

PASTAPUR DECLARATION OF PGSOC

JUNE 26-27, 2018

Organic farming has been the proud tradition of peasant farmers in India for millennia. They know no other way of farming, especially in the vast stretches of this country's farmscapes across the North East, the foothills of the Himalayas, the hills of Central India, the plains of the Deccan plateau, and the Eastern and Western Ghats.

When there was no space for these farmers in the emerging organic market of India, with PGSOC (PGS Organic Council) stood shoulder to shoulder with them, mobilised tens of thousands of them, and created a space and identity for them.

In existence since 2006, PGSOC has consistently helped small and peasant farmers to gain a fair share of the organic market, which were otherwise controlled by the big and powerful traders and corporates. For the first time in India, PGSOC made it possible for the small and peasant farmers to assert themselves and create a niche for their products.

PGSOC introduced a unique system of participatory certification whereby the farmers could subject their practices to a peer review and establish the primacy of trust overcome some paperwork.

By reaching out to all the important stakeholders concerned, PGSOC elevated PGS to the level of a national movement. This in turn led the NCOF (National Centre for Organic Farming) to introduce 'PGS-India', which is largely based on the framework developed by PGSOC. Globally, the pioneering work of PGSOC has been acknowledged by international institutions such as IFOAM Organics International, Urgenci International, and INOFO. The world looks at us in appreciation as a country that provides space for the civil society along with the state to participate in organic certification. Our country needs to cherish and protect this image.

PGSOC, which has done its work in a truly voluntary spirit, now finds itself on the verge of delegitimisation through a narrow FSSAI (Food Safety Standards Authority of India) notification that mandates that, from July 1, 2018, the sole authorities to recognize organic are NCOF and APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority).

It is extremely difficult for us to accept this situation, which will significantly impact tens of thousands of small farmers. Therefore, we will reach out to important policy makers, the most crucial of them being the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, and urge them to provide a space for civil society-led PGS initiatives to enable small peasants to certify

themselves. We firmly believe that allowing farmers to voluntarily certify themselves as organic is a small but very significant step towards achieving the Prime Minister's vision of doubling farm income, particularly of small farmers and peasants.

Signed by PGSOC members:

Mr. Kalyan Paul,
President – PGSOC
c/o Pan Himalayan Grassroots,
Ranikhet, Uttarakhand.

Mr. C.K. Ganguly,
Secretary – PGSOC
c/o The Timbaktu Collective,
Chennekothapalli, Ananthapuramu District, Andhra Pradesh.
Mr. P.V. Satheesh,
Deccan Development Society (DDS),
Pastapur, Zaheerabad Mandal, Sangareddy District, Telangana.

Mr. Bhartendu Prakash,
Vigyan Shiksha Kendra,
Banda, Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Mathew John,
Keystone Foundation,
Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Joy Daniel,
Institute for Integrated Rural Development (IIRD),
Nakshatrawadi, Aurangabad District, Maharashtra.

Ms. Niranjana Maru,
Chetna Vikas – Alternative Agriculture Resource Centre,
Gopuri, Wardha District, Maharashtra.

Mr. Sandip Pattanayak,
Green Foundation,
Bangalore, Karnataka.

Mr. P. Babu,
Institute for Cultural Research and Action,
Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Mr. Jogi Naidu,
Sarada Valley Development Samiti,
Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. Suresh Kanna,
Kudumbam,
Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Poornachandran,
TEDE Trust,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Ms. K.A. Chandra,
Centre for Improved Rural Health and Protection,
Nilakottai, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. M.N. Kumaresh Babu,
Covenant Centre for Development,
Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Prasant Mohanty,
Nirman,
Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Mr. Saji Pulickal,
Fair Trade Alliance Kerala,
Kasargod, Kerala.

About PGSOC

Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council is a civil society network that was formally registered in 2011. It functions as a coalition of 21 civil society organisations committed to the promotion of organic food production for domestic consumption in India. It is spread across 14 states of India with more than 10,000 participating farmers. It supports organic farmers to form Local Groups and follow standardised procedures as per NPOP standards to peer review and guarantee organic food production. It also certifies the successful Local Groups as organic through Facilitation Councils.