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Mountain Partnership: Organic Practices and Participatory Guarantee Systems Partnership with IFOAM - Organics International

Since 2018, IFOAM - Organics International and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have partnered to improve the livelihoods of rural communities and households of smallholder farmers, forest dwellers, fishers and fish workers.

As partners, IFOAM - Organics International and FAO have carried out a range of activities, including knowledge exchange, awareness-raising activities, and specific trainings on agroecology and organic agricultural practices.

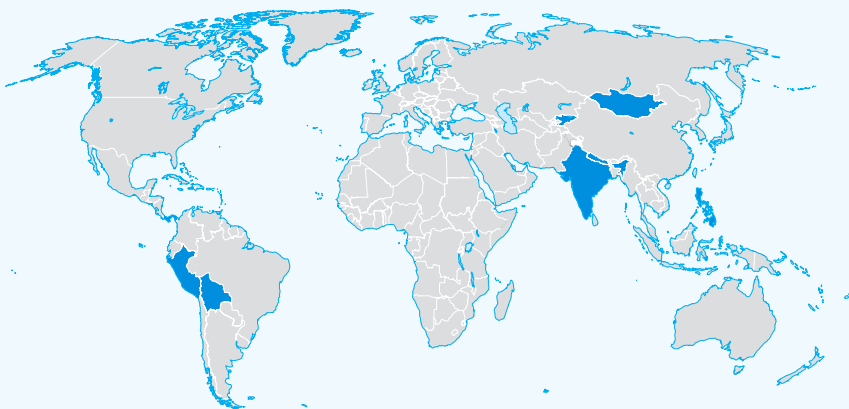
One exciting area of this partnership has been with the Mountain Partnership Products initiative (MPP initiative), through which IFOAM - Organics International and FAO

have supported thousands of mountain producers in eight countries by strengthening the value chain of numerous high-value mountain products, such as a stingless bee honey from the Bolivian Andes, and pink and purple rice cultivated in the Indian Himalayas.

Through this initiative, mountain producers are able to use a voluntary certification and labeling scheme for their organic products to promote them in domestic markets.

To further support producers to differentiate their mountain products and find appropriate markets, the MPP initiative has created an international network of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) to certify farming systems as ethical, fair and organic.

■ MPP Initiative countries



Source: United Nations Map No. 4170 Rev. 18.1, February 2020

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MAIN AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

- **Ecosystem management:** improving farming practices toward more sustainable agroecological and organic approaches.
- **Strengthening value-chains:** implementing PGS as a participatory approach to certification, while enhancing producers' cohesion and learning process.
- **Knowledge sharing of agroecological and organic practices:** producing training materials and involving MPP producers in trainings and workshops.

CONTRIBUTING TO



KEY RESULTS

This partnership has positively impacted rural and mountain populations, improving the livelihoods of communities and individual households of smallholder farmers, forest dwellers, fishers and fish workers. They have gained access to better markets and improved value chains, while conserving local agrobiodiversity, and improved the sustainable management of agroecosystems. In particular:

- 01** | PGS were adopted to certify and monitor the MPP labeling scheme, strengthening the sustainability of the label-granting system and increasing the autonomy of mountain communities.
- 02** | At least 20 high-value mountain products have been or soon will be certified using PGS in eight countries, including honey, rice, tea, coffee and pulses. The PGS certification, as well as the MPP narrative label, differentiate these high-quality mountain products on the market and recognize a fair return to primary smallholder producers.
- 03** | Numerous indirect positive impacts include: improved cohesion/organization of producers; continued learning process and knowledge exchange among producers; enhanced locally adapted organic practices, etc.
- 04** | For those producer organizations in countries that adopted the 2019 *Ranikhet Declaration for a Global Mountain PGS Network**, technical support was provided to design and implement their own mountain PGS.

* The Ranikhet Declaration was signed by representatives from eight MPP countries committed to establish the first international network of PGS initiatives specifically designed for mountain regions, to ensure ethically sound value chains, sustain safe organic production systems, conserve indigenous agrobiodiversity and empower mountain producers.

LOOKING FORWARD

Through the MPP, IFOAM - Organics International and FAO are committed to continue to:

- Exchange existing best practices and methods on participatory innovation in sustainable food systems.
- Improve peer-to-peer visits and disseminate good, regional practices of participatory innovations (e.g. PGS, farmer field schools, interaction innovations).
- Expand the global Mountain PGS network to improve knowledge sharing and to increase the adoption of agroecological and organic approaches and participatory systems for certification.

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEMS (PGS)

PGS are low-cost certification schemes for organic products, suitable for smallholder farmers. These locally focused quality assurance systems certify producers based on the active participation of farmers, consumers and other relevant stakeholders, who come together to make decisions, visit farms, support one another and make sure that the production chain is carried out according to organic standards.

PGS are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. They provide smallholder producers with an alternative organic certification that is adapted to local and national markets and short supply chains. They address obstacles faced by small-scale mountain farmers in many countries who cannot afford third party organic certification, required for exports, despite adopting organic farming practices.

ABOUT THE PARTNER

Founded in 1972, IFOAM - Organics International is a membership-based international umbrella organization working to unite a diverse range of stakeholders who contribute to the organic vision, working towards true sustainability in agriculture, from the field through the value chain to the consumer. From raising public awareness and advocating for sustainable policy, to building capacity and facilitating the transition of farmers to organic agriculture, everything IFOAM - Organics International does aims to strengthen the organic movement.

CONTACT

FAO Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations:
www.fao.org/partnerships/civil-society/en/
FAO-CivilSociety@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome, Italy



IFOAM - Organics International:
www.ifoam.bio
contact@ifoam.bio



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