



OWC 2020 Paper Submission - Science Forum

Topic 4 - Innovation in Organic farming: "thinking out of the Box"

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PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS VS OFFICIAL CERTIFICATION SYSTEM. WHEN PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE PART OF IT

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Abstract: There are many initiatives of short food supply chains in Spain that have been implementing participatory guarantee systems, with great involvement of producers and, in some cases, consumers.

In this context, a research have been developed to systematize the procedures under which 8 Spanish and 1 French PGS have developed, to assess conformity under a participatory approach involving local communities. Through the review of the documentation provided by the initiatives, we have analyzed the procedures and tools that are shared among the experiences, that allow them to be identified as PGS. We highlight the way these initiatives understand confidence building as a matter of collective implication and involvement at local scale.

To identify the differences between a guarantee system as a participatory and collective, and that impose by the official regulation of the third party certification, we have generated a comparative table to highlight the main differences between both systems.

Introduction: Short food supply chains mean a new approach between producers and consumers at many levels (Seville et al. 2012, Renting et al. 2012, Rucabado and Cuellar, 2018). Associated to them, and under the same logic, Participatory Guarantee systems emerge as an alternative way of confidence building around local, healthy and sustainable food based on the involvement of the local community of agroecological producers and, in many cases, consumers. IFOAM (2008) defines PGS as "local guarantee systems that certify organic producers based on the active participation of different agents and built on trust, local social networks and the exchange of knowledge". Indeed, many PGS initiatives have emerged in countries whose regulations do not recognize them as valid to guarantee organic production. This is the case of countries within the European Union. Despite the consequence of non recognition, these systems are functioning and developing in countries such as Spain, claiming for the self-organization of procedures that affect and interest them (Cuellar and Ganuza, 2018).

Through this work, what we aim to present is, on the first hand, the procedures to involve local communities in confidence building around agroecological producers that 9 PGS in Spain and France have established and, on the other hand, to compare these participatory procedures and tools to the third party certification system, which is the guarantee system established by the European public organic regulation.

Material and methods: The research was developed through the case study of nine Spanish/French PGS. We have carried out an extensive bibliographic review of the existing documentation on their guarantee systems, such as: internal regulations, operating manuals and documents on PGS procedures. In addition, the websites, the blogs and any public information on the case studies have been reviewed.

After a first review of the different procedures, we built a table of variables that would facilitate the organization of all the information, using the *libreoffice calc* software. Once the table done, we started organizing the information of the different PGS on the table, identifying weaknesses and improvement needs of the table. A group discussion about the exercise ended into a final table model, where we introduced the different PGS procedures and tools, organized through four variables.

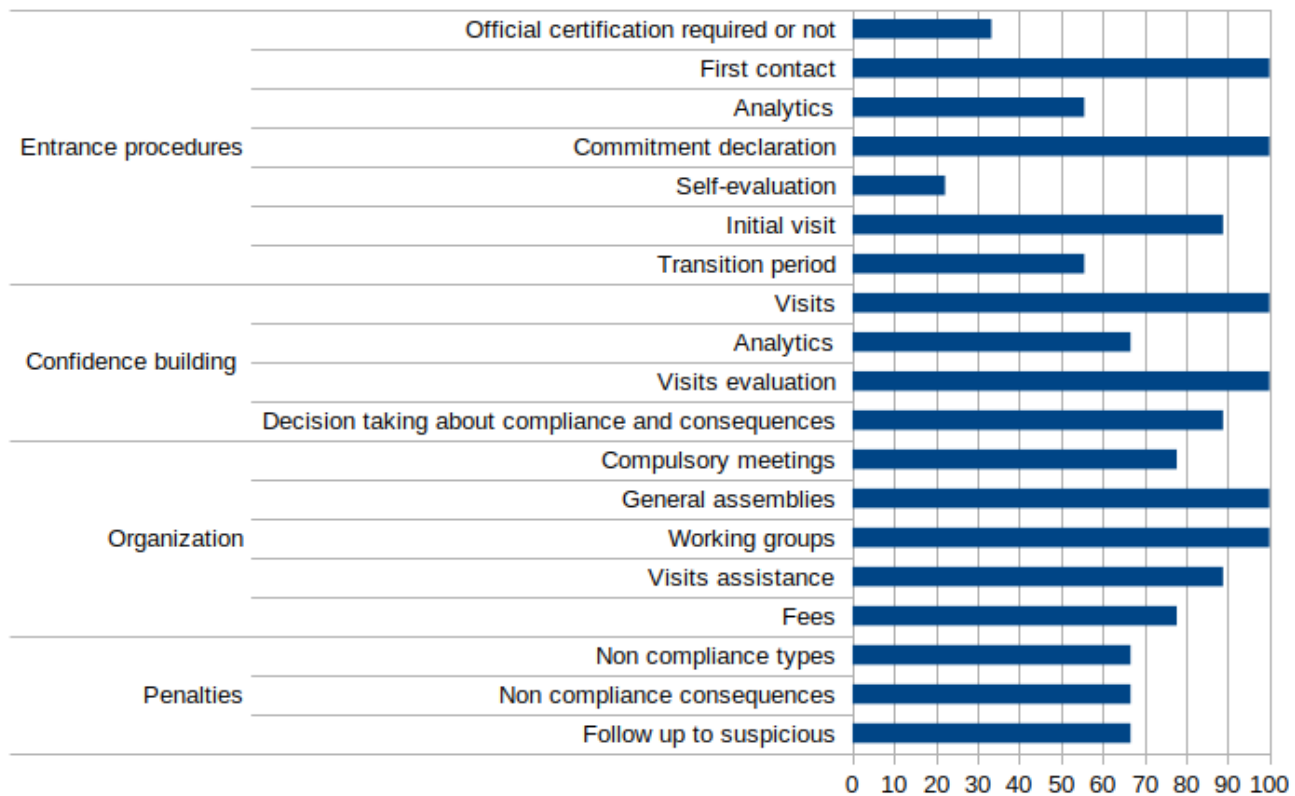
Type of procedure (variables)	Type of activity
Entrance procedures	Official certification required or not
	First contact
	Analytics
	Commitment declaration
	Self-evaluation
	Initial visit
	Transition period
	Others
Confidence building – following up	Visits
	Analytics
	Visits evaluation
	Decision taking about compliance and consequences
	Others
Organization	Compulsory meetings
	General assemblies
	Working groups
	Visits assistance
	Fees
	Others
Penalties	Non compliance types
	Non compliance consequences
	Follow up to suspicious
	Others

The same table was used to systematize the procedures established by the official regulation. The documents used have been the public regulation itself, together with the operating manuals of 2 Spanish public certification entities. The information organized in the table allowed us to discuss about the main differences existing between both guarantee systems, organized in the 4 variables.

Results: There are several interesting results that emerged from the analyses carried out. PGS are based always on collective activities to build the guarantee and take decisions. All the activities developed by the PGS are collective. And most of the activities developed require time and effort, but not money. Both the entrance procedures and the follow up to suspicious are established based on the collective implication of the farmer. A farmer must be involved in the territory to be part of a PGS.

Analyses are done in case of doubt in most cases, sometimes they are supported by an external entity and sometimes by the organization, if the result is positive it is paid by the farmer.

Figure 1. Procedures in the studied GSPs. Percentage of coincidence.



Penalties are one of the main differences between official certification and PGS. And this is related to the answer that the visit is looking for. While in third party certification the answer is a yes/no option; in PGS there is a broader range of options, as they establish the possibility of recommendations, and evaluate the farm taking into account the improvements followed since the last visit. So non compliance consequences are of different kinds, depending on the type of non compliance: from new recommendations to the denial of the guarantee.

Discussion: The main differences between PGS and third party certification are based on who is assuming the responsibility of the guarantee, and the level of involvement of farmers and consumers in the guarantee system. Based on this, third party certification is a tool for farmers and consumers, to generate confidence, while PGS is a collective and

local social process. We can affirm that PGS are well adapted to local agrifood initiatives that aim to eliminate intermediaries and are based on the active implication of farmers and, in many cases, also consumers.

Regarding the diversity in PGS, we can affirm that despite there are common tools identified in all the PGS studied, the composition of the groups as well as the responsibilities of the different actors involved in PGS change, from one PGS to another. There are always producers and consumers, but the implication of consumers and their role is very diverse in the different PGS. There is always an interesting difference between PGS that count on technical staff, and PGS that develop all the procedure in a voluntary aim. The roles and responsibilities vary.

There are not concrete structures to solve or address conflicts, in none of the PGS studied. We can affirm that PGS work properly because in their entrance procedures they are guaranteeing there is an affinity of the new farmer with the group. The social control works well in this direction. PGS are not easily open to new farmers. And this is a key issue to maintain the procedures work.

Also, the participatory procedures themselves could be selecting, a priori, the profile of farmers aiming to take part of these systems. We can affirm that these two conditions have something to say to the fact that , despite being collective initiatives, there are not conflicts management structures in them.

Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

Keywords: alternative food networks, Certification, guarantee systems, confidence building procedures

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