

Ad hoc support : PGSC2020

Participatory Guarantee ABSYSs Conference 2020: “30 Years of PGS Development: A Root and Branch Appraisal”

ABSTRACT

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are certification systems that use peer review to ensure compliance with sustainable production practices through a quality sign or label. PGS represent an alternative to this so common and widespread third-party certification (TPC), in particular for organic farming or agroecology practices. Furthermore, PGS is more than just a certification process. It seeks to provide a framework to facilitate individual or collective marketing activities and to contribute to a continuous learning process.

In 2004, IFOAM-Organics International, in cooperation with MAELA (Latin American Agroecology Movement), organized the first international workshop on alternative certification in Torres (Brazil). It brought initiatives from various continents to discuss the common grounds between various approaches and needs behind alternative certification systems. An important outcome was the birth of “Participatory Guarantee Systems” as a concept and the creation of an international task force on PGS, now the permanent IFOAM PGS Committee.

As PGS are generally less expensive than TPC and more appropriate for small local entrepreneurs, they have developed in many countries. There are more than 127 operational PGS in 43 countries (IFOAM 2017). Overall, these PGS represent hundreds of thousands of peer-certified producers. PGS were first developed by local social movements. Today, many NGOs and some governments are investing to promote this alternative inclusive certification method. For instance, an increasing number of governments have taken measures to support PGS initiatives and some recognize PGS as a means to verify organic agriculture practices (Brazil, India, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Uruguay, New Zealand, etc).

While knowing a rapid and huge development in the world, these initiatives are very little known in France and have until now remained relatively isolated from each other.

The collaboration between CIRAD (UMR MOISA and UMR Innovation) and the Fédération Nature & Progrès (a pioneer in France of this type of participatory guarantee since the 1970s), which began in 2017, has been formalized around a participatory research project in 2019 – project REPAIRS (Appel CO-CONstruction des Connaissances pour la transition écologique et solidaire. édition 2018). The objective of the project was to create a framework for pooling experiences of PGS from various domain (agriculture, building, handicraft, energy, etc) and exchanging information in order to enable converging interests to meet. Majors stakes were to set up and improve PGS (environmental, social and technical issues), to make them better known (economic and territorial issues) and to enhance the value of this peer review system (regulatory and institutional issues). Shared questions on the regulatory recognition of PGS in Europe and on the analysis of PGS as a system of rules for the collective management of a commons, led the first partners to imagine a longer-term partnership project, extended to the various PGS in France and to researchers questioning existing guarantee mechanism and new economic forms at the service of the common goods – project COMPAIRS (Appel CO-CONstruction des Connaissances pour la transition écologique et solidaire. édition 2019).

An important step in the construction of this national and international network is the world meeting of the PGS in Rennes in 2020.

Keywords : France, International conference, Organic farming, Ecological transition, Participatory Guarantee Systems

Year : 2020

Project number : 2000-009

Type of funding : SP
Project type : PC
Research units in the network : INNOVATION
Start date : 1970-01-01
End date : 1970-01-01
Flagship project : no

Project leader : Sylvaine Lemeilleur
Project leader's institution : CIRAD
Project leader's RU : MOISA

Budget allocated : 3850 €
Total budget allocated (including co-financing) : 3850 €
Funding : Labex

GOAL

In the days leading up to the Organic World Congress 2020, which will happen in France (Rennes), participants have the opportunity to engage in topic specific pre-conference. The PGS preconference has been selected among other preconference proposals.

CIRAD, Nature & Progrès and IFOAM - Organics International are thus co-organising the long-awaited international meeting on Participatory Guarantee Systems, which will be held on the 21st of September 2020, in Rennes, just before the OWC.

After 15 years from the Torres event, this Participatory Guarantee Systems Pre-conference will create the opportunity to gather again PGS practitioners, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, policy makers and researchers from all over the world to stocktake on current PGS development, setting new strategies, targets and defining goals to improve PGS worldwide.

Our funding request for this event is thus part of a mixed project strongly involving both researchers and civil society actors. This conference intends to be an international conference of high scientific quality (the selection of contributors is made, among others, by a scientific committee including CIRAD, INRA, the University of Toulouse and the University of Cordoba). The funding allocated through this grant will be use to ensure non only the high quality of the event but also to two fully cover the participation of two researchers from Less developed Countries (or more, depending if we need to offer a full or partial support), keeping in mind youth and gender balance. Thanks to the grant the organizers will be also able to strengthen the link with civil society and to ensure broad participation, and consequently greater dissemination, through the organization of working group, designed and supported by the organization LISODE, an expert in facilitation of participatory processes and by ensuring simultaneous translation in 3 different languages. Without any doubts, this conference will allow to capitalize and create new pedagogical tools for vocational training on PGS that does not really exist anywhere else at the moment. Part of the co-financing done by partner organizations will be used to ensure live streaming of the conference's sessions and open access and dissemination of the conference proceedings.