibited substances have been used in storage 		
	Are you satisfied that full standard requirements have been met in storage		
2.	Processing facility Specify whether processing facility is certified organic or undertakes non-organic processing also.		
	Whether all equipments, containers and processing facility has been cleaned thoroughly to ensure that no prohibited substances are incorporated in the processing		
	Are you satisfied that the processing unit meets all standard requirements for PGS-organic processing		
3.	Processing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give details of process and specify whether the process is approved process under PGS-organic programme or not 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether all ingredients are PGS organic or not. If not then provide details for each organic and non-organic ingredients 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you satisfied that all non- 		

	organic ingredients/ purchased ingredients meet standard requirements		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, quality and quantity of non-organic additives used 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you satisfied that no prohibited substances have been used in processing 		
	Are you fully satisfied that the entire processing process meets the standard requirements or not. If not then specify non-conforming activity/ingredient		

3. Production details

S.No.	Type of finished product	Expected total yield	Details of packing	Specify number of containers with sizes
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

3. Inspection summary and recommendations

Although the peer review team does not make the final decision on certification but now that the inspection is over, what would you recommend for:

Storage facility

Processing unit

Process and out put

Date of inspection _____

Name, Signatures and Date of all peer-inspectors present during the appraisal

Non-Compliance Guidelines “Catalogue of Sanctions”

Sanctions are given to farmers by the Local Group as a whole OR by the Local Group’s elected Ethics Council (if one was created).

Situations	Type of sanction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing Attendance at a required Field Day • Unsatisfactory production system 	Verbal warning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor violations of the standards or regulations • Repeated written warning for similar problem • Not responding to approval conditions 	<i>Short Suspension of Certification</i> Period determined by length of time it takes for the Grower to get a new peer inspection/consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated minor violations • Clear violation of the standards not threatening the organic integrity of the product 	<i>Suspension</i> for a fixed period after until farmer(s) take corrective actions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear violation of the standards threatening the organic integrity of the product eg: use of prohibited pesticides or synthetic fertilisers. 	<i>Longer term suspension for 1 year</i> <i>Farmer may be moved back into “In Conversion” status</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated violations leading to penalties, suspension or withdrawal of approval. • Obvious fraud • Intentional obstruction of the inspection eg: denying inspector access. • Refusal to respond to written requests for additional information 	<i>Termination of participation</i> Farmer(s) banned from PGS membership either permanently or for a set period of time.

The Right of Appeal

The farmer's can make an appeal to the Regional Council within 2 weeks of the date of notification of the sanction by the Local Group OR to the Local Group as a whole if there is an Ethics Council that implemented the sanction.

LOCAL GROUP SUMMARY WORKSHEET

(To be submitted to the Regional Council for certification decision approval)

List of Local Group Farms to be Certified this Calendar Year

Calendar Year: _____

LOCAL GROUP ID# _____
(Assigned at the time of formation of the Local Group)

LOCAL GROUP LEADER/Representative _____

Contact Information: _____

Total number of farmers

1. Number of farmers fully conforming to certified status
(list enclosed as A)
2. Number of farmers granted in-conversion
(List enclosed as B)
3. Number of farmers sanctioned
(List enclosed as C)

Certification decision

We the members of the Local Group ID No.
hereby individually and collectively declare that members listed at A have achieved the PGS certified status (PGS Organic) and fully conformed all the requirements.

We individually and collectively declare that farmers at B are granted with In-conversion status (PGS Green – Grown without chemicals).

Details of expected produce under PGS-Organic and PGS-Green are given at Annexure I.

Regional Council is requested to kindly approve our certification decision. All required information including peer appraisal sheets have been up-loaded on PGS website and is available for review.

We all group members undertake to abide by the decision of the Regional Council.

Local Group Representative Signature Date

Decision of the Regional Council

Certification decision approved

Certification unique ID Code

Or

Certification decision not approved due to reasons

1

2

3

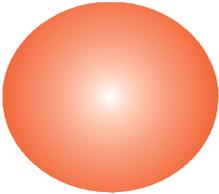
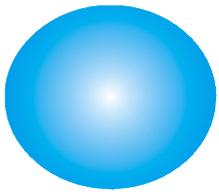
Signature

Regional Council Certification Manager Date

The Right of Appeal

In case of certification approval denial by Regional Council the Local Group can make an appeal to the National Council or to NAC through PGS Secretariat within 2 weeks of the date of notification of the certification denial by the Regional Council OR to the Appellate authority designated by the NAC.

Specifications of PGS-INDIA Logo

PGS-INDIA GREEN	PGS-INDIA ORGANIC
	
<p>Dimension: Inches :6.912”(W)x9.112”(H) Pixels : 2073 (W)x 2733 (H)</p>	<p>Dimension: Inches : 6.912”(W)x9.112”(H) Pixels : 2073 (W)x 2733 (H)</p>
 <p>C :0 M :100 Y:100 K: 0 R :218 G: 37 B: 29 Fountain Fill Mid Point : 50</p>	 <p>C :100 M :0 Y:0 K: 0 R :0 G: 147 B: 221 Fountain Fill Mid Point : 50</p>
 <p>Dark Side C: 68 M:22 Y:99 K:1 R:75 G:141 B:56 Light Side C: 53 M:0 Y:100 K:0 R: 133 G: 196 B: 65</p>	 <p>Dark Side C: 68 M:22 Y:99 K:1 R:75 G:141 B:56 Light Side C: 53 M:0 Y:100 K:0 R: 133 G: 196 B: 65</p>
<p>PGS-INDIA GREEN</p> <p>Fonts: Arial Black C:100 M:0 Y:100 K:0 R: 0 G:146 B:63</p>	<p>PGS-INDIA ORGANIC</p> <p>Fonts: Arial Black C:87 M:68 Y:0 K:0 R: 55 G:77 B:146</p>