



Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council

June 30, 2018

To

Shri Narendra Modi,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,
Prime Minister's Office (PMO),
South Block,
Raisina Hill,
New Delhi -110011.

Subject: Request for urgent intervention in relation to organic certification of farmers by PGSOC - Reg

Respected and Honourable Prime Minister of India:

Please accept our respectful greetings on behalf of lakhs of peasant (small and marginal) farmers who constitute more than 75% of the farming community in India. These are the very people, Sir, as you would gladly acknowledge, who have symbolised organic farming and sustainable living in our country. We at the **PGSOC** [Participatory Guarantee Systems - Organic Council], a coalition of civil society organisations, have the proud privilege of standing along with our farmer brothers and sisters to give them a voice in the rapidly evolving organic market in India, increasingly dominated by big players with enormous resources.

Over the years, the Council has worked relentlessly to introduce the revolutionary and democratic concept of **PGS** [Participatory Guarantee Systems] as a means to certify organic farmers. Sir, in brief, PGS are peer-based, quality assurance processes that enable farmers, the actual growers, to certify themselves as organic without relying on external certification agencies that are both expensive and out of their reach. Thus, not only does PGS save money for small and marginal farmers, but also positively impacts their dignity and self-worth.

Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council, India (PGSOC) is a registered Voluntary Organisation, initiated in 2011. It functions as a coalition of Voluntary Organizations or NGOs committed to the promotion of organic food production for domestic consumption in India.

SECRETARIAT & MAILING ADDRESS: c/o The Timbaktu Collective, C.K. Palli village, Anantapuram Dist. A.P.-515 101.
REGD. OFFICE: G-8, St Britto's Apts., Feira Alta, Mapusa 403507 Goa, India

Telephone Nos.: +91 79819 16958. **E-MAIL:** pgsocindia@gmail.com **WEBSITE:** Web: www.pgsorganic.in



Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council

Sir, due to our efforts, PGSOC now represents tens of thousands of small and marginal farmers in our country. We have introduced and promoted the concept of PGS with the Government of India, the media, consumers, and other important stakeholders. As a result, India had the rare distinction as the only country in the world that allowed a civil-society backed PGS framework to co-exist with the government's own certification authorities - **APEDA** (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) and **NCOF** (National Centre of Organic Farming).

The problem which compels us to address this letter to you Sir, is a recent development wherein **FSSAI** (Food Safety Standards Association of India) had issued a Gazette notification on 29.12.2017 (No.CPB/03/Standards/FSSAI/2016), which mandates that from July 1, 2018, organic certification can only be provided by **NCOF** through PGS-India or by **APEDA** through accredited third-party certification agencies.

Sir, this is an extraordinary situation, which will result in small peasant farmers, who are the primary holders of organic farming, being denied their right to voluntarily come together and benefit from a PGS framework which has trust, community participation and ownership as its key principles. This will also impact negatively on the very people-centred democratic basis of the Indian constitution.

As of July 1, 2018, these farmers will no longer be able to rely on PGSOC to certify themselves as 'organic', which will have negative impacts on processing, value addition and marketing of their products. In addition, Sir, while the intention of this action is to protect organic farming, it will actually work against the concept. The move by FSSAI will destroy the very spirit of organic farming, which is intrinsically embedded within the culture and spirituality of the people of India, and signifies a deep respect for the earth, which we reverentially refer to as *Bhoomata*.

Sir, you are a passionate champion of the rights, freedom and dignity of the farming community, especially the small and marginal. You are also our leader who zealously enhances and protects our country's interests as well as the image of India to the wider world.

It is for these reasons Sir, that we approach you with great hope and expectation that you will stand with PGSOC and the lakhs of farmers whose interests we uphold.

Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council, India (PGSOC) is a registered Voluntary Organisation, initiated in 2011. It functions as a coalition of Voluntary Organizations or NGOs committed to the promotion of organic food production for domestic consumption in India.

SECRETARIAT & MAILING ADDRESS: c/o The Timbaktu Collective, C.K. Palli village, Anantapuram Dist. A.P.-515 101.
REGD. OFFICE: G-8, St Britto's Apts., Feira Alta, Mapusa 403507 Goa, India

Telephone Nos.: +91 79819 16958. **E-MAIL:** pgsocindia@gmail.com **WEBSITE:** Web: www.pgsorganic.in



Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council

In summary Sir, we humbly request for your intervention on the following:

- Please stand by the lakhs of small and marginal farmers - who are the custodians of organic farming, and let them assert their right to refer to themselves as organic; please do not permit one single government body to appropriate for itself the right to decide who should be called organic.
- Since you understand the fact that peasant farmers cannot by themselves accomplish a strong presence in the marketplace, they need to come together under a broad umbrella of networks such as PGSOC. This is the very *raison de'tre* of PGSOC. Therefore, we request you to please ensure that PGSOC is not delegitimised and deprived of its rights and responsibilities by a simplistic, market-oriented notification.
- Finally as someone who has constantly nurtured India's liberal and democratic traditions, please treat PGSOC as a flagship civil society-supported, people-centered regulatory structure of the organic food regime.

Sir, for your reference, we have annexed the PGSOC's '*Pastapur Declaration*', which was adopted by all of our members on June 27, 2018. The intent of the Declaration was to analyse the impending changes to organic certification in the country and articulate our deep concern and anguish at this point of time in our history.

We look forward to your kind intervention in this matter. We remain hopeful that you will re-affirm the faith that the country's small peasant farmers have in you.

Sincerely,

C.K. Ganguly
PGSOC – Secretariat
C/O The Timbaktu Collective
Chennekothapalli village
Ananthapuramu District
Andhra Pradesh

Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council, India (PGSOC) is a registered Voluntary Organisation, initiated in 2011. It functions as a coalition of Voluntary Organizations or NGOs committed to the promotion of organic food production for domestic consumption in India.

SECRETARIAT & MAILING ADDRESS: c/o The Timbaktu Collective, C.K. Palli village, Anantapuram Dist. A.P.-515 101.
REGD. OFFICE: G-8, St Britto's Apts., Feira Alta, Mapusa 403507 Goa, India

Telephone Nos.: +91 79819 16958. **E-MAIL:** pgsocindia@gmail.com **WEBSITE:** Web: www.pgsorganic.in



Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council

Email: pgsocindia@gmail.com

Mobile: 9000610382

Note: sent on behalf of the members of PGSOC, and the 10,000 small and marginal farmers using the PGSOC framework.

Copies to:

- Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- Shri Suresh Prabhu, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry
- Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister Of Health and Family Welfare
- Chief Secretaries of the Union Ministries of Agriculture; Commerce; Health and Family Welfare
- All Chief Ministers
- Members of Parliament (MPs) in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council, India (PGSOC) is a registered Voluntary Organisation, initiated in 2011. It functions as a coalition of Voluntary Organizations or NGOs committed to the promotion of organic food production for domestic consumption in India.

SECRETARIAT & MAILING ADDRESS: c/o The Timbaktu Collective, C.K. Palli village, Anantapuram Dist. A.P.-515 101.

REGD. OFFICE: G-8, St Britto's Apts., Feira Alta, Mapusa 403507 Goa, India

Telephone Nos.: +91 79819 16958. **E-MAIL:** pgsocindia@gmail.com **WEBSITE:** Web: www.pgsorganic.in