

Good Market Organic Participatory Guarantee System

According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), any system of agriculture based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture can be regarded as “Organic Agriculture.”

The purpose of organic certification is to answer the question “How do I know this is organic?” When organic products are exported to other countries, the land needs to be certified by an internationally recognized certification agency. The inspection visits and certification process can be expensive for small-scale farmers. Because of this, many countries have started alternative certification systems for local markets where producers and consumers have the opportunity to meet directly.



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In a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), producers and consumers volunteer their time to develop standards and systems, inspect farms, and ensure that products are organic. The goal is to keep costs down and make organic food more accessible and affordable. It can also serve as a stepping-stone for small-scale farmers and make it easier for them to get export-level organic certification in the future.

The Good Market Organic Participatory Guarantee System was started in February 2013 by producers and consumers that want to make organic more accessible and affordable in Sri Lanka. The PGS is being incubated under the Lanka Good Market (Gte) Ltd., but it has a separate bank account and committee, and plans to register independently in the future.

The Good Market Organic PGS is recognized by IFOAM Organics International. The IFOAM PGS logo can be used on producer certificates, but not on products. The Good Market PGS logo can be used on promotional materials and products.

Producers must follow the standards for at least 1 year to be eligible for the PGS.

If you have a cluster of at least 3 producers in the same area, you can apply as a producer group. Group members must be geographically close enough to monitor and support each other and ensure that the full group is meeting the standards.

Process for Producer Group

1. Collect a signed **PGS Producer Promise** for crop cultivation and/or animal husbandry from each producer group member.
2. Conduct internal monitoring visits and complete an **Individual Evaluation Form** for each participating farm. Make sure each farm has farm records: (1) a map, (2) a calendar, diary, or record of daily activities, (3) financial records with receipts for inputs and sales. Only farms that are approved during the internal monitoring visits should be included as group members.
3. Review the **Producer Group Evaluation Form** and ensure the group is prepared for a visit. Make sure the group has group records: (1) a ledger with details on each member, (2) a map showing the location of each member, (3) completed Evaluation Forms from internal monitoring visits to each member's farm.

4. Contact the PGS coordinator at +94773772122 or by email and request an external evaluation visit. The external evaluation team includes at least 3 people with at least 1 qualified technical leader. The team will review group records, randomly select at least 25% of the farms in the group (minimum 5), visit the selected farms, review farm records, and complete an Evaluation Form for each farm visited.
5. If the producer group is not approved, make the recommended corrections and request another external evaluation visit when all members meet the standards.
6. If the producer group is approved, pay the certification fees by cash, check or bank deposit for all producer group members. The certificate is valid for 1 year.

COSTS

The Good Market Organic Participatory Guarantee System is a volunteer-driven initiative that operates on a not-for-profit self-financing basis. Producers and consumers have volunteered their time and contributed resources for documentation, travel, refreshments, meeting venues, accommodation, etc.

Visit Costs

Visit costs apply to every farm visit regardless of whether the producer or producer group is approved.

- Transport to farms (e.g. own vehicle, vehicle hire, pre-booked train or bus service, fuel cost for volunteer vehicle)
- Food and refreshments (e.g. tea, lunch)
- Accommodation for overnight trips (e.g. homestay, guest house)
- Visit fee (Rs. 5,000 per day for long distance visits, Rs. 2,500 for half day visits within 100 km of Colombo)

SPECIAL NOTE: Cocomi Bio Organic is currently covering transport costs and visit fees for farm visits as part of their CSR program to support the organic sector. Producers are still expected to cover food, refreshments, and accommodation for overnight trips.

Certification Fees

The certification fee is only paid if a producer or producer group is approved. It must be paid before a certificate is issued.

- Independent Producer: Rs. 5,000
- Producer Group: Rs. 600 per member with less than 1 acre
- Producer Group: Rs. 1,200 per member with more than 1 acre
- Urban Home Garden: Rs. 1,000 if less than 1 acre in Colombo District

Certification fees cover one year. If a certificate is issued for less than 1 year, the fees will be prorated.