



**Alliance**  
*for*  
**Organic**  
**Integrity**

Strengthening organic assurance globally

**GROWING ORGANIC TRUST –**  
Improving conformity assessment  
in organic production systems

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# Growing Organic Trust

1. Introduction to AOI
2. Issues of trust – PGS
3. Issues of trust – Third party certification
4. PGS pitfalls to avoid
5. Third party certification pitfalls to address

# 1. Introduction

- AOI founded by IOAS in 2019
- 501(c)(3) non-profit (US charity)
- To protect and enhance the quality and integrity of the organic guarantee being provided to consumers, by working with Partners to:
  - Develop and share best certification and accreditation practice
  - Harmonise systems to improve effectiveness and reduce workloads
  - Create and introduce better tools for fraud prevention
- Partners include IOAS (Founding), IFOAM-OI, Organic Services, International Organic Inspectors Association, Anti-Fraud Initiative , Global Organic Textile Standard, SKAL, Verum Control, Organic Arable, with others joining...

## 2. Issues of Trust - PGS

PGS is both a tool for trust (in the local market), and a tool for development

Partly built on (very) short supply chains between producer and consumer

- therefore complementary to 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification (longer supply chains, processing, etc)
- but still needs effective oversight, clear and open communication, skilled inspectors

Partly built on cooperation between producers in the PGS

- bottom-up process with its development involving the whole group
- shared responsibility and ownership to ensure successful operation

Increasingly recognized, and regulated, by national governments

- advantages of support and recognition
- disadvantages of 'top down' control and disempowerment

# 3. Issues of Trust - Third party certification

Long and complex supply chains, multiple certifiers, Incompetent authorities

- Higher risks from bigger scale, more complex operations, parallel production, international trade
- Lack of harmonisation between major regulations, especially NOP and EU
- Surveillance of Competent Authorities inadequate and their own oversight of CBs highly variable
- No coordinated system for identifying, communicating and tackling fraud (especially when crossing borders)
- Rely on (minimal) ISO requirements for competence of Accreditation, Certification and Inspection personnel
- Inspection/audit can be too heavy on bureaucracy and too light on investigation
- Risk-based approach to accreditation and certification poorly understood and applied
- Lack of requirements for supply chain audits (trace-back, mass balance/input-output)
- Lack of communication between CBs in the same supply chain – few trace back audits
- Criminal investigation and prosecution of cross-border fraud is even more complex and slow
- Increasing focus on residues with not enough understanding of them (sources, movements, also sampling protocols)

# 4. PGS pitfalls to avoid

PGS Standards should:

- balance 'just no chemicals' with positive organic practices
- lead to 'active' organic farming, so that 'problems' are pre-empted, not invited
- be development-oriented, about good agricultural practice
- avoid, as far as possible, legalistic language and requirements

PGS inspection should:

- be about how to avoid usual problems, not about detecting prohibited substances
- aim to create trust and mutual responsibilities, instead of being based on distrust
- act as guide through the conversion (where good organic farming is built)
- maybe allow sales during the conversion?

Government involvement should be very 'light touch'

# 5. Third party certification pitfalls to address

AOI working on four main projects:

## **E-learning course for inspectors, certifiers, accrediters**

- Leading to a recognized qualification, plus Continuing Professional Development
- Working with IOIA

## **Organic Supply Chain Observatory**

- Working with the industry to gather, analyze & disseminate key market data to identify, expose and therefore discourage fraud hotspots and risk areas

## **RESCUE Network**

- Supporting stakeholder organisations to share information, research and interpretation on pesticide residues in organic food

## **Training and consultancies**

- ACA/NOP, COR, Black Sea, Sri Lanka



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*Thank you!*



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