

TOOLKIT FOR BUILDING ORGANIC

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS











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INTRODUCTION

The Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community

Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom) is a not for profit membership organisation with active members (farmers associations, farmer support organisations, NGOs, private sector, research instituțions and working with governments) access of the Pacific Island region with the Secretariat hosted by the Pacific Community in Suva, Fiji. POETCom serves as the peak body providing a unified voice for the organic and ethical trade movement in the region. Through coordination, information sharing, net-working, and capacity building programmes as well as establishing a regional certification scheme to support market access and trade, POETCom aims to:

- » improve local and regional food and nutritional security;
- » improve farmer livelihoods by enabling farmers to trade, with access to both domestic and export markets, and by reducing their dependence on imported production inputs;
- » improve human health, by providing better access to high-quality, clean and nutritious food;

- » promote diversified productive and sustainable farming systems able to face global crisis;
- » protect and enhance the environment, by encouraging the use of environmentally friendly management practices; and
- » improve the well-being of people and communities, by promoting the adoption of ethical labour and social justice principles.

Since inception a key objective of POETCom has been to identify, develop and facilitate access to organic certification systems that are affordable and appropriate to organic growers — in particular small holders. To this end POETCom has developed the Pacific Organic Guarantee Scheme which recognizes group certification through Internal Control Systems for certification to regulated export markets and also Participatory Guarantee Systems for local and regional markets.

Participatory Guarantee Systems

What

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused organic assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.

Why

In most situations PGSs are born when a group of people come together who can see the benefit of having an organic guarantee. The guarantee provides recognition in local markets, is not constrained by the compliance requirements and costs of third party certification which is usually geared to anonymous markets and often long supply chains. Other motivating factors include a desire to

- /> | Reduce bureaucracy in the organic guarantee process
- » Promote equity and fairness through the production chain
- » Engender community values and support the potential for community development through organic agriculture

The group structure can provide a framework through which group marketing and various community building activities can be facilitated.

Most individual producers join a PGS because they want to sell their organic products locally (usually a farmers market or a retail outlet) and they need a label. A PGS can provide an affordable way of getting such a label. The benefits of belonging to a group may also be important particularly once the PGS has been in operation for a period of time and the full benefits can be appreciated.

Thus, NGOs might be inspired by the opportunity to support the development of a PGS through which community development objectives can be achieved, whereas most farmers will see the opportunity to access markets and secure better returns as the initial motivating factor.

How

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) aim to provide a credible organic guarantee to consumers seeking organic produce through direct participation of farmers and consumers in the organic guarantee process and are based on recognized and publicly available standards for organic production. Key elements of PGS include:

- They are shaped by the very farmers and consumers that they serve and while the details of methodology and process vary, there is a consistency of core principles which can be adapted and specific to local conditions (communities, geographies, politics and markets).
- Transparent, systemised decision-making processes aim to share the responsibility for the organic guarantee and to verify that farmers are consistently maintaining the standards. Trust is created through open information and peer reviews. PGS involve less administration and lower costs than export focused third party certification.
- PGS support and encourage producer groups to work together and to improve their farming practices through the sharing of knowledge and experiences. Active participation on the part of the stakeholders results in greater empowerment but also greater responsibility—there is a high priority placed on knowledge and capacity building of producers and consumers, ideal for the rural communities of the Pacific.
- » They can be used as a tool for improving local socioeconomic and ecological conditions by encouraging smallscale production and product processing. In local markets they help smallholders to have their products recognized as organic and can open unique opportunities such as small holder links with the tourism and hospitality industries.²

Development of PGS in the Pacific

In 2008 IFOAM provided a training session to POETCom members on PGS and in 2009 in New Caledonia the Chamber of Agriculture and the fruit farmer association 'Arbofruits' cooperated to develop a PGS to meet the challenges of organic agriculture in the region and using the Pacific Organic Standard as their production standard.

The decision to establish a PGS in New Caledonia was made because it provides a structure to regroup the organic actors in a common project, provides a platform for technical exchanges and improvement of the farming practices, is/more accessible for most producers than 3rd party certification, and it was also felt it could restore confidence in local production by involving consumers. The consultation process was extensive, producers and consumers were involved in working groups to define the PG\$ functioning scheme and the certification process. Official institutions in New Caledonia have recognized this system and it includes an external controller. The founding and operational documents of the structure were also developed and validated by working groups in a participative way. The PGS was officially established and launched in August 2009 as "Bio Caledonia".

Bio Caledonia approached POETCom to see if there was an option to develop a regional PGS registration mark that could be used on PGS guaranteed produce. POETCom felt this was a way of both promoting PGS and use of the Pacific Organic Standard (POS) and after extensive consultation it was agreed that a PGS version of the "Organic Pasifika" Mark would be produced and managed by POETCom. PGS who wish to use the Mark will need to apply and undergo an approval process managed by POETCom and be using the POS as their production standard. The PGS logo states that produce is "Organic Pasifika Guaranteed by" and the name of the PGS.

Interest in PGS continued to grow in the region and in 2013 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) supported a programme to establish 3 further pilot PGS in different environments, train PGS facilitators and develop training materials for PGS development resulting in this Pacific PGS Toolkit.

The toolkit is designed to provide a background and understanding in the principles of Participatory Guarantee Systems. It provides a step by step guide for building a PGS and developing the required systems and documentation to provide a reliable organic guarantee to consumers.

PURPOSE OF THE TOOL KIT

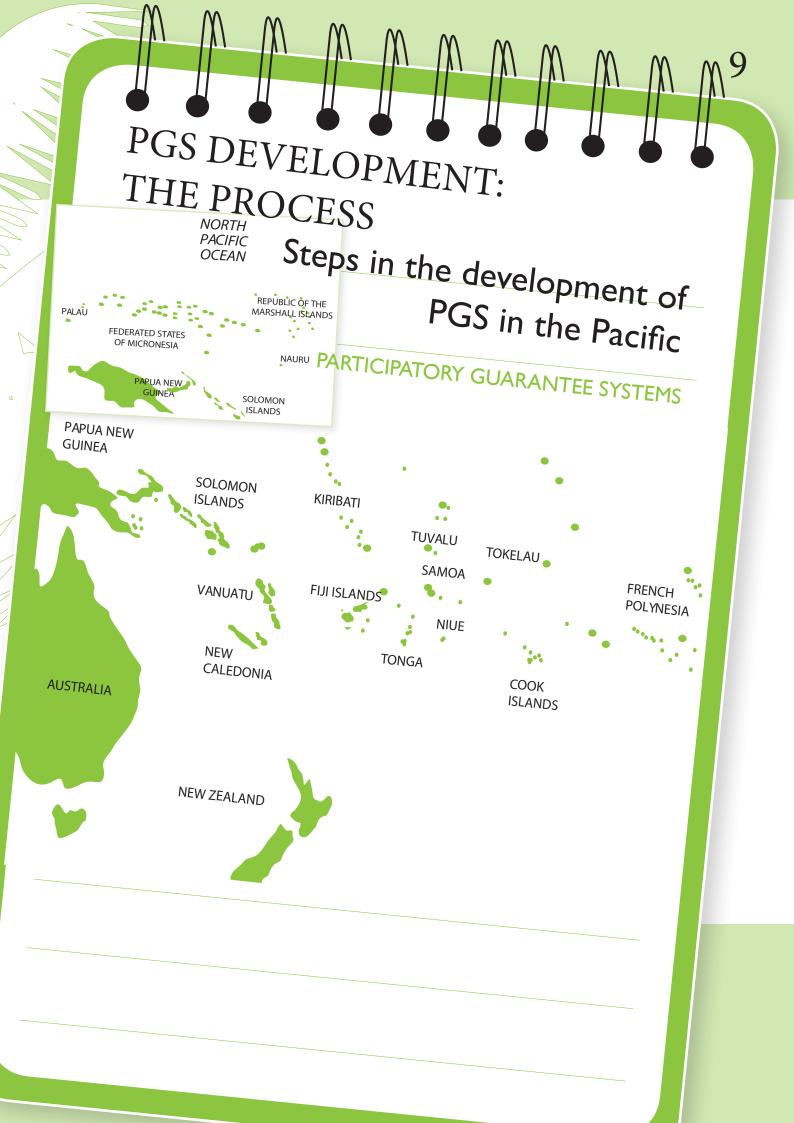
A PowerPoint presentation has been developed as a guide to the process and sample forms and documents are referenced to the PowerPoint. Links for further information are also included.

It is important to note that developing any PGS should be a fully participatory process, as such the forms and templates provided in the toolkit are examples only. These forms should be reviewed and adapted to meet the specific needs of each PGS. The PowerPoint also is a guide only.

The development process must be supported by the collective participation of the key stakeholders and all processes and systems should be subjected to trial and evaluation by the key stakeholders before they are finally adopted.

The trialling process will enable you to:

- » Identify and strengthen gaps in your existing skill base and systems (administration, management and technical)
- » Review paper work and modify as required
- Develop an understanding of the organic guarantee process and the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in the process
- » Consolidate the feeling of ownership of the PGS amongst the stakeholders through participation in the trial process For any PGS to be sustainable and provide a robust organic guarantee ownership of the producers of the system is the KEY factor and this is best achieved through full participation in shaping and defining their own PGS.



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- Module 3 Key Components and Non-Compliance
- Module 4 Implementation (new PG\$)
- Module 5 Organizational Arrangements
- Module 6 Regional and National Support Structures
 and the Role of Government
- Module 7 Market Access

MODULE I BACKGROUND

PGS OVERVIEW

PGS provide a **certification methodology** used by smallholder farmers to help them access organic markets using a PGS certificate as a **marketing tool.**

Integral to the PGS process sees farmers collaborating in groups and with other stakeholders to reinforce organic standards and production methods as well as producing, processing and often collectively marketing their products.

PGS certification methodology is described in the IFOAM PGS Guidelines Doc.

The PGS (includes farmers and other stakeholders who play a role in the day to day operation of the PGS) have the option of developing a group logo to be used on their packaging etc.

SMALL-HOLDERS ENGAGING IN 'NEW' MARKETS

Quality + Guarantee (certification)

Access 'new' markets

Builds consumer trust

Improved Incomes

ADB/IFOAM PGS Project

The biggest barrier to securing markets is poor quality and irregular supply. A PGS certificate on its own is of little use unless there are quality products to sell. Quality is what keeps the buyers coming back.

Product Quality can be enhanced through collective processing – at a central location with farmers trained in processing techniques who manage the process.

Selling as a group can provide a larger volume of product (more interesting to buyers) and help to ensure consistent supply as production is more likely to be coordinated.

The buyers should provide the quality parameters. Engage buyers early in the PGS development to consolidate their role as active stakeholders in the PGS.

EVOLUTION OF PGS

Alternative organic certifications have been around for many years.

In 2004 in Brazil IFOAM and MAELA, at a workshop now referred to as Torres I brought together representatives from a many of these alternative organisations to share their experiences.

A key output from Torres I was the synthesis and documentation of the common themes that underpin these approaches to create the IFOAM PGS Guidelines doc and the term participatory guarantee systems.

/PG\$ are now established in more than 50 countries in the world.

PGS in the Pacific are supported by POETCom.

PGS AND ROLE OF POETCOM AND IFOAM - ORGANICS INTERNATIONAL

POETCom provides - framework for the coordination of PGS in the Pacific region (POS, inputs approval, PGS registration, Pasifika Mark, support for PGS development).

IFOAM - Organics International provides - PGS Guidelines Doc; Case Studies; PGS Newsletter; PGS Registration and technical guidance via the IFOAM PGS Committee.

PGS Guidelines: http://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/page/files/pgs_guidelines_en_web.pdf

PGS newsletter

http://www.ifoam.bio/en/pgs-updates

PGS IFOAM registration

http://www.ifoam.bio/en/ifoam-pgs-recognition

PGS case studies

http://www.ifoam.bio/en/pgs-publications-english

COMPLIMENTARY CERTIFICATION APPROACHES RECOGNIZED BY IFOAM

THIRD PARTY

(Follows regulatory requirements of EU etc and standards of external certifiers and external inspection) Required for export to regulated markets PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS) (IFOAM PGS Guidelines and recognized 'local' standards, internal compliance) Local and non-regulated regional markets

ADB/IFOAM PGS Project

MODULE 2 GETTING STARTED

PGS; HOW THEY START

There are two basic approaches to getting PGS started.

- I. **Commercial Approach** established organic farmers with the support of a trading company develop a PGS begins with a supply chain and market in place.
- 2. **Project Approach** idea of PGS introduced to farmers by an **external agency e.g. an NGO** with an agenda for supporting sustainable livelihoods etc. The agency facilitates the PGS development and the market linkages.

Various agencies can facilitate and support the development of a PGS. PGS link farmers to markets and both directly and indirectly to consumers therefore these stakeholders should be engaged in the PGS process where possible.

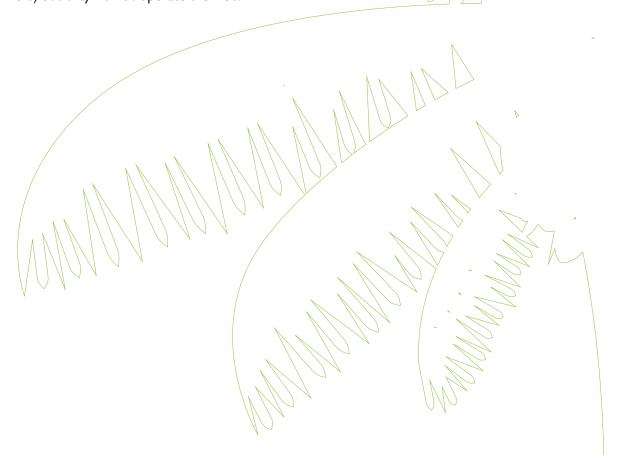
PGS MINDSET IS DIFFERENT TO THIRD PARTY

- The strength of a PGS comes from farmers demonstrating their capacity to understand the standards and the PGS process by making the system work for themselves.
- PGS certification is based around internal monitoring (peer review) and NOT inspection by external agencies.
- If regulations dictate that a government agency is responsible for certification they should focus their role around standards and registration of PGS setting the scene so PGS can operate.

THE PGS

PGS Stakeholder Group - (can be a single group or cluster of groups working together) is the 'body' that is responsible for the day to day internal management of the PGS, usually includes issuing the certificates.

Support for a PGS can come from other stakeholders (NGO, Traders, Government agencies, consumers) but they do not operate the PGS.



Certification is the responsibility of the PGS. In some situations a third party such as a Government Agency, Company or NGO may have a role in the issuing or approval of certificates. It is important that this approval process is not based on INSPECTION of farms by the outside agencies. Where they are involved their role should be limited to a very basic level of audit to see check that the PGS is operating effectively.

If the PGS is registered with POETCom (umbrella organization) they should have the right to audit a PGS if there are non-compliances unfulfilled.

SCOPE OF PGS

- PGS can cover groups of farmers as whole island communities, clusters of farm plots (next to each other) or scattered plots.
- PGS covers production and processing activities.
- PGS fit both direct (farmers markets) and indirect marketing (to retailers).
- All actors in the supply chain should have systems to maintain the integrity of organic PGS centified products after they leave the farm.

Cicia Island Fiji is an example of a whole Island and BioCaledonia an example of clusters of farm plots. Localized processing such a women's groups preparing VCO should be inspected and certified by the PGS following a peer review approach but larger scale processing of PGS products may require additional technical expertise. POETCom have a role in facilitating such inspections if they are required.

Where there are risks of contamination from external sources buffer zones will be required. If there are no risks then they are not required.

GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF GROUPS FOR A PGS

- Ideally there is already an established foundation to build from, with:
- Some level of producer organization, with producers experienced in production;
 Coordination at post harvest aimed at quality;
- Active engagement from the private sector to provide a market and maybe investment in community activities;
- Technical expertise to facilitate the PGS process (usually provided by an NGO or a company);
- A basic organizational framework (government or private) providing an enabling environment for PGS to operate.

Guidelines for Selecting an Organic PGS 'Pilot'

To create infastructure to support a PGS from scratch requires a great deal of funding and long term technical support, thus, in many cases PGS are developed as a Project. Even where there is external support it is important to keep in mind that a PGS is a marketing tool. A PGS group with no market is not sustainable.

MODULE 3 KEY COMPONENTS AND COMPLIANCE

PGS KEY COMPONENTS

FORM

- Recognized Standard
- Rules (norms)
- Documented management systems
- Mechanisms to ensure compliance
- Documented non-compliances and sanctions
- Pledge
- Mark or logo

FUNCTIONS

Organic Standard (usually a national or regional standard).

PGS Operators Manual describes -

Compliance System and Rules (peer review, checklists for internal monitoring, database, certification approval systems).

Pledge (PGS Operator).

PGS Operator / Organic Pasifika Mark.

Recognized Standard (Pacific Organic Standard) + Summary Standard (usually a 1 page summary of standards main points). Rules (norms) to include a description of the mechanisms for ensuring compliance. Documented management system outlining the roles and responsibilities of key persons (and agencies) and includes a description for how certificates are approved and issued). Documented list of non-compliances and sanctions for each level of non-compliance— (agreed to by the producers)

Pledge (shaped by the producers and pledge signed or agreed to in a transparent way)

Certificate (usually an individual certificate but could be a group certificate depending on the situation)

Seal or logo (PGS Operator or Organic Pasifika Mark) available once certificates issued.

COMPLIANCE AND PGS MEMBERS

PGS members demonstrate compliance by:

- Following production practices described by a recognized Production Standard;
- Following clearly defined rules and procedures that include a pledge, an appropriate level of documentation, record keeping and reporting;
- Full participation in various group activities such as training sessions, internal/peer review of farm plots and decision-making.

Standards can be National Standard or a Standard recognized in the IFOAM Family of Standards. Eg POS Example of Summary Standards are available in the folder of templates with this toolkit.

To be eligible to use the Organic Pasifika Mark the POS must be the standard used.

MODULE 4 IMPLEMENTATION

NEW PGS DEVELOPMENT STEPS

I. Situation analysis 2. Stake holders Sharing the Vision 3. Document how the PGS will work 4. Training standards and Pledge 5. Map Farm and Record Farm details 6.
Internal
monitoring/
Peer review

7. Certification Approval

- It is important to systematically complete Steps I 4 before the actual certification process starts. A good level of awareness of the PGS process and understanding of standards provides the foundation on which the PGS is built. Farmers cannot be expected to be trusted to follow a process if they do not firstly have a good understanding of how their roles and responsibilities work.
- For new members joining an existing PGS they should complete steps I-4 before they can join the PGS as a registered farmer.

STEP 1 SITUATION ANALYSIS

check
physical
(risks to
organic) and
stakeholder
capacity to
manage a PGS

Identify existing and potential stakeholders

Before you begin it is important to know what the strengths and challenges the existing situation might present and who the key stakeholders are. With this knowledge you know who to engage in the PGS development process and the issues that might need to be addressed.

STEP 2 'SHARING THEIR VISION' A DYNAMIC PROCESS

New markets **Buyers** expectations **Perceptions** of benefits of certification Consumer expectations **Stakeholders** discuss **Opportunity** Challenges of for organic reach market Opportunity for organic - new markets New markets Production, **Buyers** quality, expectations prices

Sharing the vision is an important building block in the formation of a PGS and is also considered as a step in the Learning Process (another important underlying theme for PGS). Stakeholders with different perspectives come together to share their ideas on organic, certification, markets, consumer attitudes, opportunities etc and from this exchange develop an appreciation of the different perspectives, help build trust and also build commitment to working together.

SHARING THE VISION

Underpins the PGS implementation process.

- It is fundamental to building trust between stakeholders, and
- Through sharing thoughts and experiences and exchanging ideas it ignites the LEARNING PROCESS to become an ongoing process that will go on for the life of the PGS



STEP DOCUMENTATION

The **PGS Key Components** lists the KEY DOCUMENTS that are used to shape the PGS rules.

Importantly in **all situations** the details (however basic) **must** be **documented** and describe a process that can be **checked regularly** - in a **consistent way** - with the **outputs recorded** and summarized into a **database**.

The level of detail can vary depending on the context and complexity of the situation.

Reference slide 16 PGS Key components.

PGS documents will cover: Management Systems, Rules, Non-compliances and Sanctions describe the Structure and Functions of the PGS

If the farmers cannot read and write you still need to write down how they comply with the standards and rules so the process can be checked to see that it is working.

PGS DOCUMENTS

- PGS Summary Standard (referenced to a recognized standard)
- Pledge
- Farm Details Document (includes farm maps)
- Internal Monitoring (Peer Review) Checklist
- List of agreed non-compliances and sanctions
- PGS Database

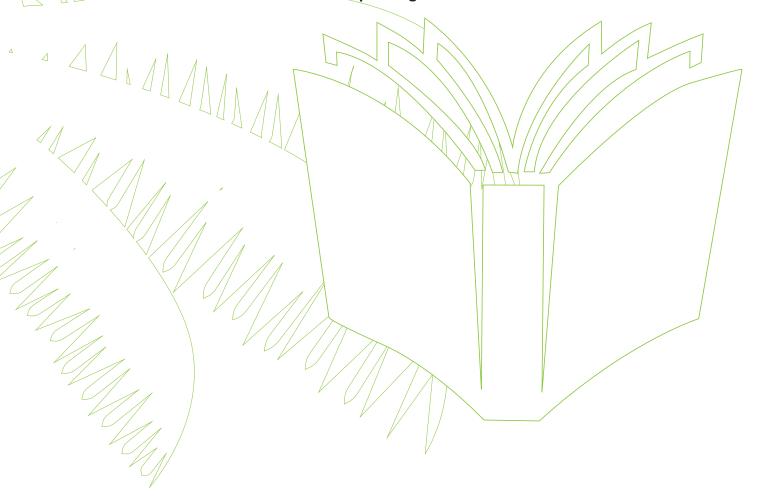
Other Docs can include:

- Template for recording farm inputs purchased
- Approved Inputs List useful
- Compost Dairy

These documents are common to all PGS.

PGS OPERATORS RULE BOOK

Procedures and Rules will be documented in the PGS Operator's **Operating and Rules Guideline Document**



STEP 4 TRAINING

Now that you have the rules and documentation prepared training and the next stage of awareness building can follow

The focus points for this training are

Standards

Pledge



TRAINING STANDARDS AND PLEDGE

All members in PGS receive training in:

- How the PGS works and roles and responsibilities of each member (includes pledge);
- What is required by the organic standards including inputs allowed;
- After the training each farmer will hold a copy of their Summary Standard
- Each farmer will have a method for keeping records (covering inputs, yields, sales)

Examples of different Summary Standards are available in the folder of templates with this toolkit.

Farmers can keep the records at home or they can be kept at the PGS office.

PLEDGE

In a new PGS the pledge process has 2 stages:

Ownership - the group decides on the words in the pledge to reflect the commitment of the group; and

Declaration – the group members sign the pledge, often there is a special ceremony.

- Each farmer will hold a copy of the signed pledge in their file.
- A pledge is a basic requirement for membership of a PGS

STEP 5 FARM DETAILS

Farm Details Document + Map all farmers complete a Farm Details Document (template) + Map(s) of their plots.

Completed by the farmer under the guidance of the PGS Operator and checked before filing by the PGS operator's 'certification coordinator';

Farm details are held for each farmer in a dedicated file.

The Farm Details document is checked during the internal review process. The expectation is that the details in the document will mirror what can be seen in the field.

I.In situations where the farmers lack the skills to complete the form assistance from the PGS Operator or a key farmer is ok.

2.The expectation is that the information the Farm Details Doc will mirror what can be seen in the field and farmers records.

3.Examples of Farm Details Docs are available in the folder of templates with this toolkit.

4. There are various options for map drawing – most importantly there should be a map for every plot recorded in the PGS group. For scattered plots individual lot maps are required but for wild harvesting or plots gathered together a single map may be sufficient

STEP 6 INTERNAL MONITORING

- PGS coordinates an internal review at least once per year using an Internal Review Checklist to document the observations for every farmer in the group.
- This process follows a peer review approach. Farmers share responsibility for noting observations in the Checklist provided.
- The Checklists are checked by PGS certification manager and revisited if not completed.
- In situations with low levels of literacy the Checklist can be completed on behalf of the farmer by a nominated person eg: a key farmer, local school teacher etc etc .

Peer review involves farmers visiting each others farms and can include others stakeholders or technically skilled persons.

The Internal Review Checklist should be adapted to fit with the situation and context. Thus, in high risk (intensive production, neighbours using chemicals) situations a much higher level of checking will be required compared to very low risk (wild harvesting and no chemicals, remote islands)

DATABASE

Once the Internal Review Process has been completed the information is entered into a DATABASE

The database is updated after each internal review

- Template format is usually an Excel spreadsheet
- A new spreadsheet is prepared each year

The Database is very important – this is the document that should be open for any one to see.

An example is available in the folder of templates with this toolkit.

STEP 7 CERTIFICATION PERSONNEL

PGS should appoint:

- A certification coordinator/manager (day to day management). Can be a group member with technical ability;
- A Certification Committee usually 3 persons (I from the PGS and 2 independent technicians from outside PGS).

The Certification Committee role is to check to see that the system is working - includes the PGS paper work and database and advise on non-compliance and sanctions when required.

Certification manager deals with all paperwork, organizes internal monitoring, follow-ups on unfinished documentation and non-compliances, up dates database, report to certification committee.

NON-COMPLIANCE AND SANCTIONS

As part of the PGS training all members of the PGS must understand and agree to the sanctions that can be imposed on them for non-compliance.

These RULES must be documented.

Having set rules provides the certification manager and certification committee with firm guidelines to follow.

RULES COVERING NON-COMPLIANCE AND SANCTIONS (EXAMPLE ONLY)

	I.Farmer fails to attend training.	I. Reminder/Fine	
	2.Farmer has no receipts for inputs purchased or products sold.	2. Reminder/Fine	
	3.Uses farm inputs not approved by the PGS operator without permission.	3. Organic certification withheld for a period of time/Fine.	
	4.Uses prohibited inputs that are never allowed in the standards.	4. Removed from PGS group, certificate cancelled, never allowed back into the group.	

It is important that each PGS group member understands that there are consequences for non-compliance.

CERTIFICATION APPROVAL

- Certification manager presents the required paperwork and database to certification committee.
 - Certification Committee checks (particularly the database) either approves or requests more information. Where a non-compliance is unresolved they advise and certification manager follows up.
- Once complete the certification committee can recommend to the PGS to issue certificates.

The PGS management approves the recommendations and can issue certificates.

CERTIFICATION APPROVAL

Certification manager prepares and presents documents to certification committee Certification Committee review (may request more information) and recommend certificates be issued

PGS
Management
– issues
certificates

All decision making processes must be transparent to the members of the PGS

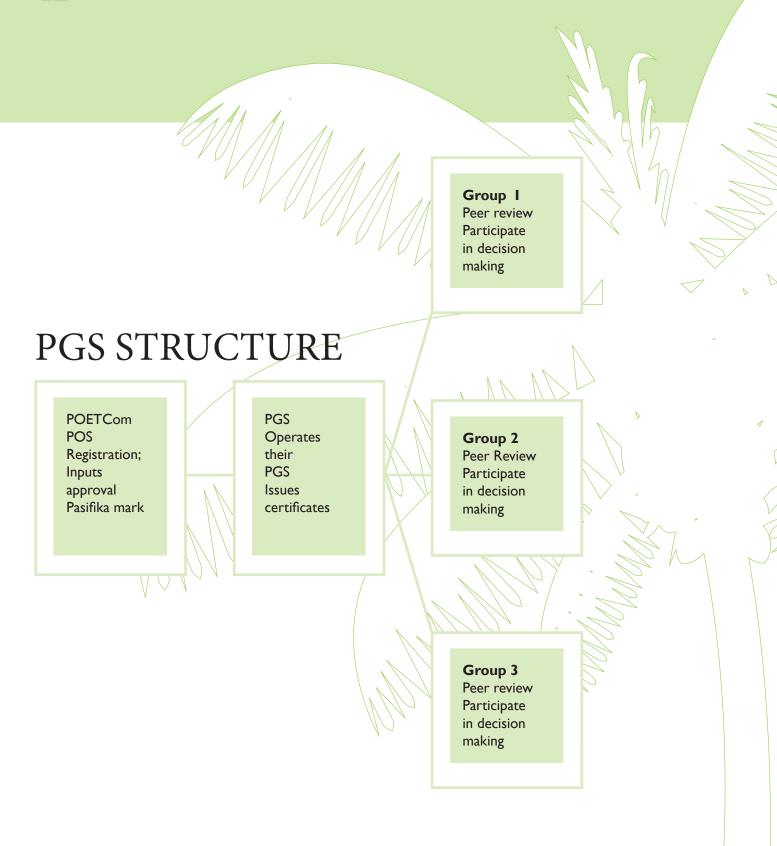
PGS Certification manager presents the required paperwork and database to certification committee. Certification Committee checks (particularly the database) either approves or requests more information. Where a non-compliance is unresolved they advise and certification manager to follow up as required. Once process is complete the PGS certification committee can recommend to the PGS management to issue certificates.

The PGS management approves the recommendation.

MODULE 5 GETTING STARTED

ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

PACIFIC REGION PGS
STRUCTURE



Examples of PGS in the region include COMA (Cicia Island Monitoring Agency, Fiji) and BioCaledonia, New Caledonia.

Cicia has 5 villages with each village being a group within COMA; for BioCaledonia the groups are based around clusters of farmers.

POETCom provides the Pacific with regional support and coordination for PGS activities. PGS can register with POETcom (see the POETCom website for the details). Once registered PGS can use the Organic Pasifika Mark as part of their marketing.

MODULE 6

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND THE ROLE OF

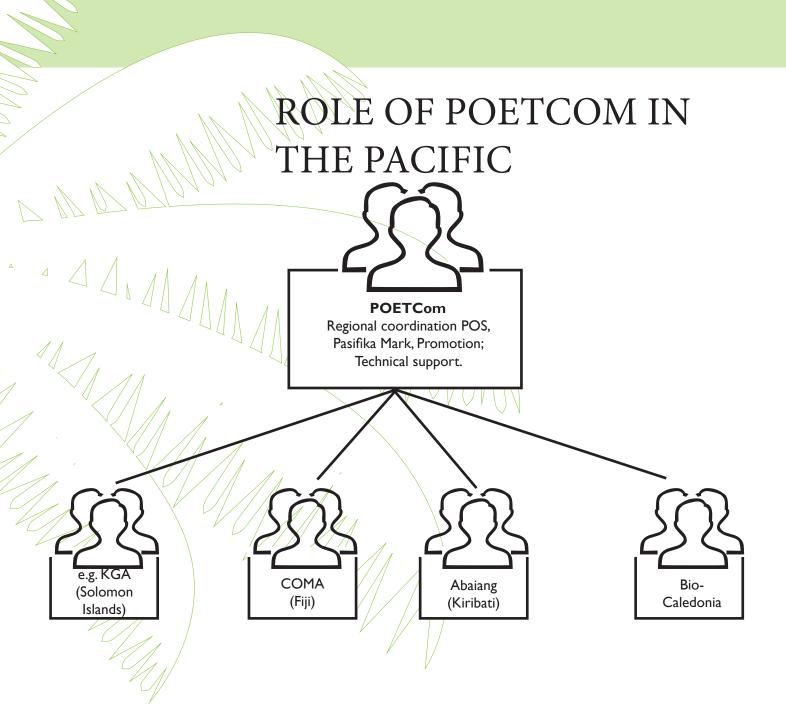
GOVERNMENTS



THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Create an enabling environment for PGS to operate in the Region.

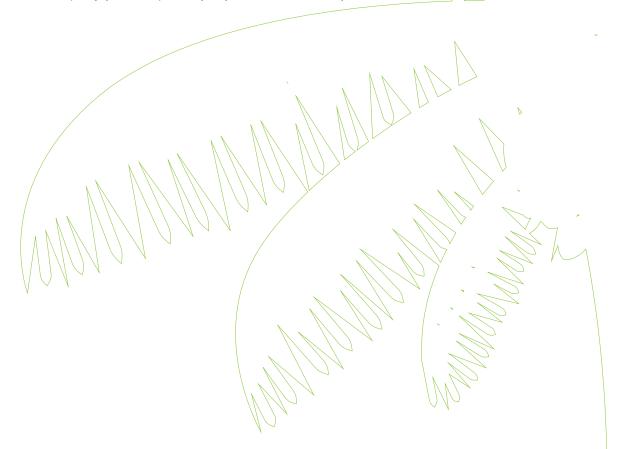
- By building PGS and organic initiatives into planning strategies;
- Allocating staff and resources to support organic and PGS initiatives;
- Recognition of the POS as the Regional Organic Standard;
- Support for POETCom as the coordinating body for PGS in the region.



MODULE 7

MARKET ACCESS

- In non-regulated markets such NZ or Australia it is possible to sell PGS certified product, where the buyer agrees.
- In regulated markets (EU, Japan, USA) third party certification is required.

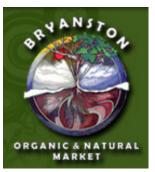


PGS product is already available in NZ via the Organic Farm NZ (OFNZ) certification program.

ORGANIC PASIFIKA AND OPERATOR LOGO



EXAMPLES PGS LOGOS FROM AROUND THE WORLD





VIVA agricultures orgánicos



















To use the Organic Pasifika Mark, PGS must apply to POETCom using the Self Evalutaion Checklist in this toolkit.



