



Participatory Guarantee Systems in Tanzania: Locally focused quality assurance systems

Highlights Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGSs) are alternative certification schemes for organic products, built on trust and social networks, and intended for local markets. In contrast to third party export-oriented certification schemes, farmers working with PGSs are directly involved in the implementation of the system. Farmer-to-farmer peer-review is also an essential feature, built on equality and knowledge-sharing between the inspector and the inspected. The Maendeleo Group was one of the first organisation of farmers in Tanzania to implement a PGS and receive permission to use the East Africa Organic Mark on their produce.

Introduction

Morogoro Municipality is located in Eastern Tanzania, about a four-hour drive from the country's capital, Dar es Salaam. It is considered the agricultural heartland of Tanzania. The fertile agricultural plains of Morogoro lay below the green Uluguru Mountains – one of the most biodiverse regions on the African continent.

However, this ecological system came under stress when population growth, and a subsequent need to produce more food, forced farmers, who had previously only cultivated the Morogoro plains, to expand into the foothills surrounding their town. The non-governmental organisation Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT) began working with these farmers to encourage the adoption of more sustainable



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agronomic practices, such as terracing, to prevent soil erosion, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss in the newly cultivated areas.

In October 2010, the farmers receiving training from SAT consolidated into a group of 23 small-scale farmers, creating the Maendeleo Group. Part of SAT's training included organic farming methods. While the farmers were adept at transitioning to organic production, third party certification would have been prohibitively expensive for these small scale farmers to obtain. Instead, after learning about PGSs from an organic training course, SAT contacted the Tanzanian Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) in 2011 to request PGS training for the Maendeleo Group. After an additional three years of training and development the group was approved by TOAM to use the East African Organic Mark (EAOM), a regional organic standard, on their produce. While, TOAM is the legal owner of the mark in Tanzania, it recognises PGSs and enables them to use the EAOM on their products.

Timeline

2005—07	2007	2010—13	2010	2011	2012	2012
OSEA project develops organic standards for East Africa	NOAMs in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya adopt the EAOPS.	OSEA II project focuses on PGS	Maendeleo Group is founded in Towelo village	SAT contacts TOAM to request PGS training for the Maendeleo Group	TOAM issues the Maendeleo group a certificate to use EAOM	Maendeleo Group opens the SAT organic shop

How It Works

Developed by IFOAM (the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), PGSs are systems for organic certification that emphasize the participation of producers, especially in developing countries. PGSs are intended to be non-hierarchical and have a shared ownership, democratic structure, and collective responsibility. According to IFOAM:

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.

While organic certification existed in East Africa, particularly in Uganda, before the introduction of PGS, certification mainly came through third party systems based on EU organic regulations, with products destined for export to the EU market. In contrast, farmers are directly involved in the implementation of the PGSs. Farmer-to-farmer peer-review is an essential feature, built on equality and knowledge-sharing between the inspector and the inspected. Because PGSs focus on the local market, they also help expand local demand for and accessibility of consumers to sustainably produced food and agriculture products. In some cases PGSs directly include consumers in the process, as well as supporting organizations that work with producer groups.

In 2007, the IFOAM and National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAM) partnered to adopt the East African Organic Product Standard (EAOPS) in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The partners intended EAOPS to be used to certify products for the local organic market. However, it wasn't until 2010 that an emphasis was placed on developing PGSs, with each NOAM coaching groups to develop and implement a PGS. NOAMs also developed regional PGS criteria and an assessment process for PGSs to be permitted to use the regional organic mark, EAOM.

The assessment has four major steps:

1. On-site assessment visit of the PGS by the respective NOAM
2. A review by an approval committee appointed by the NOAM
3. Signing of an agreement between the PGS and the NOAM for use of the mark,
4. A presentation of the final case to a regional body, the Joint Management Committee (representatives of the different NOAMs) of the EAOM, for final validation.

Once a group has been approved through the Joint Management Committee, they are awarded a special certificate which gives them the right to use EAOM on their produce. Groups are then responsible for internally monitoring the practices of their group members to ensure they remain compliant with EAOPS.

Enabling Participation

PGSs emphasise farmer participation, ownership, knowledge, and capacity building right from the initial design. While each PGS is set up differently, the Maendeleo group utilises a general assembly. Through the general assembly, all producers within the PGS have equal rights and decisions are taken democratically. Other stakeholders (e.g. SAT or TOAM) have no decision-making power. The Maendeleo PGS group is organised into several sub-groups:

- Training Committee (responsible for all the training needs of the group and organises training to be done internally by a member or by SAT);
- Standard and Inspection Committee (carries out internal inspections every 3 months, or once a production cycle);
- Marketing Committee (collects, grades, packages, and sells products on behalf of the group);
- A Secretariat (coordinates all the activities).

As with all PGSs, farmer-to-farmer peer-review is an essential feature of the certification scheme. Farmers in the Maendeleo Group make a pledge (contract) between them and the group, and every three months their farm is inspected by the Standard and Inspection Committee, which focuses on terracing, biodiversity, soil fertility, and pest management. Equality between the inspectors and the inspected contrasts with the control and compliance approach of third-party standards, and provides an opportunity to share challenges and personal experiences, with a more efficient and equal access to knowledge. The Maendeleo Secretariat decides on approval of each producer. Producers do not get their own certificate – the group is certified based on the East African Organic Mark (EAOM) and the use of EAOM is managed by the group as a whole.

Outcomes

As of 2013, the Maendeleo Group was one of fifteen PGSs functioning in East Africa. Together the fifteen groups represent 5100 farmers. The Maendeleo Group is now formally organised, with a bank account and official registration, and implements the PGS to certify tomatoes, carrots, aubergines, cabbage, and bananas, which are sold in two shops: the SAT organic shop in Morogoro and the Bioshop, run by TOAM, in Dar Es Salaam. The group is also working on incorporating livestock production into the PGS. The Maendeleo Group has a chairperson, a secretary, and a treasurer. The group also assesses the strengths of its members and assigns them to different volunteer roles, such as marketers, trainers, and inspectors who ensure the members of the group are compliant with organic practices.

By joining the PGS, participating small scale farmers in the Maendeleo Group are able to be more self-sufficient. They make their own fertiliser and practice organic pest management

which means that they no longer rely on expensive synthetic fertiliser and pesticides. Farmers also benefit from the increased value of their crops due to organic certification. Fewer outside costs and higher income helps them to pay for additional services, such as school fees for their children.

However, certain challenges still exist for PGSs in East Africa and the Maendeleo Group in particular. They include:

- The difficulty in changing mindsets regarding third party certification (consumers are still unfamiliar with the EAOM and do not see it as a viable and authentic alternative);
- Farmers' capacity to collect fees, manage expenses, and keep records (external inspections are currently financed by SAT, but in order to be independent, Maendeleo will need to implement a fee collection process to cover these and similar costs).
- Continuing issues of self-sustainability without external support from NGOs (in regards to financing and training); and
- Recognition by government legalisation and international bodies (EAOPS is a voluntary standard developed by the NOAMs in East Africa for countries that do not have their own national organic standards). Also, international norms do not exist for PGSs that guarantee the credibility of the system for international export.

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Image: Members of the Maendeleo group tend to their garden.

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