



PGS | SOUTH AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIC CERTIFICATION LANDSCAPE

SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANIC CERTIFICATION LANDSCAPE

The **South African Organic Certification Landscape** is a document describing the use of logos and seals in the organic sector.

It includes recognition for smallholder organic farmers selling into local markets (short supply chain), and is intended to provide an enabling environment for the adoption of organic agriculture in the South African context, through the implementation of Participatory Guarantee Systems.

“Participatory Guarantee Systems” (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems.

They certify producers based on active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.”

(IFOAM–Organics International)

This document:

- Outlines the different types of certification.
- Describes steps for the establishment of PGS groups and membership to PGS SA for organic farmers selling into local markets.
- Offers two seals for PGS groups to use to recognise farmer members’ alignment with a group’s chosen organic standard and for consumer transparency.
- Describes the process for PGS groups to follow when applying for approval to use the SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo.

PGS groups are guided by 6 basic elements:



Shared Vision – the members of the PGS share a common goal based on a shared need and collectively embrace the principles of PGS and organic agriculture.



Trust – “integrity-based approach” – trust and integrity form the ethical basis of the system.



Horizontality – the group has a flat equitable organisational structure, it is developed and managed by peers and not by a top-heavy management structure. All are responsible, all are accountable



Transparency – the system is open to public, stakeholder and peer scrutiny at all levels.



Participatory – the members participate in the development and management of the process and procedures of the PGS which is “owned” and controlled and determined by the collective.



Learning Process – the assessments and the site visit process focus on skills and knowledge exchange, both in traditional knowledge as well as innovations. Local knowledge and experience from fellow farmers that consider the specific characteristics of the soil, the climatic conditions and the market is particularly useful and relevant for all farmers in the group.



First Party Claim

A verbal declaration is made by a farmer/producer directly to the consumer that their produce is produced in alignment with organic principles. There is no verification of the claim; it is a trust-based acknowledgment between the farmer/producer and the consumer. This is a critical step in the process as this is when the farmer/producer makes a commitment to produce according to organic practices and principles as best as they understand them. The consumer chooses to trust the claim based on direct contact and the relationship.

Second-Party Certification

The farmer/producer wants recognition that their production practices have been assessed by others and that they are in line with organic practices, processes and principles. The consumer wants assurance that the produce is grown organically. There is generally an intermediary (a local market, agrihub, pack house or independent retailer) in the supply chain between the farmer/producer and consumer. Typically, the farmer/producer joins a local PGS group. Regular farm assessments are held during which stakeholders in the supply chain (other farmers, consumers and local markets) meet and assess the compliance of the farmer/producer's production methods against the groups' chosen internationally recognised organic standard.

Third-Party Certification

Third-party certification means that an independent organisation (typically referred to as an Accredited Certification Body or ACB or CB) has reviewed the production processes of a product and has independently verified that the final product complies with specific standards for safety, quality or performance. This third-party procedure verifies the production processes of a product and determines whether the final product is produced in accordance with an internationally recognised organic standard. In SAOSO's case, the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) Standard for Organic Production and Processing.



This standard forms part of the IFOAM–Organics International family of standards. Third-party certification to the SAOSO standard provides alignment to global standards, communicates to consumers, has immediate credibility with new customers and facilitates marketing and the creation of product identity. It is suitable for long supply chains nationally, and export.

Please contact SAOSO for more details at info@saoso.org



ESTABLISHING A PGS GROUP

The table below outlines the steps for the establishment of a PGS group and its membership to PGS SA.

| Key steps | Resource documents, guidelines and requirements | Use of seals and logos | Seals and logos | Fee |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Step 1 | | | | |
| Farmers who are already producing a surplus of organic produce and organized as an Organic farmer Association (OFO), and wanting to aggregate and sell their produce to a local market where there is consumer demand for organic produce, get together to form a PGS group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFOAM PGS tool kit • PGS SA: How to set up a PGS group | | | Local PGS group determines the membership fee for farmers/consumers/traders that are part of the PGS group. |
| Step 2 | | | | |
| <p>The PGS group agrees on operational procedures and their Basic Production Principles, based on an internationally accepted standard, against which farmers will be assessed.</p> <p>The members sign pledges and formally establish the PGS group at a general meeting.</p> <p>The group completes a self-assessment form (like a status report), shares the required information with PGS SA and pays an annual membership fee.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PGS operational procedure guidelines • Farmer/consumer pledge example • PGS SA self-assessment form • Basic Production principles based on organic standards – (SAOSO standard or equivalent) | <p>Once formally established and paid-up members of PGS SA, groups will be entitled to make use of the “member of PGS SA” logo.</p> <p>Groups may also create their own local logo identifying their group and use the “member of PGS SA” logo on their communication and certificates.</p> <p>Groups that do not wish to design their own logo may make use of a PGS SA logo customized to the name of their PGS group.</p> |  | <p>Annual membership fee (paid by the PGS group to PGS SA): R500</p> <p>Once-off customisation of logo, seals and certificates (paid by the PGS group to PGS SA): R1 000</p> |

| Key steps | Resource documents, guidelines and requirements | Use of seals and logos | Seals and logos | Fee |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Step 3</p> <p>The group conducts farm visits and on approval grants certificates to its farmer members in the relevant category. Farmers may label their products accordingly.</p> <p>The use of the two seals is detailed below.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm visit assessment form • Farm visit checklist • Farm visit certificate granted to approved farms, which lists all the products and displays the relevant seal | <p>These two seals were developed by PGS SA in consultation with PGS groups.</p> <p>Description of seals and their use is detailed below. Groups may also create their own seals.</p> <p>PGS groups are custodians of the manner in which the seals are used in their PGS groups. Where exceptions to the organic standards are granted, a copy of the farm visit assessment report must be submitted to PGS SA.</p> <p>Note: A PGS group may issue membership certificates to farmers whose production practises follow the group’s organic standard but where there are exceptions that are more significant than what the standard and category of seals allows. This certificate is acknowledgement of the farmers’ commitment to PGS and organic agriculture.</p> <p>Where farmers are transitioning to organic agriculture and additional deviations to the standards are required that cannot be accommodated within the “organic in conversion” category, PGS groups can develop their own intermediary seals. GMOs and synthetic pesticides and fertilizers remain strictly prohibited in this category.</p> <p>PGS SA is not responsible for monitoring the use of these seals.</p> |  | <p>A newly established PGS group will have the following seals customised in the name of its PGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PGS Organic In-Conversion • PGS Organic <p>Printing of seals is at own cost.</p> <p>Recommended annual fee for the use of stickers (paid by individual farmers):</p> <p>R350 [to be divided between PGS SA (30%) and PGS groups (70%) – the portion of the fee accruing to PGS SA should be paid when the PGS group renews its membership]</p> |

PGS SEALS AND THEIR USE

| Key steps | Resource documents, guidelines and requirements | Use of seals and logos | Seals and logos | Fee |
|--|---|--|---|----------|
| <p>PGS Organic In-Conversion</p> <p>Farmers who cannot support/ attest to the organic history of the land or who are converting from chemical to organic agriculture may be granted this seal by their group.</p> | | <p>PGS Organic In-Conversion</p> <p>If the production is in accordance with organic principles, but the land has been under organic management for less than:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 months before sowing or planting in the case of annual production; • 12 months before grazing or harvest for pastures and meadows; • 12 months before harvest for other perennials. |  | As above |
| <p>PGS Organic</p> <p>Farmers who are fully compliant with their group's choice of an internationally accepted organic standard may be granted this seal.</p> | | <p>PGS Organic</p> <p>Labelling regulations state that use of the word "organic" for animal products must be linked to specific protocols registered with The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).</p> <p>The IFOAM recognised SAOSO standard covers these protocols. In the absence of SA legislation governing the use of the word "organic" for crops, groups are guided by the intended purpose of the Consumer Protection Act 2008, and must be able to substantiate this claim with documented record keeping of farm visits and compliance with the group's chosen organic standard.</p> <p>Any notifiable exceptions are permitted for a duration of 12 months, provided that the producer provides a remedial plan on how s/he will make improvements towards reaching the standards.</p> <p>The next visit assesses whether the indicated improvements have been reached and whether any other additional extension is to be granted.</p> <p>PGS groups granting exceptions to the organic standards need to notify PGS SA of these.</p> |  | As above |

PGS SA is developing guidelines to facilitate trade between PGS groups to ensure traceability. PGS Organic and PGS Organic In-Conversion seals are as acceptable forms of organic certification, as any other type of certification, only the process for achieving the outcome of organic recognition is different.

SAOSO ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

PGS groups that wish to enter more formal markets and use the nationally recognised SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo would take the following steps.

| Key steps | Resource documents, guidelines and requirements | Use of seals and logos | Seals and logos | Fee |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Step 1 | | | | |
| <p>For a minimum of 18 months, the PGS will be operating as per its agreed procedures and approach PGS SA for support. Farmers are assessed during farm visits and the PGS coordinator keeps a record of farm visits. PGS groups that have been compliant PGS SA members for this period can apply to SAOSO and PGS SA for approval to use the SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAOSO application form. Appendix 9 of the SAOSO Standard for Organic Production and Processing. PGS SA Assessment of Group documents, provided by PGS SA representative responsible for assessment of the group. | | | <p>PGS SA will use experienced PGS practitioners to conduct these assessments.</p> <p>The fee attached to this application will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The applicant PGS group will be responsible for the costs based on a quote provided by PGS SA. Where possible, PGS SA will assist with identifying financial models for groups, including retailer contributions, in order to fund group assessments and printing needs.</p> <p>Fee to apply to make use of the SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo is determined by SAOSO (see below).</p> |
| Step 2 | | | | |
| <p>If approved by PGS SA the PGS group will be entitled to determine which of its farmers qualify to use the SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo.</p> <p>Farmers may wish to use both the “PGS Organic” seal and the SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo on their product.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of eligible farmers in the group SAOSO Licensing agreement Downloadable stickers | <p>SAOSO “Organic PGS Certified” logo.</p> <p>Qualifying farmers wishing to use this logo will sign a licensing agreement with SAOSO.</p> <p>Application for the use of this logo can be made by a PGS group which has been established for 18 months, after a positive recommendation is given by PGS SA.</p> <p>This logo can be used for PGS-to-PGS trade.</p> |  <p>The logo is circular with a green border. Inside the border, the text 'ZA ORGANIC' is at the top and 'PGS CERTIFIED' is at the bottom. In the center, there is a stylized green hand holding a leaf, with the word 'saoso' in lowercase letters below it.</p> | <p>The farmer will be responsible for the printing costs of the stickers linked to a producer code system (QR Code in the pipeline).</p> <p>Licensing agreement with SAOSO to make use of the logos (for farmer members): R500</p> <p>Licensing agreement with SAOSO to make use of the logos (for retail members): R2 500</p> |

| Key steps | Resource documents, guidelines and requirements | Use of seals and logos | Seals and logos | Fee |
|-----------|---|------------------------|-----------------|-----|
|-----------|---|------------------------|-----------------|-----|

For farmers wanting direct 3rd party certification to the SAOSO standard.

Farmers who are producing organically but are not able to join or establish a PGS group (geographic isolation, time constraints), can apply to SAOSO to use the SAOSO “Organic Certified” logo.

This route excludes the social, knowledge sharing, and participatory approach of PGS groups and may not be cost effective for smallholder farmers.

- Certification body application form
- Licensing agreement

SAOSO “Organic Certified” logo

This certification is appropriate for farmers wishing to sell into long supply chains.

If farmers wish to export, their market will determine which standard is applicable and a CB within South Africa would need to be contracted for certification. Should the standard be part of the IFOAM Family of Standards, the SAOSO standard could be seen as equivalent.

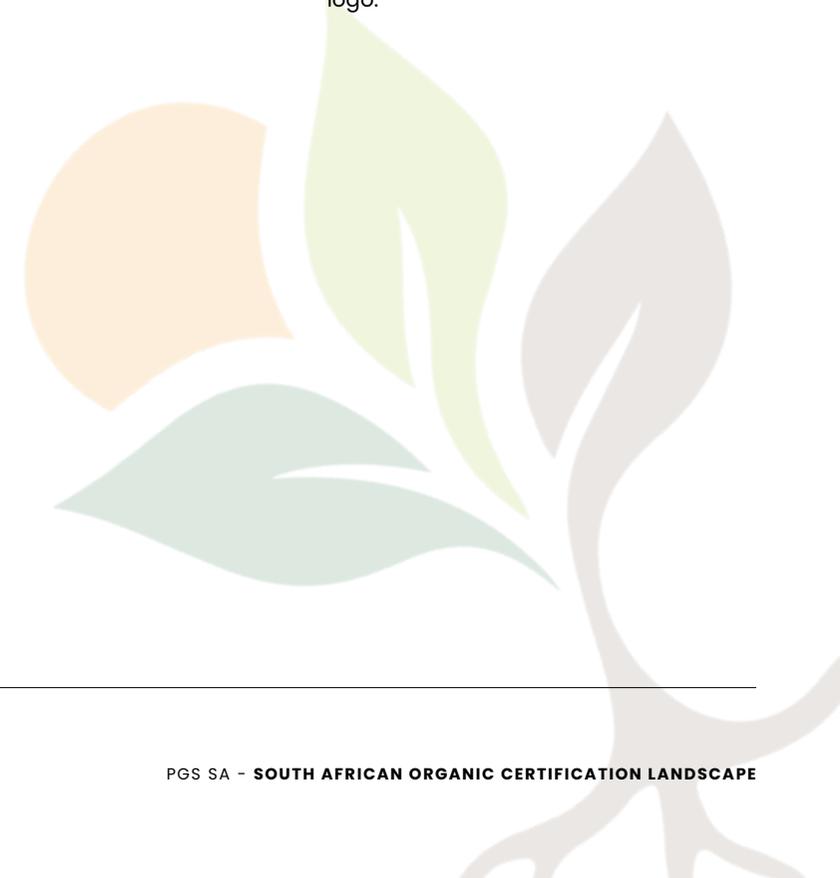
Information on the IFOAM Family of Standards may be found here:

https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/2020-04/fos-infoa4_en_2015_web_1.pdf



Quote to be provided by the Accredited Certifying Body.

Upon payment of a fee to the Accredited Certification Body (ACB), the farmer receives an annual audit visit and is certified against the SAOSO standard. An annual licencing agreement between SAOSO and the farmer will be signed upon payment of the fee for use of the trademarked logo.





PGS | SOUTH AFRICA

Local organic certification
for farmers and consumers



KHSA
Knowledge Hub for
Organic Agriculture
in Southern Africa

www.saoso.org



info@saoso.org



SAOSO



@saoso_za



www.pgssa.org.za



info@pgssa.org.za



PGS South Africa



@pgssouthafrica

