



The PGS logo certifies sustainably grown organic farm crops that are built on the foundations of quality, trust and alliance through a farmer's social network.

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PARTICIPATORY
GUARANTEE
SYSTEM

PGS
ORGANIC



What is PGS

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS) organic farmers get together to provide a quality assurance guarantee that the food they produce is “organic”, that is, grown without soil-damaging chemical fertilizers and poisonous pesticides.

Organic farming is a way of life. It ensures that our agricultural resources including lands are kept productive for the use of future generations. Various methods of organic farming are in use across different eco-regions. However, the underlying element that runs through all of them is the need to protect and conserve the soil. Interest in organically grown products has increased exponentially in the last decade. Market share of such produce is still considerably low as organic farmers, especially those from the small and marginal groups, face a variety of obstacles, one of them being certification of their produce as organic.

Not only do they have to compete with market forces, but they have to ensure that their product is sold at competitive prices and also brings sufficient net income. In India, with growing consumer concern over pesticide residues, there is a need to support and encourage organic production of food. A practical uncomplicated system of certification and an assured market are the two poles of an organic quality assurance guarantee. Today, what are generally referred to as “Third-Party Certification” systems have become the dominant means of organic guarantee. Participatory Guarantee Systems, on the

other hand, are systems of quality assurance that are directly managed and controlled by organic producers. The difference is in the approaches of the two systems. PGS complements the organic movement as it is set up and managed by the very farmers and consumers that it serves. Importantly, there is no universal model of PGS. Each variant is adapted and specific to the individual communities, geographies, politics and markets of their origin.

ORGANIC



PGS groups are promoting organic agriculture in other countries like US, New Zealand, Brazil & France. New initiatives are also coming up in East Africa, Australia, South Africa and Vietnam.



Fundamental Values

PGS programs require a fundamentally ecological approach to agriculture that uses no synthetic chemical pesticides, fertilizers or GMOs, and further sustains farmers and workers in a cradle of long-term economic sustainability and social justice. The primarily local and direct market focus of PGS programs encourages community building, environmental protection and support to local economies in general.



The Introduction of PGS in India

In 2006, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, in consultation with farmers, NGOs and state government officials, began working on a model PGS program for organic certification specific to India's needs. After a national workshop in September 2006, pilot PGS programs were launched in different parts of the country. The structure is

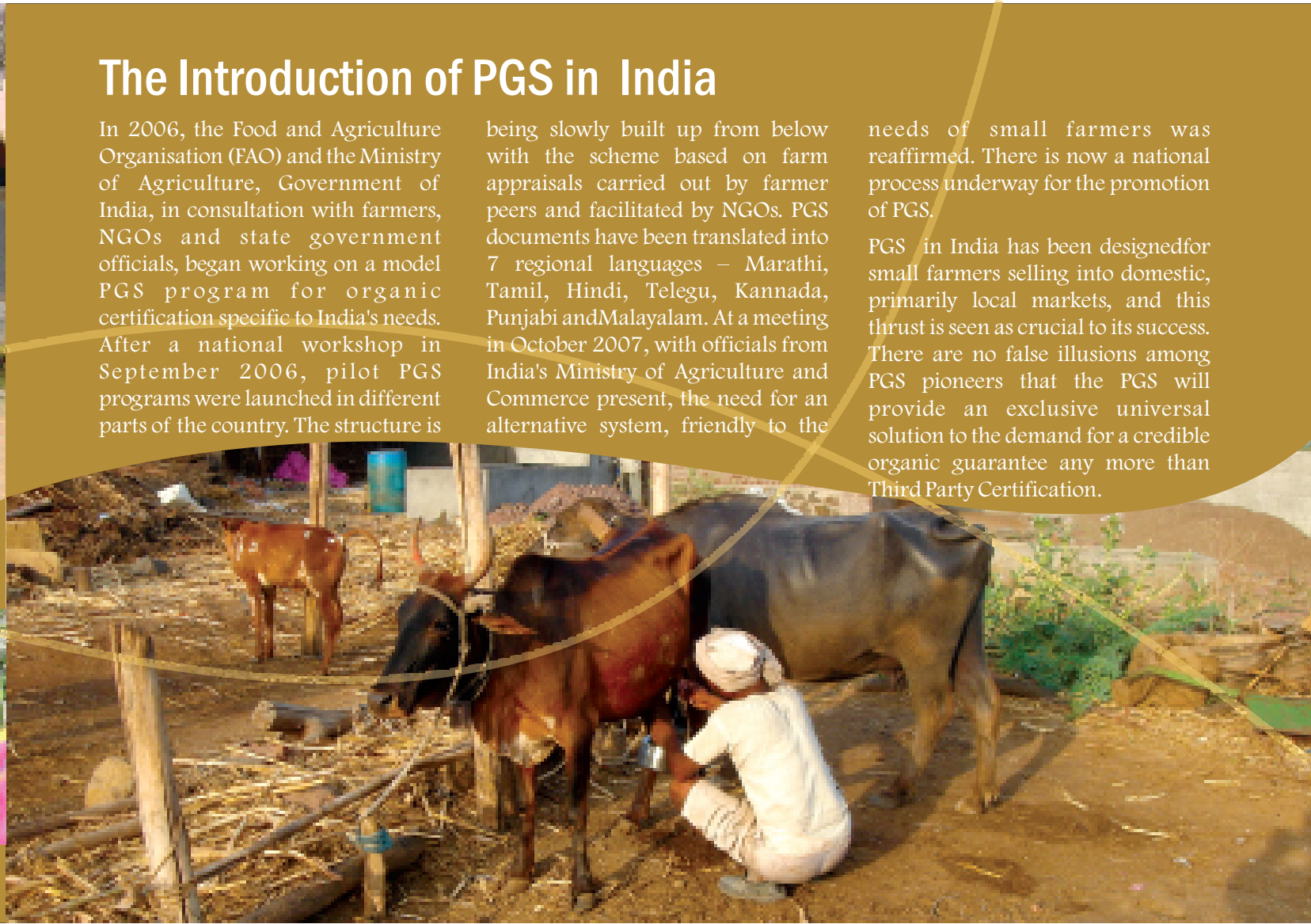
being slowly built up from below with the scheme based on farm appraisals carried out by farmer peers and facilitated by NGOs. PGS documents have been translated into 7 regional languages – Marathi, Tamil, Hindi, Telegu, Kannada, Punjabi and Malayalam. At a meeting in October 2007, with officials from India's Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce present, the need for an alternative system, friendly to the

needs of small farmers was reaffirmed. There is now a national process underway for the promotion of PGS.

PGS in India has been designed for small farmers selling into domestic, primarily local markets, and this thrust is seen as crucial to its success. There are no false illusions among PGS pioneers that the PGS will provide an exclusive universal solution to the demand for a credible organic guarantee any more than Third Party Certification.

Key Elements

- SHARED VISION** - Farmers and other civil society members have a shared vision in the core principles guiding the programs.
- PARTICIPATION** - The credibility of the production quality is a consequence of participation.
- TRANSPARENCY** - All stakeholders must be aware of exactly how the guarantee mechanism works.
- TRUST** - Farmers can be trusted and the organic certification system should be an expression of this trust.
- LEARNING** - A permanent process of learning which develops capacities in the communities involved.
- HORIZONTALITY** - Sharing of power. All involved in the process have the same level of responsibility and capacity.





Key Features of PGS India

Credible guarantee: by including both farmers and consumers in the certification process, and maintaining transparency at all times

Less paperwork: that will help address groups with low literacy rates

Low cost: through direct involvement of farmers (and consumers)

Organic pledge: to uphold and maintain the principles of organic agriculture

Social control as a compliance mechanism: for peer groups to act in accordance with organic principles

Empowering small farms: through 'whole farm' certification improving marketability

Subtext of training and support built into the system: by creating a grassroots support network for technical and moral support

Providing support to new and in-conversion organic farmers: who are not yet fulfilling the premises to be certified, but need the support network and capacity building



Roles and Responsibilities of Key Groups in the Certification Process

These are the organizational groups that administer a coordinated national PGS program. Although responsibility is shared between the groups, none of the groups has enough control to dominate the process as a whole.

Local Group. Is a social network that consists of farmers who live in the same village or region and interact regularly with each other. The Local Group does peer reviews of its members and decides which farmers are to be certified.

Regional Council. Provides capacity building, facilitates, monitors and recognizes Local Groups. Is generally started by an existing NGO, but ultimately Local Groups are empowered to create their own Regional Councils.

PGS Organic India Council. Is responsible for approval of new Regional Councils, reviewing and upgrading of the PGS program and networking with government and other agencies.

Farm Family

Joins local group, shares knowledge & experiences with other members.

Local Group

Conduct appraisals & collate information. Decide who will be certified. Send summary of farms to Regional Council.

Regional Council

Review summary of farms. Follow up on issues of non compliance. Send Local Group summaries to National Council.

National Council

Registers each Local Group. Maintains traceability. Issues certificates to Local Groups.