



Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum

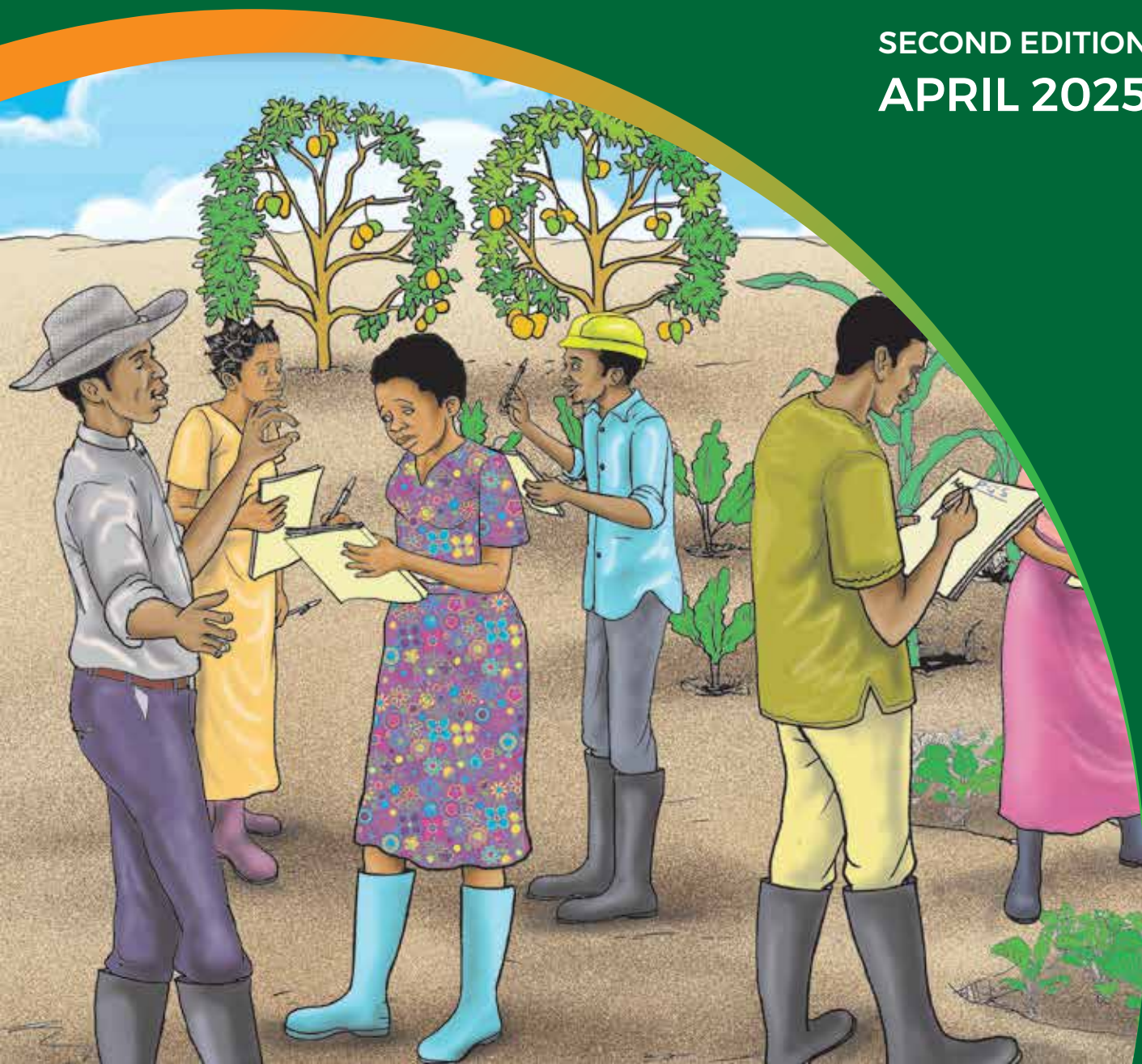
**ESAFF - UGANDA**



*Amplifying Small-scale  
Farmers' Voices*

# **FACILITATOR'S GUIDE FOR ESTABLISHING PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS (PGS) GROUPS**

SECOND EDITION  
APRIL 2025



This publication has been developed with financial support from NORAD. It has been developed to aid to ensure the production of organic foods through the use of Participatory Guarantee Systems.

ESAFF Uganda encourages the use, reproduction and dissemination of material in this document except where otherwise were indicated.

ESAFF Uganda information products are available on the ESAFF Uganda website (**<https://esaffuganda.org/publications>**)

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS	i
FOREWORD	1
PREFACE	2
BACKGROUND	2
JUSTIFICATION	2
OBJECTIVE	2
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN UGANDA	3
ORGANIC CERTIFICATION	3
ABOUT PGS	4
KEY ELEMENTS OF PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)	5
STEPS IN PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)	11
BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS (PGS)	20
PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS) TOOLS	21
REFERENCES	24
VOICES FROM THE FIELD	25
CONCLUSION	30
NOTES TO THE USER	30

---

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 1. PGS   | Participatory Guarantee Systems                          |
| 2. GDP   | Gross Domestic Product                                   |
| 3. FAO   | Food and Agriculture Organization                        |
| 4. NGOs  | Non-Governmental Organizations                           |
| 5. IFOAM | International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement |
| 6. ESAFF | Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum   |

---

# FOREWORD

Agriculture has been and continues to be the most important sector in Uganda's economy in terms of food and nutritional security, employment, income, raw materials for industry and exports to regional and international markets. The agriculture sector in Uganda engages more than 85% of the total population and its contribution to GDP is over 24%. The sector continues to gradually transition from subsistence to semi-commercial operations. Globally, Uganda is believed to be one of the organic farming countries. There are 58 million hectares under Organic Agriculture worldwide and of this in Uganda has accounts for 262,282Ha. In Africa, Uganda is second to Tanzania with 268,729 ha in organic agricultural land. Worldwide, in terms of number of organic farms, Uganda occupies fourth position after Italy, Indonesia and Mexico.

Even if Uganda is believed to have the largest and most advanced organic sector in Africa, it is concerning that it has fewer certified Small-Scale Farmers with exporting enterprises due to the high cost and bureaucratic processes. Uganda's agriculture system is by default largely organic due to the very minimal use of external inputs like inorganic fertilizers and pesticides. In order to strengthen the link between agroecological production systems and markets, certification standards and procedures for organic products are required.

The Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) has been found to be the most effective certification method for small-scale farmers to employ when growing and selling their produce. It is a low-cost, locally based, volunteer, and frequently informal quality assurance method. It is a participative approach that emphasizes the participation of stakeholders in local organizations and is based on the sharing of information, social connections, and trust.

In a bid to increase appreciation and motivate uptake of Organic Agriculture practices among farming communities, ESAFF Uganda has developed this guide on Participatory Guarantee Systems which will aid small scale farmers, traders and consumers to understand PGS and ensure organic production of foods for markets and home consumption. Participatory Guarantee Systems certify producers based on the active participation of members and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.

The Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) guide aims at increasing appreciation for Ecological Organic Agriculture among small-scale farmers, traders and consumers and creating an alternative mode of organic certification. This guide further looks at increasing the share of quality organic products at local, national, regional and international markets and provides a step-by-step process of how a farmer group can establish, operationalize, and implement the system. The assimilation of Participatory Guarantee Systems into farmers' groups, cooperatives and other less formal community cooperation will lower the costs of production and increase knowledge transfer amongst farmers while contribute to greater food security.



**Baliraine Hakim**

*National Chairperson,  
Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale  
Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda*

---

## PREFACE

**“Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) – Guide for Small-scale farmers”** is a guide for small-scale farmers and farmer organizations operating in organic agriculture or promoting the transition to agroecological farming techniques. The purpose of the guide is the support the implementation of PGS to increase the quality of organically produced agricultural products in Uganda.

The guide which is the initiative of ESAFF Uganda can be used for training on PGS but its main role is to support small-scale farmers to implement the PGS.

The main benefit of the PGS to small-scale farmers is the fact that it is an easy-to-understand quality assurance model for small and medium producers. Unlike third-party certification systems, PGS gives producers an opportunity to confirm their compliance with production standards at an affordable cost.

## BACKGROUND

Agriculture has been and continues to be the most important sector in Uganda’s economy in terms of food and nutritional security, employment, income, raw materials for industry and exports to regional and international markets. The agriculture sector in Uganda engages more than 85% of the total population and its contribution to GDP is over 24%.

The sector continues to gradually transition from subsistence to semi-commercial operations. Globally, Uganda is believed to be one of the organic farming countries. There are 58 million hectares under Organic Agriculture worldwide and of this in Uganda has accounts for 262,282Ha. In Africa, Uganda is second to Tanzania with 268,729 ha in organic agricultural land.<sup>1</sup> Worldwide, in terms of number of organic farms, Uganda occupies fourth position after Italy, Indonesia and Mexico.

## JUSTIFICATION

In a bid to increase appreciation and motivate uptake of Organic Agriculture practices among farming communities, ESAFF Uganda has developed this guide on Participatory Guarantee Systems which will aid small scale farmers, traders and consumers to understand PGS and ensure organic production of foods for markets and home consumption. Participatory Guarantee Systems certify producers based on the active participation of members and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.<sup>2</sup> This guide, therefore, highlights the features and the steps that should be taken to set up Participatory Guarantee System groups among small-scale farmers.

## OBJECTIVE

The Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) guide aims at increasing appreciation for Ecological Organic Agriculture among small-scale farmers, traders and consumers and creating an alternative mode of organic certification. This guide further looks at increasing the share of quality organic products at local, national, regional and international markets. The assimilation of Participatory Guarantee Systems into farmers’ groups, cooperatives and other less formal community cooperation will lower the costs of production and increase knowledge transfer amongst farmers while contributing to greater food security.



---

# ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN UGANDA

Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system which aims to avoid the use of synthetic and harmful pesticides, fertilizers, growth regulators, and livestock feed additives to reach a long-term goal of sustainable production of crops and animals. Organic Agriculture systems rely mainly on alternative farming methods such as crop rotation, mechanical cultivation; use of animal and green manure; and integrated pest management to maintain healthy soil; grow healthy plants; and control pests and weeds. It is widely known that small-scale farmers generate 70% of the world's food and that African small-scale farmers can produce enough food to feed the continent sustainably if they follow Ecological Organic Agriculture practices.

## ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Organic certification is the procedure by which a group of producers receives written and reliably endorsed assurance that a clearly identified process has been methodically applied in order to assess that the group is producing specified products according to specific requirements or standards. It verifies that the farms comply with the Uganda Organic Standards to allow them sell, label, and present products as organic. Certification provides the consumer, whether end-user or intermediate processor, assurance of the organic product's integrity. Even if Uganda is believed to have the largest and most advanced organic sector in Africa, it is concerning that it has fewer certified Small-Scale Farmers with exporting enterprises due to the high cost and bureaucratic processes. Uganda's

agriculture system is by default largely organic due to the very minimal use of external inputs like inorganic fertilizers and pesticides.<sup>3</sup>

Although organic agriculture contributes to increase in social capital, including more and stronger social organizations at the local level, to new rules and norms for managing collective natural resources and better connectedness to external policy institutions, organic certification is very expensive for smallholders. Third-party certification is based on reviews of certifying bodies which include operator internal procedures such as organic system plans and an annual inspection visit by a trained independent inspector. It is tedious with a lot of paperwork and farmer training requires financial support. This challenge can be addressed through enhanced promotion of FAO Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) model for farmer groups. Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are an alternative to third party certification, which are increasingly being used to offer an affordable and participatory guarantee, particularly in developing countries. This model reduces certification costs involved in the third-party certification.

---

## ABOUT PGS

PGS, an internal quality assurance system, stands for “*Participatory Guarantee Systems*” and was developed in 2004 by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.<sup>4</sup> Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are an alternative to third party certification, which are increasingly being used to offer an affordable and participatory guarantee, particularly in developing countries. PGS are systems for certification that emphasize the participation of stakeholders, particularly the small-scale farmers. Consumers are sometimes involved, although in countries with an emerging organic market there are many challenges to consumer involvement in the actual guarantee process. In developing countries, PGS usually involve supporting organizations that typically work with producer groups, such as NGOs, government agencies, or sometimes buyers of the products produced by the group.<sup>5</sup>

PGS has a much more intensive interaction between farmers, consumers and use different tools to maintain integrity such as peer assessment and social control. PGS integrates capacity building, using the opportunity of farm reviews and regular exchanges to solve practical problems, which enable small scale farmers to follow the standards and improve their agricultural practices. The direct relationship to the process, and the fact that it is owned by the farmers, consumers, traders and local leaders, encourages more responsibility, transparency and active involvement in the design of production and certification processes.

### *Features of PGS include;*

1. PGS is not a quality standard but rather a quality control system with the direct involvement of stakeholders, especially producers and consumers.
2. PGS is NOT a third-party certification but may be an alternative to it.
3. PGS is especially suitable for the domestic market, where all stakeholders can participate in the quality control process.
4. PGS deliver certificates for household groups, not for individual households.



---

## KEY ELEMENTS OF PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)



### Shared Vision

The foundation of PGS is a common vision. It is at this meeting that key players (producers, consumers, NGOs, traders, religious organizations, governments, and others) establish and agree to support the principles that guide the PGS' objectives and ambitions. Organic production aims, standards targets, social justice, fair trade

and markets, ecosystem respect, local community sovereignty, cultural variations, and more can all be part of the shared vision. These principles serve as a guide for both the production standards that will be implemented and the rules that will govern how the PGS will operate.



## Trust

PGS' integrity-based approach is founded on the notion that producers can be trusted, and that the organic guarantee system may serve as a statement and proof of that trust. The collective formulation of a common vision by key stakeholders builds trust. It is maintained

through a continuous effort to shape and reinforce this vision as a group. This concept of trust believes that each producer has committed to the shared aim of organic agriculture conserving the environment and assuring consumer health.



## Horizontality

Non-hierarchical initiatives are the goal of PGS. This is reflected in the overall democratic structure as well as the collective responsibility assumed by those involved, which includes: Sharing and rotating responsibilities (e.g., secretary or

coordinator, leading peer reviews, etc.); Directly engaging producers in peer reviews of one another's farms; Equal rights and transparency in decision-making processes.





## Transparency

Transparency is achieved by informing all stakeholders, including producers and consumers, on the operation of the guarantee system. Standards, norms (the organic guarantee process), and decision-making processes are all part of this. This does not imply that everyone is aware of every detail, but rather that others have a fundamental understanding of how the system works or know how to obtain it. Transparency is enhanced by

operational processes and systems that are clearly defined and documented and public access to PGS paperwork and information, such as certified producer lists, farm data and non-compliance actions, organic production standards summaries, and a description of certification processes. These could be found on the internet, through public notifications, or in stakeholder meetings.



## Participation

Active engagement of stakeholders who have a common vision demonstrates participation. Producers and consumers, merchants and traders, as well as NGOs and anyone involved in PGS operations,

are all included. These stakeholders assist in diverse capacities at all stages of planning, from PGS development through day-to-day processes.



## Learning Process

A learning process emerges through the sharing of ideas and experiences, and it becomes a continuing dynamic of PGS. This can involve technical factors such as increasing awareness of organic standards and practices. Through involvement in the PGS, different stakeholders get to know

each other and gain knowledge of each other's situations, resulting in a social learning process. The knowledge gained is critical to the PGS program and aids in the design of components. It also aids in the development of confidence among stakeholders and in the PGS process itself.

---

**Source:** IFOAM – Organics International. PGS Guidelines. How to Develop and Manage Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture Germany, 2019.



# STEPS IN PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS)

## STEP ONE:

### Setting up the PGS Group

Starting and running a successful PGS group in communities requires discipline, teamwork, honesty and hard work.

*The following actions are important while setting up the PGS group in a given community;*

1. Identify the community with an interest of creating a PGS group. The progress should be initiated by one or more small-scale farmers who are interested. It should be noted that the members of the PGS group can be from different small-scale farmer groups in the same community.
2. Share about the background and importance of PGS to get complete buy-in from all the members interested.
3. Each member should individually fill in an Application Form (please refer to Tool 1) to join the PGS group. The application form will also act as a commitment to the process. It is important to assess the total group membership by identifying the number of females and males in the

group. Each member of the group is given a serial number which is the unique identification number for each farmer in the PGS group.

4. The PGS group should use the Group Registration Form (please refer to Tool 2) to document background information about the group.
5. A PGS group should also elect leaders with well-defined roles. The PGS group leaders can include, Chairperson, Register/Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity and Vice Chairperson.
6. Group members should create PGS committees and develop roles and responsibilities for the different committees. Furthermore, the PGS group should analyse the risks/challenges the committees are likely to face while performing their work in the PGS and develop standards to mitigate them.
7. If possible, the PGS group should have representation of different stakeholders including small-scale farmers, consumers, traders, extension service providers, health workers, media among others.



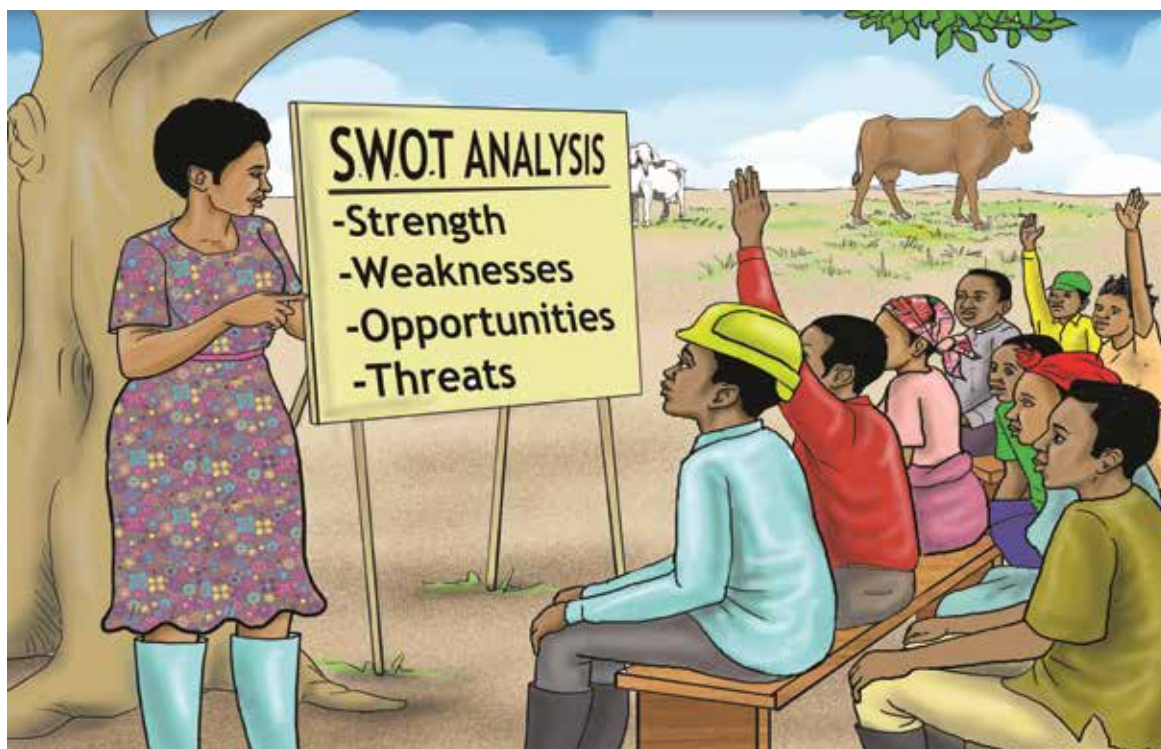
## STEP TWO: Understanding the current situation

Before the PGS group successfully implements the PGS process, it is critical to understand the strengths and challenges of a current scenario before constructing PGS. It is very important for the PGS group to understand the long farming history in the community, including chemical inputs, land usage, farming practices etc for at least 2 seasons.

*This can be done using the following guidelines;*

1. *Identify key stakeholders to take part in the situation analysis. These can include small-scale farmers, consumers, traders, extension service providers, health workers, media, local leaders, opinion leaders among others.*

2. *Organise a meeting of the PGS group with representation of different stakeholders and discuss the objective of conducting the situation analysis.*
3. *Discuss the situation analysis (please refer to Tool 3) focusing on environment/climate, socio-economic, health and diet, farm input and government/politic, all in relation to influencing on community farming techniques/practices like using all synthetic and chemical inputs on the farm and on livestock.*
4. *During this session, the PGS group should also discuss their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities (please refer to Tool 4). This will be essential in designing the vision and direction of the group.*
5. *If possible, such discussion should be done in smaller groups and later have plenary session where each group discusses their findings.*



## STEP THREE:

### Design a shared vision

To make the implementation of PGS successful, it's important that all the members of the PGS group and the community have a shared vision and also understand the benefits of PGS.

*The following areas are highlighted to develop a shared vision;*

1. Organise a meeting to discuss and develop a shared vision as well as explore and understand the benefit of PGS to the community or their group **(please analyse the benefit of the PGS)**, market and contribution to food security and economic empowerment. Collaboration and mutual trust among stakeholders is what makes a PGS Program successful.
2. At this point the PGS group members

*analyse the different enterprises that members are engaged in and which enterprises they are considering to get engaged in **(please refer to Tool 5)**.*

3. To develop a shared vision, the PGS group should comprehensively discuss the activities involved in the value chain of the different enterprises selected. Here, they explore their strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in specific enterprises.
4. Members of the PGS group should understand that marketing is key to the success of the process. They should conduct a market analysis exercise **(please refer to Tool 6)** to understand the different markets both locally, nationally and also internationally that the PGS group members are targeting. The process involves exploring potential organic markets for small-scale farmers' produce.





## STEP FOUR:

### Develop PGS standards and how it will work

In the process of developing the PGS standards to be used, every member of the PGS group should appreciate that transparency is key and it's the role of all stakeholders to create it. At this stage, the PGS group develops a process through which the guarantee system works with clearly defined and documented systems and how decisions are made. At this stage of development, it is important to ensure that all members of the PGS group have a good understanding of the different PGS standards, and the process in which they will be implemented, as well as their own roles in this process.

*The following actions are important while developing the PGS standards and how it works;*

1. *At this point, all the members of the PGS group should have filled and submitted their farm history sheet which gives the history of farming activities in the farm which is being recruited for PGS (please refer to Tool 7).*
2. *Each member of the PGS group should appreciate that the PGS is a quality assurance initiative that is locally relevant, emphasizes the participation of stakeholders and operates outside the frame of third-party certification.*
3. *Members of the PGS group should discuss the desirable standards for crop production, animal production, food processing, handling and storage as well as marketing.*

4. *To operationalise the PGS standards, the PGS group should do the following;*
  - a). *The PGS group should document and prepare the PGS standards document for sign-off by all the members who are committed to take part.*
  - b). *Each member of the PGS group should be given a copy of the standards.*
  - c). *PGS group should create opportunities to build awareness of the community and members about the PGS standards. This can be accomplished through training and meetings.*
  - d). *The PGS committee should organize a visit to each of the fields and farms that are going to be involved in the PGS process.*
  - e). *The PGS committee should endeavor to keep track in the activities in the farms through follow-ups and inspections and if some non-compliances are noticed then inform other group members during group meetings. The process should be documented.*
  - f). *The PGS group should develop mechanism to handle any violation of the set PGS standards.*



## STEP 5: Make a Pledge

It is critical that all the members of the PGS group (including those members who may join the PGS group later) understand the vision and standards involved in the process. This will empower them to support the ambition of the PGS in the community. Like it was discussed in the previous step, to achieve, the PGS group should conduct awareness-raising events about PGS vision and standards.

*The following actions are important to support this process;*

1. Members of the PGS group must agree to established standards by signing the pledge certificate (**please refer to Tool 8**).

2. The pledge can be made as a self-declaration. Ideally it is signed, witnessed by other members of the PGS group and stakeholders if possible.
3. A group pledge endorses both the individual and group commitment to the PGS standards. Nevertheless, a group pledge does not replace individual responsibility, just as the group certificate does not become invalid for the entire group if one member of the PGS group is found to be non-compliant.
4. The pledge covers all farming activities and how these activities plan to follow the standards adopted by the PGS groups.





## STEP 6: Implementing the PGS process

At this point, all members of the PGS group understand the shared vision and appreciate the standards involved in the process. All members of the group have also made a pledge to operationalize the standards in their community.

*To effectively implement the PGS in the community, the following actions should be considered;*

1. *If there is no member of the local government like from the agriculture/production department are part of the PGS group, it is important that the local government is noticed and briefed about the process. This can be done through organizing a meeting with the local government officials.*
2. *It is important that the PGS group develops a group annual plan for the selected crop enterprises. The plan can also be divided into seasons to ensure systematic implementation.*
3. *Please recall the farm history sheet that was filled and submitted by all*

*the members of the PGS group, PGS standards and the pledge certificate. This is important to remind the members of the PGS group about the great task that they are embarking on.*

4. *The PGS group members or selected committee should physically visit all the farms that are going to get involved in the PGS process before the beginning of the season. Small-scale farmers' assessment of another's farm is one of the key methods in which PGS guarantees compliance with its members adopted organic standards.*
5. *Each farm should be given a unique identification (ID) code. This code should be used during the assessing and reporting of ton progress on the farm. This ID code should also appear on the PGS certificate.*
6. *Each member of the PGS group should give updates of the progress in the farm during the PGS group meetings. This allows the PGS group to measure success and also respond to the challenges identified in the course of the process. This process also allows innovation in the PGS group.*



## STEP 7: Certification

Certification is the last step of the process and a key step in the PGS. The certification procedure should provide clear information on the process and the required steps to conduct an inspection. Certification is established and administered in a variety of ways throughout PGS efforts. To reach this stage, the members of the PGS group should have followed all the PGS standards developed by the group.

*The following observations are key in issuing and using of the certificate and label;*

1. The PGS group should complete peer review of all the farms at least once

*in each season. After peer review by the PGS committee or members of the PGS group, and report is presented that recommends the need for certification approval. This report is further discussed, verified and analysed for any potential non-compliance to the PGS standards.*

2. In some cases, not all members of the PGS group may be certified. This should be informed by the report.
3. Those members who are found to be non-compliant, various corrective actions to be implemented including imposing punishments.



## PGS Certificate



Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum  
**ESAFF - UGANDA**

Sereal No. \_\_\_\_\_

### PGS CERTIFICATE

Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / 20 \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Group or Person)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(ID Number)

***This is to certify that the following Person or Group  
has achieved the PGS Standards and hence  
awarded a PGS Certificate.***

Issuing Officer: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Signature)

PGS group: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS (PGS)

*The PGS process presents the following benefits to small-scale farmers and other stakeholders in the process.*

1

Knowledge sharing and capacity building are top priorities for PGS. All the PGS members know each other. They build a very high degree of understanding on day-to-day knowledge or acquaintance of the farm. PGS trainings and farmer interactions assist farmers in improving their operations and exchanging knowledge.

2

The procedures are simple; documents are basic and use the local language understandable to small-scale farmers. PGS is a simple quality assurance strategy for small-scale farmers unlike third-party certification methods, it allows small-scale farmers to verify their compliance with production standards at a low cost.

3

Consumers have access to safe or organic food that has been manufactured to meet quality standards. Due to direct linkages between buyers and sellers and obvious traceability, PGS helps to create consumer trust. The PGS process also brings consumers to the farm without the need of middleman since they are often involved in production and verification process.

4

PGS is a dependable, cost-efficient, and effective system for managing food safety across the country. It aids in the restoration of citizens' faith in the food system and promotes consumer health. It also contributes to shifting producers' behavior toward safer and more ecologically friendly production processes, promoting social responsibility awareness, and developing community ties.

5

Small-scale farmers who participate in PGS generally see an improvement in their incomes because usually organic products call for higher prices. There is improvement in nutrition and availability of food. As a result, PGS can help them meet more of their households' nutritional needs through subsistence farming. Enhanced self-sufficiency not only helps farmers raise the quantity of food available but also improves the quality of the food because production tends to follow agroecological best practices.



---

## PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM (PGS) TOOLS

The following tools enhance the implementation of the PGS process among small-scale farmers and other stakeholders. Each of these tools can be tailored according to the ambition and needs of the community.

### TOOL 1: PGS Application Form

Name of the small-scale farmer	
Gender	
Date of birth	
Location details i.e. village	
Phone contact	
Signature	

### TOOL 2: PGS Group Registration Form

Group ID	
Name of the group	
Group Location	
When the Group was formed	
Contact Person Details	
Group Objectives, Eligibility	
Group Membership (Indicate Gender)	
Leadership (Executive and Committees)	
PGS Enterprise Selection	

### TOOL 3: Situation Analysis Tool

Focus	Situation two years ago.	Situation in the past two seasons.	Impact on farming practices.	Impact on markets.
Environment/climate				
Socio-economic				
Health and diet				
Farm input				
Government/politic				

### TOOL 4: Group Analysis Tool

Focus	Responses
Strength	
Weakness	
Opportunities	

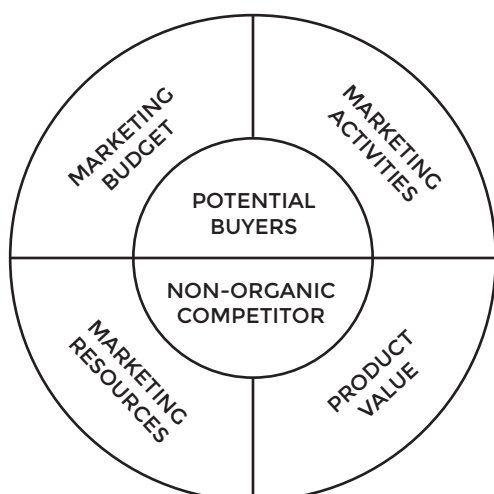
## TOOL 5: Vision and Enterprise Tool

Enterprise	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Vote	Selected Enterprise

## TOOL 6: Group Marketing Strategy

Product, Value proposition, Potential buyers, Information dissemination methods, key market activities and key Marketing resources.

Name of the Group:	
Name of the Product:	



## TOOL 7: Farm History Sheet

Name of the small-scale farmers:	
ID code:	
Location:	
Date:	

Period	Crops grown in the field	Fertilizer inputs used (name and quantity)	Plant protection inputs used (name and quantity)	Remarks
Year 1: Season 1				
Year 1: Season 2				
Year 2: Season 1				
Year 2: Season 2				
Year 3: Season 1				
Year 3: Season 2				



## TOOL 8: Pledge Certificate

**PGS**



Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum  
**ESAFF - UGANDA**

### PLEDGE CERTIFICATE

*I pledge to follow all the set Participatory Guaranteed System (PGS) Standards that we have set in our PGS Group and Committee to report periodically to the PGS Group about any progress made.*

Name of the Season:
Name of the Small-scale Farmer:
Signature of Small-scale Farmer:
Date:
<b>Witnesses</b>
Name and Signature:
Name and Signature:
Name and Signature:

---

## REFERENCES

**IFOAM – Organics International. (2019).** PGS Guidelines. How to Develop and Manage Participatory Guarantee Systems for Organic Agriculture Germany.

**Greater Mekong. (2017).** PGS handbook for the Greater Mekong Sub-region: How Participatory Guarantee Systems can develop and function.

**Rikolto. (2018).** Building trust in safe and organic vegetable chains through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). Policy Brief, July 2018.

---

## VOICES FROM THE FIELD



### “PGS was our Game Changer: Small-Scale Farmers Thriving with Organic Pineapple Farming”.

In the heart of Uganda's Central region, a group of small-scale farmers known as the Kayijja Produce Dealers has transformed their livelihoods through organic pineapple farming. Located in the City of Masaka, the group faced the dual challenges of low yields and fluctuating market prices due to their reliance on conventional farming methods. However, their decision to shift toward organic farming practices has brought about profound changes not just in their income, but also in their community and environment through the adoption of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS).

For years, the members of the Kayijja Produce Dealers Group struggled with the rising costs of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which ate into their profits. Additionally, the long-term use of chemicals had begun to degrade their soils, leading to declining yields. In 2020, members of this group were trained on best practices for growing pineapples organically. Recognizing that their current path was unsustainable, the group adopted this new way forward one that would improve their crop quality, enhance soil health, and provide a better future for their families. In order to improve access to better organic markets, members of the group were trained on Participatory Guarantee Systems an approach through which they can grow their pineapples while ensuring application of organic practices while marketing collectively.

Within just a few seasons, the results of their efforts became apparent. The Kayijja farmers saw an increase in both the quantity and quality of their pineapples. By eliminating chemical inputs and using organic coffee husks, chicken droppings as fertilizer and

---

natural pest control methods, they restored the fertility of their soil and improved the resilience of their pineapples to pests and diseases.

***"Since we started organic farming and adopted the Participatory Guarantee System, everything has changed. Our soil is healthier, our pineapples are sweeter, and we sell at better prices without the burden of expensive chemicals. Most importantly, we have trust with our buyers because they know our farming practices are transparent and sustainable."*** - Kisekka Ibrahim, Kayijja Produce Dealers Group Farmer.

Organic pineapples also fetch a premium price in both local and international markets. With the growing demand for organic produce worldwide, Kayijja's pineapples became a sought-after commodity both on the village of Kayijja, Masaka City as well as the Capital City through their collective marketing and bargaining for a higher price for their pineapples. The farmers are able to sell their pineapples to higher-end markets, earning more than they had with conventional pineapples. This price premium, combined with lower input costs, significantly boosted their incomes.

The success of the Kayijja Produce Dealers Group goes beyond financial gain. The transition to organic farming has also empowered the community. Women, who make up a large portion of the group's membership, have found new opportunities for leadership and income generation. The leadership roles under the PGS structures have enabled them to not only be good decision makers but also be good leaders within the group.

The shift to organic farming has had a positive impact on the environment as well. By avoiding chemical inputs, the farmers have reduced water contamination and preserved local biodiversity. Beneficial insects, which had been destroyed by pesticides, returned to their fields, helping to naturally manage pests. The farmers also noticed improvements in the quality of their soil, which now holds water better and produces stronger, healthier plants.

***"The farmers and their families have reported better health outcomes, as we are no longer exposed to harmful chemicals. The adoption of PGS and shift to organic farming has not only improved the health of our land but also the financial wellbeing of most of our members."*** - Nalubega Fausta, Group member.

The Kayijja Produce Dealers Group's success with organic pineapple farming has inspired other farmers in the village to consider making the transition to Organic farming and adopt the approach of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in growing and marketing their pineapples. With their reputation growing, the group is now exploring the possibility of adding value to their pineapples through solar drying, pineapple juice making as well as wine making. The group further envisions exporting their organic pineapples to international markets, where demand for sustainably grown produce continues to rise.

Their journey signifies the power of Participatory Guarantee Systems. By embracing this approach, the Kayijja farmers have not only transformed their own lives but also set an example for others, showing that farming in harmony with nature and having a common vision and collective marketing can lead to economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment.

The Kayijja Produce Dealers Group's story is one of resilience, innovation, and hope. Through organic pineapple farming, they have proven that small-scale farmers can thrive while protecting their environment and improving their quality of life. Their journey continues to inspire others to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future for all.



## Ripping Big from Organic Yam Production and Briquettes Production: Organic Certification made easier through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)

Kwegatta Gemanyi a community-based organization based in Masaka district have cultivated yams for generations. Despite their deep connection to the land and the crop that sustains their communities, these farmers struggled with fluctuating prices, market access issues, and the rising costs of synthetic inputs. Faced with these challenges, a group of 20 small-scale yam farmers set out on a journey that would transform their practices, their incomes, and their community: the adoption of organic farming through the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) after acquiring training from ESAFF Uganda.

*"For years, we had been using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides in hopes of boosting our yields and meeting market demands. However, this approach led us to many problems such as degraded soil health, increased dependency on costly external inputs, and dwindling profits. Moreover, our customers in urban and local markets were beginning to shift their preferences toward organically grown produce, recognizing its health and environmental benefits. But organic certification, with its complex processes and high costs, we were not able to certify that our products were actually organic."*

Kisakye Margaret, Chairperson, Kwegatta Gemanyi PGS group

In 2022, ESAFF Uganda introduced the farmers to the concept of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). This locally focused quality assurance system offers a pathway to organic certification, built on trust, social networks, and knowledge sharing. Unlike third-party



---

certification schemes, which are often costly and bureaucratic, PGS empowers farmers to certify each other, ensuring adherence to organic farming standards while keeping the process accessible and community-driven. With support from ESAFF Uganda, the farmers formed a local PGS group. The PGS framework encouraged transparency and collective decision-making. Farmers conducted regular peer inspections of each other's farms, sharing knowledge and holding one another accountable to the agreed-upon standards.

Importantly, the PGS certification opened doors to new markets. Additionally, the collective nature of the PGS model strengthened the bond between the farmers. Farmers who had once been isolated by competition now collaborated, sharing both successes and challenges. The regular farm visits fostered a culture of learning and innovation, with farmers experimenting with new organic practices and passing their findings along to others in the group.

*“The success of our PGS group has also sparked interest from the neighboring communities, and we plan to scale the approach to other farmers in the district.”* – Buchana John, PGS group member.

Their journey through the PGS has proven that with the right support and a commitment to sustainability, small-scale farmers can overcome the barriers to organic certification and reap the benefits of a growing demand for healthy, sustainable food. Through the PGS, they have shown that organic farming is not only a viable option for smallholders but also a pathway to resilience and empowerment.





## Changing livelihoods through Organic consumption and Participatory Guarantee Systems

Ntenjeru-Kisoga PGS group located in Ntenjeru, Kisoga was started in 2022 and is dealing in coffee, indigenous banana and vegetables plus production of organic inputs such as bokash and human urine as pesticide and fertilizer. Since its establishment, the group has managed to get a site for establishing a demonstration garden for growing local bananas to aid farmer-to-farmer learning and later translate the practices in their individual gardens. The group envisions to create more demonstration plots where they can demonstrate best practices for coffee.

*“Previously, we faced a challenge in identifying indigenous banana suckers and equipment for making organic products e.g. fertilizers and pesticides but after forming our PGS group, we can now mobilize our members to look for the suckers which we district among ourselves to ensure that each of us is growing indigenous bananas.”-*  
Irene Nakijoba, group member

The group plans to scale up this and create a market for the indigenous banana suckers, identify contract markets for their products like in Uganda Christian University.

Since some of the members are making organic inputs, we have started selling to them and also to other non-members but we don't have branded packing materials especially for fertilizers and pesticides

We are planning to do exchange learning visit to those PGS that have done well to get more knowledge on how to be excellent

---

## CONCLUSION

It is necessary to recognize and promote PGS within national organic laws and regulations in order to encourage the adoption of ecological organic practices and to grow the organic sector beyond third-party certified organic operators. Supporting PGS development not only encourages organic agricultural acceptance, but it also helps small farmers better their livelihoods. Because the concept of PGS is not yet widely used in Uganda, there is a need for government assistance in the early stages of PGS development to give resources for capacity building and organizational development, after which the systems can function independently.

## NOTES TO THE USER

The participatory guarantee system is described in length and in-depth in this guide (PGS). This guide can be used in a variety of ways by users to accomplish their PGS group's goals. The guide can be used as a reference by development organizations and allied agencies working in the sector of food safety and quality management to expose their partners and local governments to the Participatory Guarantee Systems. PGS can also be duplicated and integrated into national and municipal policies relating to sustainable agricultural development, bridging the gap between production and markets, quality management, and food safety. The guide can be used by agricultural cooperatives and farmer groups that have been using PGS in their production and economic activities to assess the process of setting up and managing the system.

### **About ESAFF Uganda**

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) was formed in 2002 by small-scale farmers during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). This was in an effort to create a Forum to bring together small-scale farmers into a social movement to influence favourable agriculture policies and practices at global, continental, regional, national and local levels.

ESAFF Uganda became operational in 2008 and has since become the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda. ESAFF Uganda works to enhance the small-scale farmers' ability to participate meaningfully in development processes. ESAFF Uganda currently has a membership of 12588 small-scale farmer community organisations in 54 districts representing over 765,560 individual small-scale farmers of which 67 percent are women.

ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers in 15 other countries in Eastern and Southern Africa including; South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa, Lesotho, DR Congo, Madagascar, Seychelles and Mozambique.

ESAFF Uganda is also part of La Via Campesina (LVC) which is the largest peasant organisation in the world.



Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum

**ESAFF - UGANDA**

## VISIT OR CONTACT US



### Physical Address:

Plot 266, Muvule Avenue  
Buye - Ntinda, Kampala  
P.O Box 34420 Kampala - Uganda  
Telephone: +256 393 247 195



### Write to the National Coordinator:

Ms. Nancy M. Walimbwa  
Email: [coordinator@esaffuganda.org](mailto:coordinator@esaffuganda.org)



### Social Media:

Twitter: @ESAFFUG  
Facebook: **ESAFF Uganda**  
YouTube: **ESAFF Uganda TV**  
Instagram: **esaff\_agroecology**  
Linkedin: **ESAFF Uganda**  
Podcast: <https://anchor.fm/esaffuganda> Farmers' Voice



**[www.esaffuganda.org](http://www.esaffuganda.org)**