

**Source:**

- PGS Manual, Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards



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**Operation of  
Participatory  
Guarantee  
System (PGS)  
Groups  
as Organic  
Certifying Bodies**

**Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)**, is the key feature of the Republic Act (RA) No. 11511, an act amending the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 or RA 10068.

**Legal Basis**

Section 14 (Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) provides the basic principles, legal personality, certification, accreditation, organizational levels, promotion, training and inspection of, and incentives for PGS group.

Rule 14.3 of Section 14 of the IRR mandates BAFS to develop guidelines that will set out the principles, characteristics, composition, organization and procedures for the establishment and operation of PGS groups.

# 5 PGS Groups Logo



- Shall be issued by the PGS group to certified farmer members
- Shall be accompanied by the Philippine PGS Guaranteed Organic mark
- PGS group shall establish policies and procedures to control the use and display of their logo, including the discontinuance of its use
- PGS group shall take appropriate actions against incorrect or misleading use of certificates, Philippine PGS Guaranteed Organic mark, and PGS group's logo

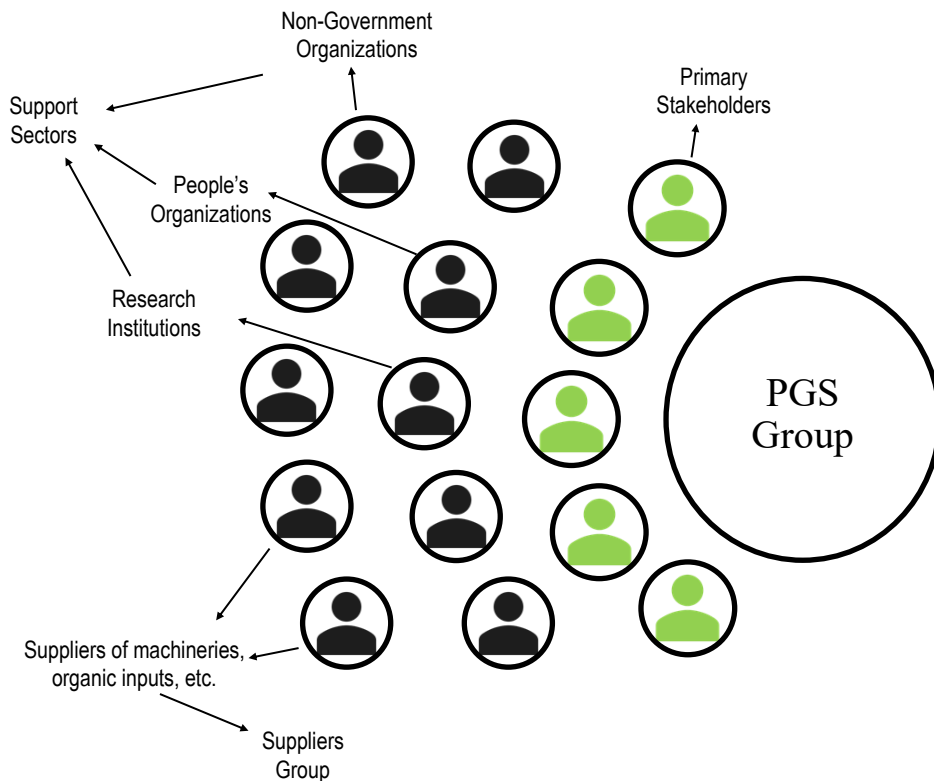


## Supplier Groups

- Composed of suppliers of inputs, machineries, equipment, and packaging materials
- ensure that their produce or products are compliant with the applicable current PNS for organic agriculture and relevant regulations.
- Their involvement in the PGS activities shall be determined by the PGS group

## Support Sectors

- Composed of academic and research institutions, financial institutions, NGOs, Pos
- Provide support the operations of the PGS group through provision of technical and/or financial assistance.
- Their involvement in the PGS activities shall be determined by the PGS group



## 6 Key Elements and Features and Characteristics of PGS Groups



### Shared Vision

All stakeholders shall have the shared vision in ensuring the organic integrity



### Participation

All primary stakeholders shall actively engage in the establishment and operation of PGS embodying the principle of collective responsibility to ensure organic integrity.



### Transparency

Encompasses the openness of the system, involvement of relevant stakeholders, and accessibility of all information



### Trust

Demonstrate trust and build confidence in all its stakeholders



### Horizontality

Ensure that all its relevant stakeholders, regardless of gender, have equal rights, responsibility and accountability in maintaining the organic integrity



### Learning Process

Ensure that primary stakeholders fully understand the internal standards and procedures thereby maintaining the organic integrity

## 5 Features and Characteristics of PGS Groups

### 1 Legal Personality

The PGS group, as represented by the core PGS group, shall secure necessary permits or registration from relevant government agencies to operate as an OCB.



### 2 Clearly Defined Standards

Consistent with the requirements of applicable current Philippine National Standards may be translated into local languages

Applicable Current Philippine National Standards for Organic Agriculture

- PNS for Organic Agriculture
- PNS for Organic Aquaculture
- PNS for Organic Soil Amendments
- PNS for Code of Practice for the Production of Organic Soil Amendments
- PNS for Organic biocontrol agents – Microbials and botanicals – Minimum data requirements
- PNS for Organic Milled Rice - Code of Practice
- PNS for Organic Aquaculture Feeds



## 4 Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders



Stakeholders is a collective term for all involved in the PGS - primary stakeholders, supplier groups, and support sectors

### Primary Stakeholders

- Composed of farmers, processors, traders, and consumers
- Have the highest involvement in the development of internal standards, policies, procedures, and information dissemination activities.
- Include core PGS group
- Directly engage in peer review, certification, and monitoring activities;
- Comply with internal standards, policies, and procedures;
- Provide assistance to other stakeholders;
- Provide valuable management expertise to the group; and
- Perform such other functions as deemed necessary by the group.

### Core PGS Groups

- Develop an understanding of the internal standards;
- Ensure compliance to Manual of Operations
- Make a pledge that they understand and commit to adhere to the Manual of Operations;
- Conduct peer review and certification activities of farmer member;
- Submit record of the peer review signed by the majority of the peer reviewers;
- Recommend farms for certification;
- Initiate key field trainings for farmer members and residents in their locality to promote organic agriculture;
- Take actions on non-compliances consistent;
- Assist non-compliant farmer members to regain and maintain certification status; and
- Attend municipal/provincial PGS meetings and share information as instructed



## E. Records Management

The PGS group shall have policies and procedures for the maintenance of information necessary for the verification of production, storage, processing, purchase and sales; and other relevant documentation to provide adequate inspection trails and traceability of organic produce and/or products.



Accomplished Application Forms;

- Signed Farmer's Pledges;
- Signed Membership agreements;
- Records generated from peer review and certification activities (e.g. accomplished self-review and peer review form, accomplished certification decision form, and other documents that provide evidence of compliance);
- Database;
- Accomplished Appeals Decision Forms and records generated from verifying the filed appeals and complaints; and
- Other records deemed necessary by the group.

## Manual of Operations

*"a document that contains key information about a business and how it operates. The manual is created specifically for its employees, providing them with a resource to refer to when in doubt about who to contact, how to go about a task, or a certain business policy."* Carter, J. 2020 (<https://www.process.st/>)

Contains the following:

- Policies
- Company hierarchy
- Company contact details
- Departmental contact details
- Business procedures and processes
- Emergency procedures and processes.

## What is Standards?

Document, established by consensus, and approved by a recognized body, that provides for common and repeated use, rules and guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context -ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004



# 3 Documented Management Systems and Procedures

## A. Structure and Organization



### Management Committee

- Spearhead the development of its Manual of Operations
- Manage the effective implementation of the PGS, and
- Issue POC based on the certification decision of the Certification Committee.



### Peer Review Committee

- Conducts inspection of farmer members
- Monitors compliance of farmer members
- Recommends decisions to the Certification Committee



### Certification Committee

- Evaluates and validates recommendations submitted by the Peer Review Committee
- Issues certification decisions and recommend to the Management Committee the issuance of the POC
- Enforces sanctions for non-compliances (NCs), as necessary



### Appeals Committee

- Evaluates, and make decisions on appeals and complaints
- Provides recommendations to the appropriate committee for further deliberations and decisions



- Traceability of produce or products per farmer member
  - \* The PGS group shall have a traceability system and regular product flow monitoring for organic produce and products of its certified farmer members.



- Reporting
  - \* PGS group shall establish a procedure for a timely reporting of its farmer members of relevant information such as but not limited to, volume of production of each commodity, sales, market reach, and updates or changes in their organic management.



- Changes affecting PGS group
  - \* PGS group shall ensure that changes such as new or revised requirements that affect the members are communicated to all.
  - \* PGS group shall verify the implementation of the changes by its members and shall take actions required by the group.
  - \* Changes that must be considered:
    - ⇒ Changes affecting the certification process
    - ⇒ Changes affecting the structure of the PGS group



- Regular Assembly
  - \* PGS group shall hold regular assembly to identify areas for improvement, which may include, but not limited to, revision of Manual of Operations. Areas for improvement may be gathered from peer reviews or group discussions, evaluations, feedback, and results of BAFS' audit(s).



- Promotion
  - \* PGS group shall conduct regular activities to promote organic agriculture in the community.



- Renewal of Certification
  - \* Application documents to be submitted to Management Committee
  - \* Objective: Ensure the availability of farmer member’s updated documents such as completed application form, accomplished self-review form, farm records, farm map, and other relevant documents.



- Suspension and Revocation of Certification
  - \* Shall be handled by the Appeals Committee
  - \* Objective: Gather and verify all necessary information to progress the complaint or appeal to a decision



- Handling of Complaints and Appeals
  - \* PGS group shall identify the grounds for suspension and revocation of certification
  - \* PGS group shall specify the conditions and requirements for discontinuation of use and return of certification documents, and any other action if the certification is suspended or revoked



- Sanctions
  - \* PGS group shall impose appropriate sanctions to members who are found violating the group’s internal standards, policies
  - \* Classification of Findings:
    - ⇒ Major Non-Compliance  
A systemic failure or significant deficiency - either as a single incident or a combination of a number of similar incidents - in part of the quality system, or the lack of implementation of such a part, governed by applicable standards.

A number of NCs identified against one requirement of the relevant standards can represent a total breakdown of the system and thus be considered a major NC

- ⇒ Minor Non-Compliance
- ⇒ Administrative Non-compliance

## B. Resource Requirements

- **Financial Resources Sustainability:**  
The PGS group must have sufficient financial resources for the sustainability of its operations
- **Human Resources:** The PGS group shall ensure that its farmer members and members of the committees are competent to carry out the roles and responsibilities.



### Competence Criteria:

- Stakeholder:
  - \* Should be knowledgeable in internal standards
  - \* Should have appropriate trainings on organic agriculture
- Management Commit: should have sufficient knowledge on the documented management systems and procedures of the group, applicable current PNS for organic agriculture and relevant regulations.
- Peer Reviewers and Certification Committee
  - \* Knowledgeable on the internal standards of the PGS group or certified as organic practitioner;
  - \* Participated (as observer) in at least 1 peer review of the accredited core PGS group or inspection by BAFS; Knowledgeable on the group’s operations and procedures; and
  - \* Attended at least 2 trainings on applicable current PNS for organic agriculture
- Maintaining and Monitoring of Competence
  - \* identify training needs of the at the entry level and others based on their roles and responsibilities in the group
  - \* provide adequate training to its members as guided by a training plan;
  - \* establish policies to ensure competency of committee members, and procedures to regularly evaluate their performance.

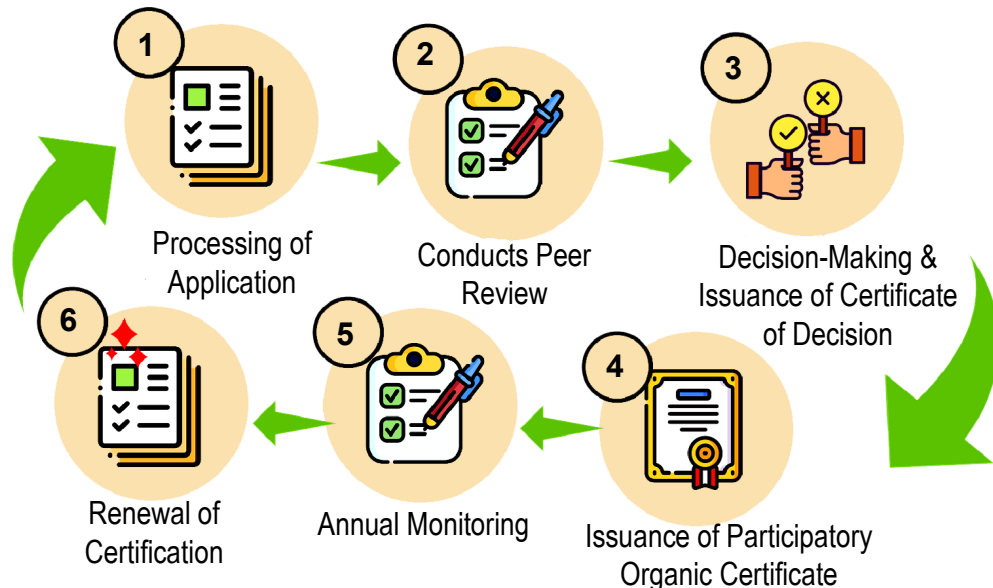
- **Knowledge Resources:** The PGS group shall develop a Learning and Development (L & D) Program to encourage learning among stakeholders, to wit:



- \* Frequency: Trainings at least once a year
- \* Learning Materials: Develop and update training modules
- \* Activities: Can be outsourced or organized by groups.

### C. Certification Activities

- Coverage: All farmer members implementing the internal standards
- Scope: crop production, animal production, aquaculture production, processing of organic produce, special products (i.e. wild harvest, mushroom production) agricultural input production (i.e. organic soil amendments, organic biocontrol agents, feeds, seeds and seedling materials)
- Procedure in Certification Activities:



### D. Process Requirements

- Application Processes



- \* Shall be handled by the Management Committee
- \* Objective: To verify the completeness and veracity of the information provided by the farmer member
- \* Minimum required documents:
  - a. Accomplished application form;
  - b. Signed farmer's pledge;
  - c. Farm map, and profile including practices; and
  - d. Self-review on the status of their farm

- Peer Review



- \* Shall be carried out by at least three (3) farmer members from the core PGS group
- \* Objective: To collect and verify the information provided by the farmer applicant in the accomplished self-review form

- Certification Committee Review



- \* Shall be carried out by the Certification Committee or "Certification Officers"
- \* Objective: Review the results of peer review, laboratory analysis, if there is any, and other evidence of compliance, and issuance of a certification decision based on the results of the review

- Granting and Maintaining the Certification



- \* Shall be carried out by the Management Committee
- \* Objective: To issue the Participatory Organic Certificate (POC) based on the decision of the Certification Committee
- \* Validity of Certificate: 3 years

- Conduct of Monitoring of Certified Farmer members



- \* Shall be carried out by the Peer Reviewers
- \* Objective: To ensure the continued compliance of certified farmer members with the internal standards, policies, and procedures.