



## ASSOCIATION OF INDIAN ORGANIC INDUSTRY

# NEWSLETTER

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## World Quality Month

November 2021

### Theme

Sustainability: Improving our Products, People & Planet

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## From the CEO's Desk



*Dr. (Mrs) PVSM Gouri*

Dear Friends,

### Greetings from the Association of Indian Organic Industry !

World Quality Day is globally celebrated every year in November. The day was designed to increase awareness about the important contribution that quality makes towards both organizational and national growth, and prosperity. This year's theme is **Sustainability: Improving our Products, People and Planet.**

We are aware that Quality is essential in everything we do, including how businesses and organizations should operate. In the organic sector, continuous quality improvement should be the mantra to achieve measurable improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, performance, accountability and outcomes at every step of the operations. This is achievable with the recognition that all processes can be improved.

We are all aware that the organic sector is replete with many challenges and the recent reports of the presence of traces of Ethylene Oxide (ETO) in organic products in our export consignments to Europe is of concern. Presence of ETO in food is banned in the EU, as it is considered to be carcinogenic. The consignments reported to have had a high residue of ETO and the stakeholders should have been careful about it. Such an incident could have been prevented had stringent quality control been put in place by all concerned. Integrity of organic products becomes questionable if appropriate steps are not put in place, particularly, if it is the legal requirement of an importing country.

To address the need for quality control in the organic sector, therefore, not only there should be effective quality control backed up by requisite SOPs, appropriate notifications should also be issued to ensure it. There is also a need to enhance awareness about the compliance requirements, as necessary.

This edition of the newsletter highlights the various requirements / procedures under the TBT Agreement for compliance by the trading countries for facilitating trade. The trading partners need to ensure that commitments under the agreement are met. The industry actors in the system, exporters and the certification bodies, must also cooperate in the trade facilitating arrangement without compromising on the quality requirements of organic products. This edition also takes you through various opportunities and challenges in the organic livestock sector, the need for looking at good agriculture practices in organic production and the alternative certification system, i.e., PGS for small farmers.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and we look forward to your feedback so that we can continuously add value to it.

With Best Wishes

**AIOI Family**



# Advantages of an Equivalence Arrangement or Recognition of Conformity Assessment Procedures for Export of Organic Products



\* S Dave

## Key Provisions under the TBT Agreement

Production and trade in organic products fall under the purview of the [TBT Agreement](#). This agreement has two main objectives very similar to those of the SPS Agreement. The two objectives are: (a) to ensure that technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures established by a Member do not create unnecessary barriers to trade; and (b) Allow Members the possibility to protect the life and health of plants, animals and human being and of the environment; and, in addition, legitimate objectives including national security, prevention of deceptive practices.

In the context of organic products, countries establish technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures, and these are not sanitary or phyto-sanitary standards within the meaning of the SPS Agreement. In fact, the provisions of TBT Agreement do not apply to SPS measures. With regard to trade in organic products, we need to remember that countries are required to accord “national treatment”, i.e., treatment no less favourable than that accorded to like products of national origin (**Article 2.1**); and that the technical regulations are not prepared, adopted or applied having the effect of creating unnecessary obstacles to international trade. For this purpose, technical regulations shall not be more trade-restrictive than necessary to fulfil a legitimate objective, taking account of the risks non-fulfilment would create (**Article 2.2**).

In terms of the **technical regulations**, in case relevant international standards (Codex, in this case) exist, these should be used to develop the technical regulations and if such technical regulations are likely to have a significant effect on trade, the importing country should publish a notice and notify the exporting country in order to allow the latter reasonable time to make comments in writing, discuss these comments upon request, and take these written comments and the results of these discussions into account (**Article 2.9**).

The **conformity assessment procedures** relate to the certification and accreditation systems that the respective countries that are members of the WTO are required to apply. As per **Article 5.1** of the TBT Agreement, countries are required to ensure that conformity assessment procedures are prepared, adopted and applied so as to grant access for suppliers of like products, and do have the effect of creating unnecessary obstacles to international trade. They are also required to ensure that such procedures are equitable and that a procedure exists to review complaints concerning the operation of a conformity assessment procedure and to take corrective action when a complaint is justified (**Article 5.2**).

With regard to the recognition of conformity assessment procedures, members of the WTO, at the request of other members, should be willing to enter into negotiations in order to facilitate market access (**Article 6.3**). Here, it is important to note that when a positive assurance of conformity with a technical regulation or standard is required, members ‘shall’ formulate and adopt international systems for conformity assessment and become members thereof or participate in it (**Article 10.1**).

**Article 12** of the TBT Agreement concerns Special and Differential Treatment for Developing Countries. It requires that members 'shall': provide a 'differential' and 'more favourable treatment' to developing countries; give particular attention to the rights and obligations of developing countries; and inter alia take into account their trade needs during the 'development' and 'application' of technical regulations and the conformity assessment procedures.

This means that the special development, financial and trade needs of developing countries not only in the development of technical regulations but also their application has to be such these facilitate the trade of developing countries without creating any unnecessary obstacles to the export of developing countries.

### **Codex Guidelines**

Taking these needs into account, the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the following Guidelines:

#### **A. Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL)**

- [Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods](#)

#### **B. Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS)**

- [Guidelines for the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems.](#)
- [Guidelines for the Development of Equivalence Agreements Regarding Food Imports and Export Inspection and Certification Systems.](#)
- [Principles for Traceability / Product Tracing as a Tool Within a Food Inspection and Certification System.](#)
- [Principles and guidelines for the exchange of information between importing and exporting countries to support the trade in food.](#)

### **What initiatives were taken by India ?**

The **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)** was announced in May 2000 by the then Prime Minister of India in 1999. During this period, APEDA worked closely with Ministry of Commerce and took into account the Codex Guidelines as well as IFOAM Guidelines for organic production while developing the technical standards for organic production. Similarly, the relevant ISO Guides ISO 17065 (ISO 65 at that time) and ISO 17011 were considered for developing the conformity assessment procedures (certification and accreditation of certification bodies). This was followed by the accreditation and capacity building programme at the National level for the certification bodies to comply to the standards of ISO 17065. The NPOP was notified through a Gazette notification under the FTDR Act of the DGFT.

Our trading partners (EU and US) were insisting on certification to be done only by the EU and US direct accredited Certification Bodies for export to their markets. This was proving to be an obstacle to India's export of organic products to these countries because the cost of certification was prohibitively high. Therefore, India initiated negotiations with the EU and the US for determination of equivalence of the standards (technical regulations) and the certification & accreditation (conformity







# Organic Livestock Products: New Opportunities & Challenges



*\* Dr. Mahesh Chander*

With the largest number of organic producers (1366226), India holds 5th position in terms of area (2.3 Million hectare) under certified organic production. India, currently, exports a range of certified organic products including edibles & fiber to 58 countries. Organic food products exports grew by 51% to US\$1040 million in 2020-21 compared to US \$689Million in 2019-20, beating Covid-19 induced hiccups in the supply chain. The domestic market and exports have grown at a CAGR of 28% and 23.35%, respectively, during last 5 years. The share of India's exports in total global trade stands at 0.82%. Yet, so far the share of organic livestock products is negligible.

Recently, organic products of animal origin have triggered the interest of producers, making entry of certified animal products into market including small quantity exported too. India exported 2125.6 kg of certified organic Ghee (clarified butter) to UAE during 2019-20. The domestic consumers too are becoming increasingly conscious of hygiene, food safety and food products free of antibiotics and other toxic substances used in production process. So, the demand for organic milk, meat, eggs and products thereof may pick up in the days to come. Out of 31 accredited certification bodies (CBs), 7-8 CBs are accredited to certify organic livestock products. Currently, 52 certified organic dairy operators, 66 meat operators and 3 certified organic egg operators are active in India.

Organic animal production including Research & Development activities, import & exports are mostly confined to EU, USA, Australia & few other developed countries. But, now many start-ups including enterprising farmers, private companies and dairy cooperatives are engaged in organic animal production, processing and marketing of certified animal products in India. The export of certified organic butter oil from India to UAE has been an encouraging experience motivating many to pay attention to this hitherto neglected area. There is a growing demand for information, knowledge, skills and marketing opportunities for organic animal production, especially many youths, start-ups and enterprising farmers have been looking for capacity building and hand-holding opportunities in this emerging area. Government of India has been supporting organic farming including animal production under different schemes resulting in positive outcomes.

The export of organic livestock products from India is constrained due to the existence of infectious diseases like Foot & Mouth Disease. Many EU and other developed nations avoid importing livestock products from India, primarily because they are self sufficient in dairy, poultry and other livestock products. Therefore, the quality requirements are very high and stringent in importing countries. The recent case of suspending the CBs on account of complaints regarding ETO, from importing countries is an indicator that organic product marketing, particularly, the export is not going to be an easy affair in coming days.

India is a country of small scale producers, so individual farmers have low volumes. This low volume often makes them ineligible for organic production for want of processing facilities, meeting certi-

[illegible]

Source: [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/gujarats-dang-to-be-declared-100-per-cent-organic-farming-district-minister/articleshow/87735696.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/gujarats-dang-to-be-declared-100-per-cent-organic-farming-district-minister/articleshow/87735696.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)



From production, processing to marketing, the whole value chain has to ensure quality of products, so that consumers' confidence is won and they get a good market for certified organic products. Any weak link in organic value chain will shake the confidence of the consumers, which will harm more than helping the expansion of organic market in India.





# It is time now for IndG.A.P.



***\*Mr. Narayana Upadhyaya***

According to recent research by Aditi Organic Certifications, over 92% are aware of organic products mainly in the category of fresh fruits & vegetables. Over 57% stated inability to identify genuine organic products for their decision not to go for organic. When people talk about “organic”, there is a need to check whether the producers have followed Good Agricultural Practices. To address this concern, the Quality Council of India (QCI) has introduced a voluntary certification program called IndG.A.P.

Organic farming with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) can be optimised to meet particular goals. Profitability is usually an important goal, since without profit, one can't keep farming. Integrating IndG.A.P. with organic farming can help to prevent certain environmental problems.

Introducing IndG.A.P. to small and marginal land growers can prevent on-farm contamination of fruits and vegetables. GAPs are a new way of thinking about food safety. Good agriculture practices are also use to maximize the farm produce in different ways and quality production. Farmers can do self-assessment and learn about the potential food safety hazards that can occur on the farm or orchard and take preventative steps to avoid contamination with harmful microbes and chemical residues. IndG.A.P. certification may protect one's business. They, not only prevent the public from illness, they also protect one's farm business from the economic consequences of food contamination

## **What is IndG.A.P.?**

IndG.A.P is a voluntary certification scheme developed to certify Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) in India. The scheme is to promote sustainable agriculture to bring in culture of food safety, enhanced produce quality, optimization of human and natural resources by our agrarians. This, in turn, will result in better price realization of their produce and thereby secure and strengthen livelihoods of the small and marginal farmers.

Following general modules are developed under IndG.A.P.

- All farm base module
- Crop base module includes – Fresh Fruits & Vegetables, Combinable Crops, Tea, Green Coffee and Spices
- Agro Biodiversity module

The main components of IndG.A.P Standards are

- Soil amendments & soil fertility management including INM
- Planting Material including seeds and vegetative propagation materials
- Water management
- Pest & disease management including IPM
- Worker's health and safety





Trust factor goes a long way while buying day-to-day food items. Most of the small shop keepers presume that if a vegetable comes from a local farmer or a traditional farm (meaning not certified), they should consider the freshness and price factor as important. The importance of ecological and environmental effects to the local community is considered additionally in the case of certified products.

### **What is the role of the consumer?**

When we talk of distance market demand, every consumer must be aware of the traceability of the product, whether it is a supermarket or retailer. The consumer must be able to track the entire journey of the product, trace it back to the concerned farmer to handle any quality issues noticed by consumers. Consumers must look for a certification mark and be willing to pay a premium or reward to the farmer for helping them to have access to healthier farm produce. Here comes the role of a third-party certification body to verify and assure the consumers that certification is important. Certification helps the farmer to sell his farm produce for a “better” price with minimum wastage at every stage of product handling. The pandemic has taught us that, in the future, what we eat will play a key role in building our immunity against microbial (bacteria/fungus/virus) based diseases. Hence, it is all the more important that we must help the farmer to grow and market directly to consumers with certification of quality assurance.

IndG.A.P. certification also helps the legally registered farmers’ group to apply for certification. Only by robust planning of production, consolidation of farm produces, a group can develop a sustainable business module to and ensure regular supply of better and healthier produce to its consumers. As a consumer, one must look into these factors.

### **After COVID-19 vaccines, Bharat Biotech ventures into processed organic food business**



Makers of blockbuster of Covid 19 vaccines, Covaxin, Bharat Biotech has now ventured into the processed organic foods business with their new start-up ‘Ella Foods’. A brain child of Dr.Krishna Ella, Chairman & Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, ‘Ella Foods’ is created under a public-private model through patented formulations and processing wherein the ingredients and raw materials are directly sourced from farmers. Around 15 products- spices like red chilli, turmeric, pepper powder, healthy snacks like almonds, cashews, instant upma, turmeric latte drink, different varieties of pickles and unpolished rice are being offered. Presently available only on online platforms, the products are pickles in low sodium, cryogenic and sugar free beverages, microbial free rice, microbial free seasonings, microbial free spices, probiotic instant foods..

Source: <https://zeenews.india.com/india/after-covid-19-vaccines-bharat-biotech-ventures-into-processed-organic-food-business-2409137.html>





- Must interact with farmers and read about the difference between conventional produce and certified ones
- Must identify certified produces to support farmers' groups and buy from them or ask their local retailer who supports the IndG.A.P. and organic agriculture.
- Must know the difference between IndG.A.P. (Good Agricultural Practices) and Organic Farming Practices.

It is the need of the hour that consumers help drive demand for the organic / IndG.A.P. certified products from the farmers so that they are encouraged to retain their "Organic / IndG.A.P. certified" farm status and do not go back to traditional ways of using chemicals and pesticides indiscriminately to only look for high production. Even those converted to organic farming may just grow enough organic produce for their family's consumption, if the consumers fail to recognize them. So, if we want to eat healthier produce, we must play our part in the entire exercise.

It's about time we discuss in each family our options on what to eat and where to buy from. The certified farmer knows how important it is to serve the consumers' nature-friendly produce. But do we know our farmer? One can choose either one. Grow one's food, or identify certified farmers and pay for their farm produce better. The latter is the easier and better way to go as we believe in the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in the supply chain of Certified Organic/IndG.A.P. producers. Eat good, clean, and minimally processed food.



# Introduction to revised PGS-INDIA: An alternative Organic Certification System in India



*\*Dr. Gagnesh Sharma*

## **Introduction:**

The present demand of Indian consumers for organic products is gradually increasing and consumers are looking for the certified products for trusting quality of organic produce. Currently, India has two types of certification systems, namely, (i) Third Party certification which is governed by APEDA, Ministry of Commerce, which essentially focuses on exports; and (ii) PGS-INDIA, an alternative certification system which is governed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, which mainly focuses on the local / domestic market.

The third party certification bears high fees and more documentation as a result of which small and marginal farmers are not able to offer for certification. To make it more easy and affordable, a simpler alternative system of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certification is accessible by more number of small and marginal farmers and sale in the domestic market. The PGS-India was launched in 2011 by Department of Agriculture and Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, Government of India. The programme is implemented through the National Centre of Organic Farming (NCOF), Ghaziabad and its nine Regional Centres (Ghaziabad (HQ), Bangalore, Nagpur, Jabalpur, Panchkula, Bhubaneswar, Imphal, Bihar & Gujarat) as Zonal Councils. NCOF is Secretariat of the PGS-INDIA System, and Director, NCOF is the Executive Secretary and is responsible for implementation of all activities of PGS- INDIA as per the PGS guidelines.

## **About PGS**

PGS are quality assurance initiatives that are locally relevant, emphasize the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers and operate outside the frame of third party certification. A process, whereby, people in similar situations (in this case small holder producers), in some way assess the production practices of their peers. This process can be formal or informal.

## **PGS-India Guiding Principles**

In tune with the international trends and IFOAM's PGS Guidelines, PGS-India system is also based on participatory approach, a shared vision, transparency, trust, horizontality and networking. In addition, it gives PGS movement a National recognition and institutional structure without affecting the spirit of PGS. 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 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. The learning process is usually 'hands-on' and might involve field days or workshops.

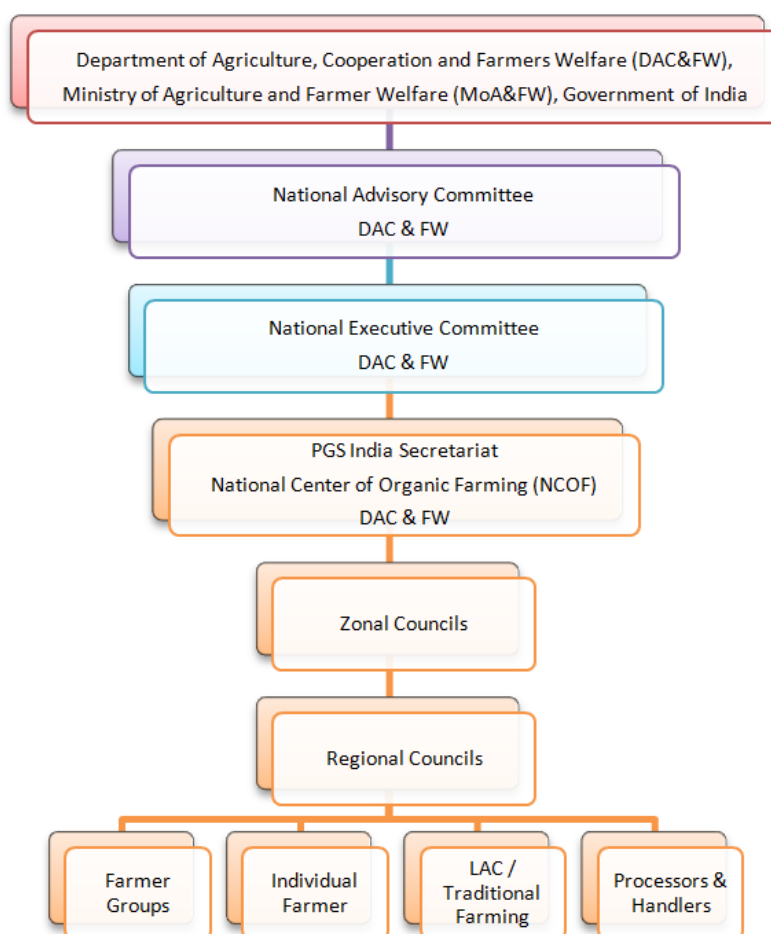


## PGS-India Philosophy

The philosophy of NCOF sponsored PGS-India programme stipulates that it is:

- A farmer empowering approach
- Based on farmer group declaration and consumer's trust
- No intermediaries
- Group will be supreme, with inspections on each other.
- Entire information to be in public domain
- Scope for product testing for chemical residue provides additional trust
- Individual farmer gets certificate with PGS number and farmer sub-code

## Institutional Structure of PGS-India System



## Scopes of PGS-INDIA organic certification system

To ensure entry of individual farm producers and PGS-India certified organic farm produce into organized processing and retail sales, PGS-India provides a system of continued verification of organic integrity for farms, on-farm and off-farm processing and handling. The following modules are implemented under the PGS-India programme:

- **Crop Production Module**
- **Processing and Handling Module**
- **Live Stock and other Module**

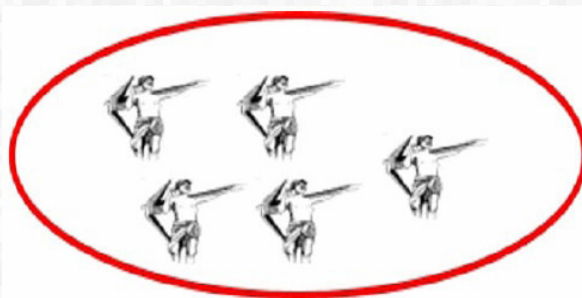
**Crop Production module:** The complete certification operation under PGS-INDIA web portal has been made functional at present under crop production modules and there are three categories for issuing certificates as given below:

- Local Group certification
- Individual Group certification
- Large Area Certification

### **A. Local Group certification:**

A Local/farmer Group formation requires a minimum of 5 Members and maximum number as per their limits. Farmers in similar situations located in the same village or close by villages or adjacent land holdings who can interact regularly with each other will be facilitated to form a local group. Participation of women farmers shall be ensured and it will be ensured that at least a few

(25%) members are well versed with the PGS/NPOP or have undergone training on PGS by the RCOFs / NCOF or part of the core team of other functional PGS group. There is also a system of taking a PGS pledge and sign a group agreement. No restriction on the size of holding, but one single member should not exceed 50% of the total land under the group. Parallel production and part conversion is not allowed, Entire farm with livestock under organic management within 24 months shall continue to remain under conversion.



### **B. Individual Group certification:**

#### **Who can register for Individual certification?**

At the beginning, where farmer is interested to undertake organic farming in a place in which other farmers are not ready to join group or no local groups in nearby villages are present or the farmer is isolated from other farmers, any individual can register under individual certification.



#### **What are the conditions for Individual registered farmer ?**

Farmer should make all out efforts to create groups and become part of PGS-India groups as and when possible within two years failing which it makes it mandatory for him to join other already existing PGS local groups nearest to him or his area.

#### **Who will endorse and monitor Individual?**

Regional Councils can assist such farmers in registration, documentation, verification, endorsement, monitoring and all other certification standards and compliance requirements as per PGS-India guidelines.

#### **How to get LAC certification?**

India has been traditionally organic and many areas continue to remain organic. Due to the complexities of documentation, physical verification and other requirements for standards compliance in such areas could not be taken up in spite of the fact that they are traditionally organic. PGS-India provides an opportunity to mainstream these areas into organic under the overall guiding principles of PGS-India with following additional features:

- Only large contiguous areas complying to PGS-India standards for several years are considered.
- Local/ State administration ensures that there is effective ban on usage of synthetic inputs and GMOs; and no permissions have been granted for sale/supply of prohibited substances to them.
- Such areas are geographically isolated from conventional areas and are separated by hills, non-agricultural land, sea, rivers, forests or any other effective barrier.
- Adoption of PGS-India organic farming policy and practices by all the farmers in the region and its corroboration by the village councillor or Gram Panchayats.



### C. Large area certification:

- What is large certification?
- What are requirement of LAC?
- How to get LAC certification?

### Steps involved in PGS-INDIA Organic certification:

1. **Formation of groups:** A farmer group will be formed with Minimum 5 Members and there are no maximum limits. But an ideal group consists of 20-25 members for easy understanding an operation.
2. **Selection of Group leader:** Well educated amongst the members of group will be selected upon consent of all group members and the group leader keeps rotating as and when required by the groups.
3. **Documents collection:** For registration, prescribed formats as per the PGS India standards needs to be collected for online enrolment and approval from regional council. One document is required for life time certification process.
4. **Selection of Regional Council:** The organization with whom local groups are very familiar and authorized by NEC-PGS India to execute work in their area can be chosen. It is the choice of farmers to select Regional Council (RC), and prior to registration, the farmer's group must interact with RC and get enough training from them before joining with them. Local Group (LG) can shift RC at any time during certification if the RC is found not performing their duties and guiding them properly upon intimation to the RC with whom they registered.
5. **Registration with Regional Council:** Each individual farmers has to submit an Application Form, Organic Pledge, Farm History Sheet, Identity proof, Identity card, Bank A/C details (only if required), Land records / details (Pani/Patta/Naksha/GPS) and also an application from group leader, copy of the Agreement, Terms of Reference for Operation and its endorsement.

### Organic India wins Outstanding Sustainable Farmer Income Enhancement Award at Agri Summit of FICCI



Organic India, a leading multinational organic product manufacturing company won the Outstanding Sustainable Farmer Income Enhancement (Mid Corporates) Award at Agri Summit & Awards organised by FICCI on November 18, 2021. This was in recognition to its sustainable agricultural practices. Based on the theme, Envisioning Smart and Sustainable Agriculture, the summit brought policymakers and value chain players on a common platform to deliberate practical and scalable strategies for smart and sustainable agriculture..

Source: <http://www.fnbnews.com/Top-News/organic-india-wins-outstanding-sustainable-farmer-income-enhancement-award-at-agri-summit-of-ficci-65681>



- 6. Endorsement:** The authenticity of farmers belonging to village and their active engagement in agriculture will be endorsed by Local Groups already registered under PGS / Regional Council. Under the scheme, farmers registered will be endorsed by State / District nodal officer.
- 7. Training:** It is the responsibility of each farmer registered under the Local group to undergo training and understand the technology, package of practices adopted in organic farming. Farmers training will be organized by the Regional Council / Service provider / State or other institute. Each local group should make sure that 50% of its members attend the training. Demonstrations must be attended by more than that. At least two such programs should be attended by each group member in a year.
- 8. Meetings:** Each group should organize meetings from time-to-time and maintain an 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 2-4 meetings each year (2 for perennial crops group and 4 for annual crop group). Compulsory meetings at key times of the year depending on the season, the crops, etc. should also take place. On or two meetings for peer appraisal planning and one or two for decision making. Every member needs to attend at least 50% of the meetings in a year and sign in the attendance register.
- 9. Peer inspection and decision submission:** During each season, 15 days after sowing and one month before harvest of crop, peer inspection has to be completed. To perform peer inspection there should be minimum 3 peer appraisers or more as members; at least one member in the appraisal team must be literate and well versed in filling the appraisal forms. The peer inspection team formulated among the members of group will perform a ten-point evaluation for organic farming standards of each farmer as given below and submit their decision to the Local Group for approval by all members of the group. Non compliance or sanctions on the farmers who violate the rules are also prepared by peer inspection team for taking appropriate decision on certification.

- Habitat management
- Diversity
- Integration of livestock
- Soil and water conservation
- Contamination control
- Seed and planting material
- Fertilization
- Pest management
- Cleaning of equipment's / tools
- Storage and transport



Reciprocal review between two-member group farms is not allowed (i.e., A reviews B and B reviews A). They should 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's guarantee and uphold transparency. All peer appraisal sheets in respect of each group member needs to be maintained in hard copy or digitally by the local group for future supervision activity. These are to be made available in the public domain and provided to RC or statutory authority upon demand during physical supervision.



10. Approval Group decision and certificate issue: Filled peer appraisal form is to be submitted to the Regional Council and the same will be uploaded by LG / RC and an online certificate will be issued to farmers.
11. Updating yield: After harvest of crop keeping 5% variation, the actual yield per farmer will be updated in the PGS-INDIA web-portal by LG/RC/FA/SP.
12. Online registration in Jaivik kheti web-portal and Transaction / marketing: Each active farmer under PGS should be registered in the Jaivik kheti web-portal and online marketing can be performed.

### **Factors for success of PGS in India**

1. In spite of tremendous investment and efforts in the promotion of third party certification system, due to its prohibitively high cost, it is still beyond the reach of small farmers and is also unaffordable to even large farmers if high premiums are not assured. In market, there is growing awareness and consumers are inclined to accept organic foods, but high premiums deter them to buy organic products on regular basis. In such a scenario, it is essential that a farmer empowering system with consumer's participation based on mutual trust is developed and put in place with some credibility support from Government and institutions. Following are the determining factors for success of PGS in India
  - Low Direct Cost
  - Minimal Paperwork
  - Regionally Appropriate
  - Peer Appraisals instead of Professional Third Party Inspections
  - Farmers, Regional Groups, NGO's and other Support Organizations in a Horizontal Network without hierarchies
  - Building a Movement
  - Credible Organic Guarantee
  - Mutual Recognition and Support between Regional PGS Groups
  - Subtext of training and support built into the system
  - Empowers the farmer with increased capacity building
  - Empowers the farmer through increased marketing opportunities
2. **Processing and Handling Module:** In such cases PGS-India certification will be done by adopting "Conformity assessment and verification" criteria similar to third-party certification systems and individual units will be approved for PGS-India organic processing and handling. Individual farmer, Local Group or any other individual away from certification system, all are allowed to register their processing unit under PGS-India certification and all are monitored by Regional Councils and authorized for its purpose.
3. **Live Stock and other Modules:** Livestock is an integral part of the organic production system and there is a large scope for their certification. The process of development of operation is

under progress and a provision will soon be made in the PGS system. Apart from livestock, other modules like bee keeping, wild harvest, aquaculture will also be developed and covered under the PGS system in the future.

### **Regional Council:**

What is Regional Council?

The legally registered organizations which are authorized by NEC-PGS under PGS-INDIA certification system to play role in registration of farmers, training, online documentation, inspection, residual analysis, soil sample analysis and certification as per PGS-INDIA guidelines.

### **Who can Become Regional Council**

Any legally registered organization which is having minimum two years of experience in PGS certification / Third Party certification and organic farming activity, having enough infrastructure and manpower and do not take up marketing activity are eligible to become Regional Council provided they fulfill other conditions as per PGS guidelines

### **The Major Role of Regional Council**

1. Formation of farmers groups, selection of leaders, documentation, endorsement and registration under online PGS web-portal
2. Preparation of literature in local language and distribution to PGS groups
3. Training of farmers about organic farming and PGS documentation process
4. Active participation in meetings, trainings and field inspections and verification of crop production practices and proper documentation
5. Timely issue of Scope Certificate and Sanctions for not following PGS standards by PGS farmers
6. Timely collection of the samples for pesticide residue testing for ensuring quality of products produced by organic farming
7. Facilitating PGS farmers to upload data in Jaivik kheti web-portal
8. Timely reporting of their activities to Zonal council / PGS-India Secretariat.

### **Facilitating Agency / Service Providers to hand-hold PGS certification:**

#### ***Who are Facilitating Agencies (FA) / Service Providers (SP)?***

“Facilitating Agencies are organizations “that may be helping the PGS-India farmers in handholding, cluster formation, capacity building, marketing, implementation of PKVY / other organic farming schemes / programmes etc.” FA/SP will help the PGS farmers in documentation, uploading, collection of data with GPS coordinates, marketing and branding and facilitating formation of FPOs .



### ***Who can Become Facilitating Agency / Service Provider?***

Any legally registered agency having Minimum 03 years' experience in organic farming management, value addition, knowledge of certification systems and marketing, and having minimum 01 year of experience in FPO / FPC / Organic Cluster formation and in-house competence in capacity building of stake holders in various aspects of organic farming. Desirable experience in GPS and Remote Sensing are given more preference. Any start up doing innovative work in agriculture, with at least 01 of year experience of working with organic farmers and their promotion are also eligible.

### ***Major Role of Facilitating Agency / Service Providers***

- Formation of Group / Cluster, Deployment of man power as Lead Resource Persons (LRPs) through mobilization of interested farmers to take up organic farming and certification.
- Capacity building of farmers / Local Groups through trainings, group meetings, workshops and seminars
- Collection of basic data of farmers (such as identity card, land details, bank account details for DBT, farm history etc. as per requirement of PGS-India).
- Participation in Group Operations, Documentation, Peer appraisal, certification decisions and online registration, data uploading of Local groups on PGS-India and Jaivik kheti web-portal
- Institutional development / FPO / FPC making and development and management
- Assist the farmers in preparation of annual plan of action, packing, marketing, logo preparation, etc.
- Facilitating market linkage, Brandbuilding, Transportation, Food processing and handling.

### **PGS-India certification services and fees**

PGS-India certification services are facilitated through an institutional network comprising of National Advisory Committee, National Executive Committee, PGS Secretariat, Zonal and Regional Councils and Local groups. Although majority of the institutional services are facilitated by the PGS secretariat free of cost, authorization of RCs, physical inspection of LGs by RCs, certification endorsement of LGs by RCs, physical inspection and grant of certification of individual farmers, processing units or large area certification are paid services and necessary fees has to be paid by the users as per the decision of NEC as revised from time to time and / or as agreed between RCs and LGs and other operators.

### **PGS-India Logos**

PGS-INDIA Green logo: Farmers under conversion (2 years for seasonal crops and 3 years for perineal crops) will be issued PGS-INDIA green and after conversion farmers will be issued PGS-INDIA Organic certificate. Products under in-conversion to organic are granted PGS-Green certification. Such products shall not be claimed as organic and only indicate "Under Conversion to Organic".



The Online PGS-INDIA [web-portal](#): Even though there are large numbers of farmers involved in organic farming under PGS-INDIA certification, their information is to be properly documented and information about farmers and agencies working are visible on public domain. This is sometimes a limiting factor for expansion of organic farming and marketing. In order to establish information access to all domain of people, Government of India launched PGS-INDIA online web-portal on 15th July, 2015. All the details of farmer's / regional councils are available in this website, and all information is in public domain. The revised web portal was launched on 3rd May 2021. The new features like transactions at LG level and modules of processors and handlers were incorporated with many checks and balances for making a more accurate and robust system. The consumer product verification was also enabled in this web-portal. Members of the public can track their products from where it has obtained and also details of producer / farmers who has grown the products on PGS-INDIA web-portal.

### **Expanse of PGS-INDIA**

PGS programs are expected to bring much greater numbers of farmers into Certified Organic status than is practically possible due to the administrative overheads inherent in Third-Party Certification including ICS / Group Certification schemes. Since the launch of PGS web- portal in July, 2015 and introduction of PGS component with the launch of PKVY scheme, more than 11 lakh farmers are registered covering an area of about 7.5 lakh ha. PGS-India is the largest PGS initiative in the world. PGS-India certification is recognized under Food Safety and Standards (Organic Foods) Regulations, 2017 at par with NPOP and all organic Food Business Operators are required to comply with all the provisions of these Regulations effective 1st July, 2018. A PGS-India guideline was also revised in 2020, and on 3rd May 2021, a revised PGS-India web-portal was launched with revised guidelines. The web-portal operation is made very easy and approachable by all stake holders. The PGS-India programme is aimed at providing uninterrupted chain of custody, starting from producer groups until the products are processed and finally packed into retail packs. The PGS certified products are gaining more acceptance among the farmer community. Stakeholders participation will lead the system to grow more robustly in India and has a great opportunity for employment generation in the near future.





# New Members of AIOI Family

## **International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture-(ICCOA):**

- ICCOA is a networking and representative organization for organic farming, registered as a society in 2004 is based in Bangalore, Karnataka with regional and project offices in 12 states. ICCOA aims to help built competence of individuals and organizations in India and South Asia in organic Agriculture. ICCOA is also directly working with farmer groups (28,122 farmers) for Organic certification.

## **GeoChem Laboratories Pvt Ltd:**

- GeoChem is ISO 17025 accredited Laboratory based in, New Delhi. They are into inspection, monitoring, and environmental assessment of raw materials, agricultural products, petroleum, petro-chemicals, consumer goods, industrial equipment, food and dairy products, vegetable oils and fatty acids. GeoChem is also recognized by APEDA for residues testing of organic products .

## **Atmik Bharat Engineering LLP:**

- Atmik Bharat is an online e-commerce aggregator for organic, herbal, and ayurvedic products recognized as a Startup Chhattisgarh by Startup India. Atmik Bharat's e-platform "Organic Orion" provides e-platform to only organic stakeholders namely organic growers, processors, and vendors to register and sell their certified organic products online.
- It is the first e-platform in India that exclusively offers only Organic, Herbal, and Ayurvedic products) with an theme to create "Purity Everyone's Priority" with an aim to empower organic growers, processors, and vendors to promote their brand and scale their business in India. Organic Orion Vendor Connect video link [here](#).

## **Jalinga Tea:**

- They are organic tea exporter since 2004 based in Kolkata, West Bengal. They are into tea manufacturing of high-quality CTC, Orthodox, Green Teas, with a capacity of 850 MT per year. The Jalinga tea estate is the world's only CO<sub>2</sub> Neutral certified tea estate.

## **LRM Spices Pvt Ltd:**

- Organic LRM is spices manufacturing unit since 1978 based in Sonapat, Haryana. They follow a combination of cutting-edge technology to assure complete food safety, organic standards for processing/manufacturing of with latest techniques of Hot air/Steam sterilization & Cold grinding methods.

## **Pure & Eco India:**

- Pure & Eco India, based in Noida,UP is a digital magazine established since 2015 with an aim to promote organic market educate the consumers, broadening markets and also helps new stakeholders to navigate the unique sets of norms and adherences that apply to the organic fraternity.

## **Aiprime Nutrition**

- Aiprime Nutritions, Hyderabad, is a part of 65 years old group in production of oil and value added products. They have diversified into organic business since 2018 and are presently exporting to over 20 countries.



# Association of Indian Organic Industry & Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University



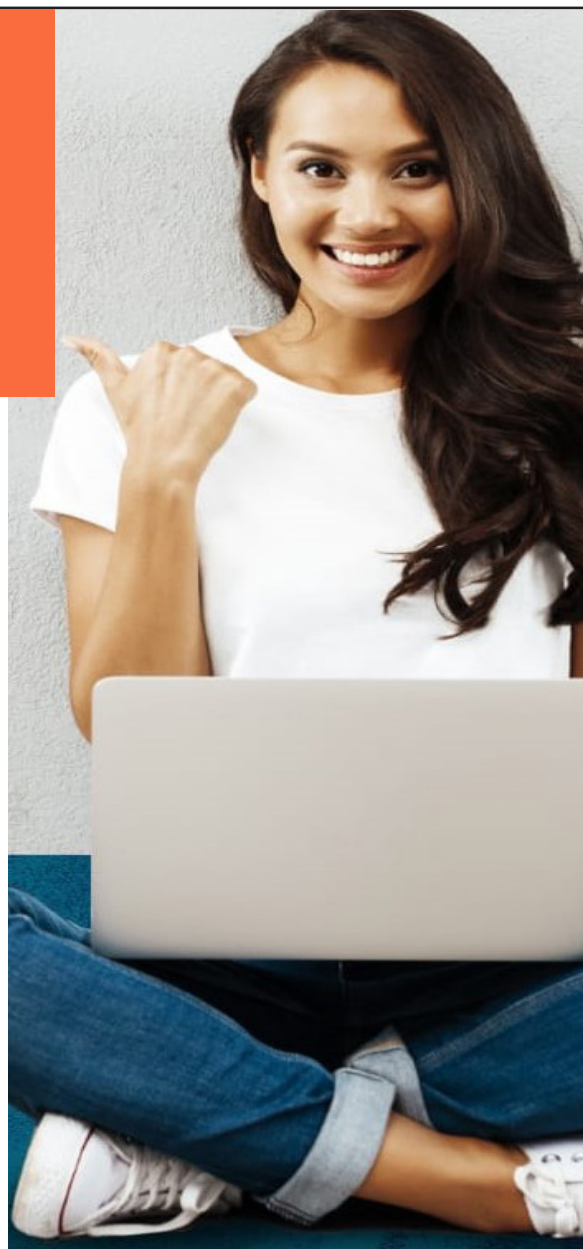
**Announces the commencement of 2<sup>nd</sup> batch of the short term online certificate course for entrepreneurs' development and empowerment for employment in Organic Industry.**

AIOI Certificate Course on Entrepreneurship Development in Organic Products is a professional course targeted to cater to the needs of organic industry. The information, guidance, practical training and course completion certificate will provide the participant with several opportunities in the industry like:

- » Auditing for assessment of organic programmes
- » Opportunities for organic certifications
- » Quality assurance executive and quality managers in organic foods and farm industry
- » Position in new product development
- » Organic agriculture consultants and many more

#### Eligibility:

Graduates and graduating students (final year) in Life Sciences and Applied Sciences. Candidates appearing for final exam in Bachelor's degree / equivalent qualification or awaiting their results, are also eligible to apply.



**The course will be  
for 40 hours**

**Duration : 4 months**

**For further information,  
contact us at**

**[memberservices@aioi.org.in](mailto:memberservices@aioi.org.in)**

**Next Batch : 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022 | Commencement of Registration : 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022**

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