

# Participatory Guarantee System Self-Evaluation

This questionnaire can be downloaded from the IFOAM website at:

[http://www.ifoam.org/about\\_ifoam/standards/pgs.html](http://www.ifoam.org/about_ifoam/standards/pgs.html)

## INTRODUCTION

There are now many Participatory Guarantee Programs serving thousands of small farmers around the world. While there is enormous diversity in how these programs have implemented the various functions of a PGS, the key characteristics (including inclusivity and participation of stakeholders at all levels of operation, transparency and peer appraisals of farms) just to name a few, have proven to be consistent around the world.

This is not an attempt (or even a proposal) to harmonize the way PGS programs are run internationally. The great strength of PGS is that the mechanisms are regionally appropriate and under the full control of the local stakeholders.

The purpose of this voluntary questionnaire is to provide PGS programs around the world with a “Self-Evaluation” tool to see how they are meeting the key PGS characteristics. It is also hoped that, very much in the spirit of PGS transparency, we share our answers with each other. In this way, we will end up both with a comprehensive list of Participatory Guarantee Systems as well as notes on operational procedures that we can use to strengthen the global PGS movement.

The order of these questions generally tries to follow the order of the “PGS Concept Document” which formed the basis of these questions. That document can be found on the [www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org) and Ecovida websites.

Though only one final submission should be made for each PGS program, your group may find it educational to have as many stakeholders as possible answer the questions including farmers, consumers, facilitating NGOs as well as national or regional level coordinating staff.

The results from any groups that wish to share their self-evaluations will be maintained and kept updated online at the [www.ifoam.org](http://www.ifoam.org) website.

## HOW IT WORKS

The questions are phrased so that “YES” answers align with the characteristics of PGS. That beings, said, not all questions require YES answers. Based on the “PGS Concept Document” and observations of PGS groups around the world, some questions do align with KEY CHARACTERISTICS of a PGS. For those questions, it seems more important that all PGS are able to answer those questions affirmatively. To make them easier to identify, those questions are marked as “IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC”.

The IFOAM PGS Task Force hopes that this self-evaluation document will inspire PGS groups to learn from and share with each other, as well as to educate other groups new to PGS about the many ways that PGS groups around the world have implemented core PGS values in ways that are culturally appropriate to their region.

## PGS NAME and CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of the PGS: ORGANIC SHIZUKUISHI

Contact Person: Mr. Satoshi Fukumoto

Year program launched: 2015

Country(ies) Being Served: Japan

Region(s) Being Served: Shizukushi town Iwate Prefecture, Japan

Number of producers involved in the SGP: 5

Number of producers currently certified by the SGP: none

Address: Dai 28 Chiwari 132 Minamihata Shizukuishi Cho Iwategun Iwate-ken 020-0573, Japan

Phone: +81-19-695-2197

Website: <http://organicshezukuishi.jimdo.com/>

Email:

sousaku@xa2.so-net.ne.jp

## SHARED VISION AND AGREED UPON NORMS

1) Is our program based on generally recognized organic principles?

Yes

No

*(Important Characteristic)*

2) Is it based on a national, regional or international Organic standard (International examples include the IFOAM IBS and Codex. National standards include USDA Organic, JAS, Indian NPOP, regional standards include the EU regulation, the East Africa Organic Product Standard), or on national private standard?

Yes

No

*Please elaborate especially where it goes beyond organic:*

*Organic Shizukuishi standards for produce is based on the JAS Organic Program standards.*

3) Did all our stakeholders have an influence in the choice and adoption of our Organic Norms?

Yes

No

*(Important Characteristic)*

*Please list key stakeholders:*

*2015: Produce farmers and consumers*

4) Are our norms easily available and accessible to all stakeholders or other interested parties?

Yes

No

*(Important Characteristic)*

*Please elaborate on how people can access them:*

*Our norms are available and accessible to the website*

*<http://organicshezukuishi.jimdo.com/>*

5) Do we have mechanisms in place to ensure farmers fully understand what they are agreeing to (Examples may include short summary of the standards, regular trainings, regular meetings or place they can contact for more information about practices or allowable materials)?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

6) Are Social Justice Principles including gender equality and fair wage embraced by our PGS?

Yes       No

*Please elaborate:*

*The Organic Shizukuishi program doesn't currently incorporate standards on these topics. If more members were interested it's not out of the question.*

## **PROCEDURES TO VERIFY PRODUCERS' COMPLIANCE AND UNDERSTANDING**

7) Is information created and maintained for each farm?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

*Please elaborate the type (paper application, video, etc.):*

Application is typically submitted online. Once the applicant is accepted into the program their application is automatically displayed on the Organic Shizukuishi website, on the farm's online profile. People without internet access may complete a paper application. Once approved, the information is transferred from paper to an online record by volunteers or staff. Each farm's online profile also includes a scanned image of their signed Declaration and inspection reports for their farm.

8) Does this information include specific questions about farm operations to ensure procedures on the farm are in accordance with our accepted organic standards?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

9) Do our producers take a pledge, declaration, oath, or promise that they will follow the standards (written, verbally stated or documented in some culturally appropriate way)?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

*Please Elaborate:*

The pledge, declarartion, oath or promise of our producers are on the Organic Shizukuishi webpage.

10) Are annual on-site reviews/inspections carried out for every farm in our PGS?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

11) Do producers take part in the annual on-site review/inspection process?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

12) As a policy, can consumers or other stakeholders visit the producers (Open Gate Policy)?

Yes       No

## **DOCUMENTED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

13) Is the following information maintained by our PGS:

a) General Information about each farm / operation

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

b) Producer's Pledge (or record if Verbal Pledge)

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

c) Record of onsite review/inspection

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

d) Record of attendance at local meetings

Yes       No

e) Record of certification for each farm / operation

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

f) Is this information accessible to members of the public?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

*Please elaborate:*

*All information above will be publicly available and easily accessible via each certified farm's profile in the Organic Shizukuishi website.*

*<http://organicshizukuishi.jimdo.com/>*

14) Have efforts been made to minimize paperwork necessary to certification

Yes       No

15) Are the steps to certification process publicly available to all stakeholders?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

16) Can stakeholders easily find out who is certified?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

## **HORIZONTALITY**

17) Is decision and policy making about PGS procedures made by either producers or regularly elected producer representatives?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

18) Are there mechanisms in place to regularly review and improve PGS procedures and policies?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

19) Are our PGS Procedures appropriate to the cultural context in which they are used (for example verbal pledges and video documentation in areas of low literacy)?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

20) Are producers the primary decision makers about which producers are to be certified? (as opposed to a third party or separate organizational group)?

Yes       No      (*Important Characteristic*)

*Please Elaborate:*

Application review will be done by farmer and non-farmer volunteers and inspections are carried out by fellow producers and other stakeholders (currently consumers). The peer-review is essential to complete the certification process.

21) If it's a national program, is there room for local and regional variations to the rules and operational procedures of the PGS as long as main functional points are maintained? (For example, maybe the on-site inspection can be changed or added to as long as they stick to agreed basic standards)

Yes       No       Not applicable

*Please elaborate, give examples:*

*NA. The PGS in this country is not a national program.*

## **CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT IN THE PGS**

22) Do consumers have the option of being active members of the PGS Group?

Yes       No

23) Are consumers able to be included in the Regional and National decision making bodies

Yes       No

24) Are consumers able to be included in the Certification Process?

Yes       No

25) Is our PGS program endorsed by any consumer group? This could include environmental organizations, health advocacy organizations, etc

Yes       No

### **SYSTEMS FOR MANAGING NON-COMPLIANCE**

26) Are there prescribed consequences for non-compliance?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

27) Is there a system for managing non-compliance?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

28) Are producers in the PGS involved in the system for managing non-compliance?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

### **MECHANISMS FOR SUPPORTING PRODUCERS**

29) Is there a system for producers to participate in trainings or sharing meetings with other local member-producers of the PGS?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

30) Does our organization offer agricultural technical advisory (or economic or social) services to producers?

Yes       No

31) Does the PGS program have mechanisms in place to avoid conflict of interest?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

*Please explain:*

*To avoid a conflict of interest, farmers are not allowed to trade inspections. So if Farmer A inspects*

*Farmer B, then Farmer B may not turn around and inspect Farmer A. Instead, Organic Shizukuishi encourages a “round-robin” inspection circle with at least three farms involved, where A inspects B, B inspects C, then C may inspect may A.*

## **SEALS AND LABELS**

32) Is there a seal or logo available for our farmers to use?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

33) Does the PGS own or control the seal?

Yes       No

34) Does each producer receive an individual certificate or some proof of their certification status?

Yes       No      *(Important Characteristic)*

## **Optional: Additional Questions on Sustainability of the Program**

35) How is our PGS program funded now? Can the program be entirely self-funded in the future?

The Organic Shizukuishi program is primarily funded through members’ contributions and volunteer efforts.

36) If producers pay a fee to be certified, do they feel it is a fair fee? What fee is charged?

We recommend 1,000 yen - 2,000 yen but leave it to producers to determine the exact amount, whether more or less. Farmers feel this is fair. Some feel we should require a minimum amount, but we haven't adopted this policy. If we did, it's likely some new farmers would drop out because even the minimum might be too much for them. Right now the flexible policy seems the best approach.

37) Do producers and other stakeholders participate in the operation of the PGS to keep costs and overhead down? In what ways do they participate?

- Home page can be viewed by farmers around the country.

- In our busy early spring season we have farm-friendly volunteers help with administrative tasks such as order fulfillment and filing.

- Farmers and non-farmer volunteers help with reminder e-mails to other members when the new year's grower declarations are due and other times when many e-mails need to be made.

- Farmer-members speak on behalf of Organic Shizukuishi at local meetings, and organize exhibit tables at conferences.

- One volunteer (non-farmer/customer) will do all scanning and uploading of thousands of certification documents in future.

