**Certification Process by Regional Council**

**Step 1**

a. Receive registration applications (on-line or off-line or in hard copy) of Local Groups (LG). Check details of individual farmer including geo-tagging of farms and mobile nos. Check for other group recommendation or endorsement by Central/State Govt authorities.

b. On being found adequate approve registration on-line.

c. If data and application have been provided on-line then approve registration on-line and provide user ID

and password on PGS-India website.

d. If application is in hard copy or off-line then upload the information on website and grant registration with user ID and password.

e. Provide copy of PGS standards and LG operational manual guidelines in local language.

**Step 2**

a. Time to time keep interacting the group and help them in understanding the certification process. If possible participate in some of the group meetings or key field trainings of group.

b. Encourage and build the capacity of the group for on-line data management (may be through internet café)

c. Undertake random supervision on groups for assessment of standards implementation and capacity of the Local Group

d. At least 50% of the groups registered under it, must be verified suitably every year. Every group must be physically verified at least once in two years

e. Receipt and redressal of complaints against the LGs and their functioning

**Step 3**

a. On receipt of entire data set and Local Group Peer Appraisal Summary Sheet, screen the details for completeness, ensure that PGS standards and processes has been complied.

b. Compare the peer appraisal summary findings with RCs own physical evaluation report, take into consideration previous non-compliances, complaints and investigation findings if any;

c. On being found compliant to PGS standards and norms, approve grant of certification and issue certificate.

d. RC needs to endorse the certification decision of the LG, if requirements have been met and there are no adverse findings into RCs physical verification, complaints, adverse residue testing report or adverse supervision report etc. Following check points suggested for decision endorsement:

i. Required LG meetings done and members present

ii. Key trainings organized and members present

iii. Summary sheet is complete and gives full reflection of certification process

iv. Complaints, if any received during the period

v. Physical verification report of RC

vi. Past record of non-compliances and advisory implementation and

vii. Result of residue testing (if any)

e. In case of Non-approval, reasons must be communicated in writing or electronically with justification.

f. RCs can not pick and choose individual farmers. They can approve or not approve or reject the decision of the group.

g. RC at its discretion can also return the decision of the LG for reconsideration in case of procedural non- compliance and ask the LG to resubmit the summary sheet after addressing and closing the non- compliances.

h. The RC needs to decide on certification request within 30 days from the date of uploading the LG- summary sheet or submitting the hard copy of the group decision to RC. If RC fails to endorse the decision of the LG or otherwise within30 days then groups decision will be auto approved on PGS-India website anda non-compliance is credited against RC.

i. Scope certificate is issued to the group with crop name and area details of the peer appraised season for each farmer separately in annexure. Scope certificates are issued season-wise with details of crops and area for that particular season.

j. After the harvest Local group uploads the actual yields. RC can verify the uploaded actual yields on- line and if satisfied approve the yields minus self- consumption with lot no and packaging/ bulk etc. for sale and issue of TCs.

k. On yield approval by RC, TCs can be generated on-line for each and every farmer member separately.

TCs can be issued in one go for entire produce of the individual member or in small lots on number of occasions.

l. RCs need to ensure that certified organic products are sold with UID code provided on the Transaction

Certificate.

m. In case if sales are happening between two PGS-India registered operators then there is no need for paper TC, online TC will facilitate transfer of stock from seller operator to buyer operator.

Note that the Regional Council does *not* make a decision to include or not include specific farmers based on the information provided. They can only approve or not approve the certification of the Local Group as a whole.

One example where this might apply would be if the Regional Council has a concern about Farmer X (for example because of a random pesticide residue test result) but the Local Group continues to list that farmer as Certified Organic with no sanctions and no explanation, the Regional Council may rightly be concerned and withhold certification approval of all farmers in the Local Group.

Another example could be that the Regional Council feels that some individual farmers’ Peer Appraisals were faked or handled in a sloppy fashion. While the Regional Council cannot hold-up the certification status of those specific farms, they can and SHOULD withhold certification approval from the Local Group as a whole.

*n.* In case if the group has no access to internet and computer The Regional Council enters summary information for every local group into a PGS website database and sends a paper certificate certifying the *individual farm.*

o. All issued certificates bear unique ID (UID) code for traceability and access to the entire information on production system, peer appraisal and decision system of the group.

**Step 4**

a. Zonal Council and PGS-India Secretariat also undertake independent supervision and communicate results to RC through website.

b. A small percentage of farms/ products are randomly selected for random pesticide residue testing each year and the results are placed on the website. Adverse results on both counts may impact the Certification status of the Local Group as a whole.

c. Pesticide Residue testing norms to be finalized by NEC and shall be coordinated by PGS-India Secretariat. It is the Regional Council and the Local Group that has to decide what to do about a positive result. RCs need to communicate the residue result to group and ask it to undertake corrective action and sanction non-complying farmers. In case if group fails to undertake corrective action and fails to sanction non-complying farmers RC can suspend/ cancel the certification and delete all yields/ produce from their stock on PGS- India website.

**5.3 Certification of Individual Producer by Regional Council**

**Step 1**

a. Regional Council receives registration applications (on-line or off-line or in hard copy). Check details of individual farmer.

b. Finalize working modalities and if required enter into an agreement including payment of fee for services provided. If data uploading work is to be done by RC then finalize necessary modalities for the same.

c. On being found adequate and finalization of working modalities/ agreement etc approve registration on- line.

d. Provide user ID and password on PGS website.

e. Provide copy of PGS standards and operational manual guidelines. **Step 2**

f. On receipt of request if possible arrange for peer appraisal by nominating peer appraisers from nearby group.

g. In case if no group is nearby, then physically inspect the farm on an annual basis and complete the peer appraisal sheet. All stages of production shall be inspected and producer need to provide full access to the RC inspector.

h. Submit appraisal form duly signed by the inspector/ peer appraisers and producer to the Regional

Council. Upload report on the website.

i. Regional Council checks for compliance and identify non-compliances (if any) and ask the operator to file compliance report.

**Step 3**

j. Take into consideration previous non-compliances, complaints and investigation findings if any;

k. On being found compliant to PGS-India standards and norms, approve grant of certification and issue certificate.

l. Scope certificate is issued with name and crop details including estimated production.

m. After the harvest, producer uploads the actual yields. RC can verify the uploaded actual yields on-line and if satisfied approve the yields minus self- consumption with lot no and packaging/ bulk etc. for sale and issue of TCs, if applicable.

n. On yield approval by RC, TCs can be generated on-line. TCs can be issued in one go for entire produce of the individual member or for small lots number of times.

o. RCs need to guide the operators so that certified organic products are sold with compliance to the Food Safety norms as regulated by FSSAI, suitable information and training can be provided by RC as capacity building for LGs.

p. In case if sales are happening between two PGS-India registered operators then there is no need for paper TC, online TC will facilitate transfer of stock from seller operator to buyer operator.

**5.4 Certification Process by Off-farm Processing Units**

a. All off-farm processing units including primary and secondary processing, handling, storage/ warehousing, packaging and trading shall apply in prescribed format to Regional Council authorized for off-farm processing and handling, giving full details of raw materials to be used, sources, certification status of each raw material, process flow sheet, recipes, ratio of input to output, details of machines, procedures for their maintenance, contamination control measures and documentation pattern to ensure audit trail.

b. Regional council shall evaluate the application, and on being found appropriate agrees to registration

c. Regional Council and operator enter into an agreement to maintain confidentiality of the manufacturing process of operator by Regional Council and commitment of operator to adhere to PGS-India standards.

d. Regional Council and operator agrees on the fee structure, inspection cost of the RC and payment modalities.

e. Regional Council after getting the payment approves registration, registration is granted for one year and needs to be renewed annually.

f. Each registered processing/ handling units shall be physically inspected at least once a year by the RC

preferably at a time when processing is in operation;

g. On being satisfied Regional Council grants approval to operator for the processes applied and approved by the RC along with production estimates based upon annual system plan uploaded.

h. A processing unit approved by the authorized Regional Council can undertake processing of PGS

certified material belonging to PGS-groups.

i. Approved processing unit shall receive all raw material with PGS transaction certificate. In case of non- availability of PGS certified raw material, NPOP certified raw material can also be used along with the transaction certificate. But in any case, the final processed product will be PGS certified.

j. All steps shall be taken to ensure that organic products do not come in contact with non-organic material or prohibited materials

k. Entire processing shall adhere to the PGS-India food processing standards.

l. All additives, processing aids and preservatives shall be used as per the approved list provided in

National Standards for Organic Production (NSOP) under NPOP

m. Process flow documentation is maintained and at all times there must be a balance between input and output ratio as approved by the Regional Council.

n. Entire processing information to be uploaded on the PGS-India website.

o. Finished products will be uploaded on the PGS-India website along with the Lot no/ batch no and packaging details. In the absence of this information no TCs will be issued

p. Finally, processed and packed material shall be sold along with the transaction certificate.

q. Distributors and retailers, not registered under PGS-India programme shall keep the copy of transaction certificate along with their purchase records for verification by Food Safety Officers (if required).

r. Transaction certificate shall be generated on-line from PGS-India website.

**5.5 Certification Process by Regional Council for off-farm processing units**

a. On receipt of application RC shall verify sources of raw materials to be used, certification status of each raw material, process flow sheet, recipes, ratio of input to output, details of machines, procedures for their maintenance, contamination control measures and documentation pattern to ensure audit trail.

b. Regional council if required, seek more details to fully understand the process and on being satisfied grant registration

c. Regional Council undertake physical inspection of the unit and all its facilities. Operator is bound to provide full access to the representative of Regional Council for compliance assessment.

d. Physical inspections shall be based on predetermined format to maintain uniformity and inspector shall ensure inspection of each and every step of processing including raw material inventories, process flow, machines used, contamination control measures, storages, ratio of input to output. Inspector shall also run an audit trail from receipt of raw material to finished product;

e. Each registered processing/ handling units shall be physically inspected at least once a year by the RC

preferably at a time when processing is in operation;

f. On being satisfied Regional Council grants approval to the operator for the processes applied and approved by the RC and issues scope certificate with name of products approved along with estimated yields.

g. Entire processing information to be uploaded on the PGS-India website shall be monitored by the RC

from time to time.

h. RCs shall be approving products on being uploaded by the operators and on receipt of requests

i. Actual production needs to be uploaded by the operator from time to time and RC need to verify the actual production stock at repeated intervals.

j. On approval of stock by RC, TC can be generated on-line from PGS-India website

k. Finally, processed and packed material shall be sold along with the transaction certificate.

l. Distributors and retailers, not registered under PGS-India programme shall keep the copy of transaction certificate along with their purchase records for verification by Food Safety Officers (if required).

**5.6 Certification process for large contiguous Traditional/ Default organic area**

**5.6.1 Certification process by Village Council/ Gram Panchayat**

a. Define the area to be brought under certification and prepare maps.

b. Prepare farmer-wise documentation, i.e. Name and family details of farmer, land details, livestock details, individual farmers land location in the map. All farmers will be taken into account and the entire defined area to be covered.

c. Create village-wise group keeping one village one group concept

d. Obtain PGS-India application form and PGS pledge from all the farmers

e. Ensure that there is no synthetic input use history in the entire defined area at least for last 3 years and also that no licenses have been issued for sale of synthetic inputs.

f. Request the State Government to issue necessary documents of the area being synthetic input usage free from last 3 years

g. Make an application to the Regional Council with copy of all the above papers for registration.

Applications to be made village-wise/ Gram Panchayat-wise

h. Submit applications from all Gram Panchayats and villages from the defined area. Only one RC to be selected for one area.

i. Undertake first peer appraisal through local farmers peer committee in each village and fill consolidated peer appraisal form.

j. Submit all details to the concerned Regional Council and Zonal Council

k. Upload required data into PGS-India portal

l. Facilitate PGS-NEC appointed committee for inspection and verification of the traditional organic status and for recommendation on conversion status.

m. On receipt of organic certification the village can undertake marketing of certified organic produce under one umbrella and under one brand name.

n. Transaction certificates for sale can be generated from PGS portal under the common village name.

Certificates and TCs in large area certification will be issued village group-wise. Individual farmers and processing units shall not qualify under large area certification.

o. For renewal of certification every year at least one peer appraisal is done involving all the farmers and consolidated peer appraisal sheet, village-wise is prepared and submitted to the Regional Council

**5.6.2 Certification process by Regional Council**

a. RC receives the application from all the Gram Panchayats/ villages.

b. Verifies the authenticity and completeness of the documents

c. Participate in some village’s peer appraisal (at least 20% of one particular area)

d. Participate in PGS-NEC committee verification programme and be part of the decision making process.

e. On receipt of recommendation of the committee and on completion of first peer appraisal decide on the certification status of the area and recommend for the approval of PGS-NEC.

f. On receipt of PGS-NEC approval, grant certification to the entire area with list of villages, their area, livestock and number of farmers/ producers.

g. Subsequent renewal of certification is granted on receipt of annual peer appraisal and random physical verification by RC. RC need to ensure that each and every village is physically inspected at least once in two years for standard compliance assessment.