

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## On Participatory Guarantee Systems for India (PGS-India)

### Joining PGS-India program by farmers and local group (LG)

#### 1. How can I join PGS-India program?

One can join PGS-India program either by joining an existing PGS-India local group or by making a new group of at least 5 members belonging to same or close-by villages.

#### 2. How can I make a PGS-India local group?

To make a PGS-India local group, organize at least 5 members living in the same or close by villages into a group. Fill Annexure I-Application form, Annexure II farm history sheet and Annexure III farmers pledge for each member. Once these documents are ready for each member and members have agreed to follow PGS-India standards, and then fill LG application form, agreement form and terms of reference. Submit all copies duly signed in hard copies to Regional Council. In case if group can fill application on-line then fill all above formats in soft in PGS-India net program and provide only LG application form, agreement and ToR in hard copies also to RC. Get your group endorsed by any local authority or by any other existing local group. On receipt of documents and endorsement, RC shall grant registration to the Local Group.

#### 3. What are minimum requirements for a local group to join PGS-India?

- A Local group must comprise of minimum 5 members
- All the members should be living in the same or in close by villages
- All the members are having similar farming practices
- Land holding of one member of the group must not exceed one third of total groups land holding
- Willing to work together in group
- At least one member is well aware of PGS-India standards, organic methods of cultivation and PGS operational procedures or have undergone necessary training organized by RC or PGS-India secretariat.

#### 4. Is there any land holding ceiling of individual members in PGS-India program?

Yes, Land holding of one member of the group must not exceed one third of total groups land holding

#### 5. What are minimum documentation requirements by a farmer to join PGS-India local group?

Each group member need to provide following documents in hard copy, duly signed:

- a. Application form
- b. Farm history sheet
- c. Farmers pledge

#### **6. Can landless farmers join PGS-India local groups?**

In crop production group landless farmers owning livestock can also be members, provided they use fodder grown on the fields of other group members. Landless farmers not owning land or livestock cannot become active members and can only join as facilitators.

#### **7. Can landless farmers having only cattle or poultry join crop production PGS-India local group?**

Yes, landless farmers can also make PGS-India local groups if they are having adequate facilities for livestock management. In such cases the group generally should be of similar type of farmers.

#### **8. Does taking a pledge is a must in PGS-India and what is its significance?**

Yes it is mandatory and is a documented evidence of commitment for organic.

#### **9. When PGS-India program is a local group based guarantee system, then why institutional networking is required?**

Institutional networking has been done to give the program a National structure with wider acceptability and national recognition. National networking with multilevel surveillance system (on the cost of program organizers i.e. Government) adds further to reliability and trust.

#### **10. Whether part conversion and parallel production is allowed in PGS-India program?**

Although PGS-India philosophy do not promote part conversion or parallel production, but this can be adopted in initial years. But all out efforts are needed by the members to bring their entire landholding and livestock to organic in due course of time.

#### **11. What is local group and what are its role and responsibilities**

Local group is the main functional and decision making body under Participatory Guarantee System. It is a local group of farmers that live in the same village or close by villages and interact regularly with each other.

**12. What are minimum requirements for registration of Local group with Regional Council?**

- a. A Local group should comprise of minimum 5 members belonging to same village or close by villages
- b. Adequate participation of women farmers shall be ensured.
- c. At least few members of the group shall be well versed with the PGS organic guarantee systems or certification system and National Standards of Organic Production (NPOP) or have undergone training on PGS guarantee system.
- d. All the members in the group have signed the PGS pledge and group agreement to adhere to the group specific vision, participatory approach and collective responsibility.
- e. Have access to PGS documents and preferably have access to computer and internet
- f. Registered with Concerned Regional Council and have obtained necessary user ID and password to upload data on PGS website.
- g. In case if farmer group is unable to operate on-line system of data up loading then the services can be availed from Regional Council or of any other facilitating agency or local NGO etc.

**13. What are minimum documentation requirements for a local group for registration with RC**

- a. Application form, farm history sheet and farmers pledge in respect of each farmer member.
- b. LG application form with agreement and ToR duly signed.
- c. Endorsement of the group by any other endorsing agency as specified in PGS-India operational manual.

**14. Is it necessary to have computer and internet facilities for a local group for on-line data management?**

Although, it is preferred, but not mandatory

**15. In case where LG do not have access to computer and internet then how data management will be done**

LG can avail of such facility from other sources (such as from internet café or may take the help of any facilitating agency) or can request RC to do data uploading on their behalf.

**16. Can Local Group apply on-line for registration?**

Yes LG can apply on-line

### **17. After application submission on-line what documents are also required to be submitted in hard copies to RC?**

LG application form with copy of agreement duly executed on non-judicial bond paper and ToR duly signed on each page is required to be submitted in hard copies also to the RC.

### **18. Why endorsement of LG is needed for registration?**

Endorsement of the new Local Group is a mandatory requirement for LG registration. This is to ensure that only genuine and trustworthy groups join the PGS-India program.

### **19. How certification process is carried by Local group?**

- i. Follow the PGS guidelines on group meetings, key field trainings and knowledge sharing.
- ii. Keep vigil on neighboring farmer's farms and if some non-compliances are noticed then inform other group members during group meetings
- iii. Ensure timely organization of training programmes in collaboration with RC.
- iv. Invite practicing organic farmers and other local experts for problem solving in management issues such as in nutrient management, pest management etc during key trainings and group meetings.
- v. Maintain attendance register for group meeting and key field trainings
- vi. If member farmers are using or propose to use off-farm inputs then verify their organic status, discuss in group meetings and endorse or prohibit their use. Use of such inputs without group's approval shall be treated as non-compliance.
- vii. Chalk out peer appraisal schedule and constitute peer appraisal groups. At least one member in the appraisal team must be literate and well versed in filling the appraisal forms.
- viii. Reciprocal review between two member group farms is not allowed (i.e. A reviews the B and B reviews A).
- ix. 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 Guarantee.
- x. Complete peer review of all the farms at least once in each season. Ensure that all farms have been reviewed objectively.
- xi. Discuss review reports in the meetings and decide upon the organic status of each farm one by one.
- xii. Segregate farmers who have fulfilled all the requirements and consider them for grant of certificate
- xiii. Discuss about the non-complying farmers and depending upon the nature and gravity of non-compliances issue sanctions.
- xiv. Appraisal paper work is checked for completeness and a local Group Summary Worksheet is prepared.

- xv. Group or certification committee decides on certification and declares certification status of each group member.
- xvi. Enter all details on-line in PGS website and send signed copy of the summary worksheet to the RC. Alternatively send all details in hard copy along with signed copy of summary sheet to RC for uploading the data into PGS website.
- xvii. Regional Council check details provided in hard copy or on-line. On being satisfied, grants necessary approval on-line.
- xviii. LG prints certificate from PGS website and distribute to individual farmers. Alternatively LG requests RC to print the certificates and send to Group leader for distribution.

**20. After application for registration which date shall be taken as cut-off date for start of conversion period?**

Date of registration granted by the RC shall be taken as the start date of conversion.

**21. Whether a farmer having crop production under organic and veterinary under conventional system can continue in PGS-India program**

Yes he can continue, but his livestock shall not be considered for certification