

GROWING THE ORGANIC SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA



**Farm Visit  
Guide**

**The Principle  
Of Health.**

**The Principle  
Of Ecology.**

**The Principle  
Of Fairness.**

**The Principle  
Of Care.**



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Farm Visit Guide has been developed in response to requests from Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) group members of PGS South Africa (PGS SA) to guide them through the PGS certification of an organic farm. This document contains input from experienced administrators as well as those who are starting out. The guide will be reviewed regularly by the PGS SA committee based on ongoing input from PGS groups and updated versions will be distributed.

The South African Organic Sector Organisation's (SAOSO) Standard for Organic Production and Processing (**Attachment 4**) is the voluntary, local South African standard and was accepted into the IFOAM Family of Standards on 5 December 2017. Reference is made to the Standard in this document to guide practitioners. There are also many 'tips' that are being shared by PGS practitioners who have been active in the PGS space since its inception in 2008.

## Participatory Guarantee Systems South Africa (PGS SA)

PGS SA is a non-profit voluntary association that supports the establishment of PGS groups in the country and Southern African region. Participatory Guarantee Systems are community-driven organic certification systems that serve as an alternative to third-party certification.

"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

PGS SA's objectives are to:

- Create an enabling environment for ecological producers where consumers are assured of the integrity of organic products.
- Support the training and development of smallholder farmers in organic production.
- Develop transparent sustainable organic market access countrywide.

# 2. ADMINISTRATOR FUNCTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

## What does it mean to be an administrator guiding a farm assessment?

The role of the administrator is to guide participants through the farm assessment process, noting answers to questions, recording any corrective action/knowledge shared, and assisting participants in reaching a decision on

whether or not the farm is producing in accordance with organic principles.

The administrator is responsible for writing and distributing the report to participants for their comment, and for the submission of the final report to the PGS group or committee. Along with all participants in the farm assessment, administrators will review the farmers' responses on the questionnaire prior to the assessment and should ask questions and share their knowledge during the farm assessment.

Moreover, administrators should encourage participants to contribute to the discussion irrespective of their level of experience in organic agriculture. Indeed, administrators should be aware of the different levels of experience amongst participants and encourage discussion and knowledge share.

In the same way that farmers continually learn as they put organic principles into practice, administrators will develop their skills of support and objectivity as they conduct more farm assessments.

### 3. FARM ASSESSMENTS

#### a. Informal first farm assessment/ simplified farm assessment

On reviewing the completed assessment questionnaire from a new farmer, the group or committee may decide to arrange an informal or "first" farm assessment to check if a farm is ready for a certification assessment and is able to supply its local market. They can use

the PGS simplified assessment template (**Attachment 1**) or if an informal first farm assessment is decided on:

- Invite peer farmers from your group
- Discuss the principles of PGS so that new farmers understand how PGS works
- Allow the farmer to show the group around the farm
- Write a short report listing:
  - name of farm,
  - date of assessment,
  - who was present,
  - what you saw,
  - any recommendations that were made, and
  - any knowledge exchanges.

Encourage the farmer to join other farm assessments before their formal assessment so they understand the process that is followed.

#### b. Preparing for a farm assessment Farm assessment duration

In general allow at least three hours for a farm assessment, especially your first assessment. A first assessment generally takes longer than repeat assessments and an assessment with a lot of participants (more than 12) also takes longer.

#### Invitation to attend a farm assessment

In line with your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (**Attachment 3**), you need to make sure that there are at least two peer farmers present who have knowledge of the production practices on the farm. Also, invite local retailers and customers who buy from

farmers in your group. It's always a good idea to invite other PGS groups to your farm assessments. This helps you share solutions to problems, learn from other groups' experiences and assists in building customers' trust in the system.

In order for all participants to prepare for the farm assessment, share the farmer's completed questionnaire (reviewed by

you or your group/committee) at least three days before the assessment. By doing so the group/committee can prepare questions for the farmer and make sure they are familiar with the SOPs of the PGS group and the Basic Production Principles (**Attachment 2**).

Here is a draft email to participants that you can adapt:

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Dear All

We are looking forward to seeing you all for the (name of PGS group) farm assessment to the (name of farm)

The assessment details are below:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Farmer: \_\_\_\_\_

In preparation for the visit, please find attached:

1. PGS Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) (**Attachment 3**)
2. Basic Production Principles (**Attachment 2**). The Basic Production Principles are a summary of the SAOSO Standard for Organic Production and Processing (**Attachment 4**) which the group uses as their reference.
3. The completed PGS farm assessment questionnaire (**Attachment 5**) for review prior to the assessment.
4. The farm assessment checklist (**Attachment 6**) to be completed at the farm assessment. (We will assist so no need to worry.)

Please do not print these documents. We will manage the responses on the farm assessment questionnaire and will print checklists for you all to complete.

Please bring a hat, a pen and water.

Looking forward!

### What you need to take with you.

- The PGS farm assessment questionnaire (**Attachment 5**) completed by the farmer, (and an extra copy if you are mentoring). Include any documents already submitted by the farmer (e.g. farm sketch, soil test or be able to access electronic copies. If documents are not all provided in advance or at the farm assessment they can be listed under “corrective action” with a timeline. (See section 6 of this guide for tips on record keeping)
- If this is a repeat assessment, a copy of the conclusion sheet and corrective actions should be brought along. This will guide you on what you need to follow up on from the last farm assessment.
- Enough copies of checklists (**Attachment 6**) for the number of participants attending. (Cut out pieces of cardboard to press on if you don't have clipboards).
- A file containing:
  - The group's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) (**Attachment 3**)
  - The Basic Production Principles (**Attachment 2**)
  - The SAOSO Standard for Organic Production and Processing (**Attachment 4**)
- The attendance register (**Attachment 7**)
- Any PGS leaflets
- Extra pens.

### **c. On the farm assessment**

#### Introduction to assessment

1. Welcome everyone to the farm assessment.

2. Ask all to sign the attendance register.
3. Describe the six basic elements of PGS (**Attachment 10**) and how they contribute to the integrity of participatory organic certification.
4. Give everybody an opportunity to introduce themselves. This is important as it helps you understand the range of experience in the group. Introduce the farmer last as in the introduction they often speak about their farm history.
5. Describe the process and farm walkabout, ending with a meeting to ask any last questions, discuss any aspects of concern, agree on corrective actions and come to a decision or reschedule the assessment. (It's great to organise refreshments at this time – you can ask everyone to contribute. Some farmers are able to provide a few snacks and drinks.)
6. Ask participants to share all conversations so that you can note comments, concerns and knowledge shared.
7. Update everyone on corrective actions from the last assessment (if applicable)
8. Hand out checklists (Attachment 6). Explain that it is not a test but a way for participants to understand all aspects that make up an organic production system. They can note compliments or concerns and at the end their decision. These checklists serve as proof of participation for PGS groups.
9. Ask for consent to use photographs that can be used to promote the work of the PGS group.

## Farm walkabout

- Walk through the farm asking questions about:
- **Crops.** If maize or soy is listed you need to ask for proof that it is GMO free. Also check the farmer has listed all produce they plan to produce in the next 12 months.
- **Land.** If the farm cannot prove the land has been under organic management for 12 months for annuals and 18 months for perennials and pastures, look at alternative evidence that would satisfy the participants; examples include: The farmer's understanding of organic agriculture, the colour and smell of the soil in the beds, the quality of compost, the length of time the farmer has been following organic practises, an affidavit or declaration from the previous owners.

If there is not sufficient evidence of organic management or that the land has been left fallow, then an organic in-conversion approval would be appropriate. If the farm is moving from chemical agriculture to organic, the in-conversion status would be for 36 months.

## • **Soil fertility**

- **Compost:** There are a lot of different kinds of composting methods. Ask the farmer to describe in detail about how compost is made, what inputs are used and where they are from. If manure is used it cannot be from a factory farm.
- **Purchased compost:** If the purchased compost is not certified for use in organic agriculture, ask the supplier to provide the ingredient list. If the compost includes manure, find out the source of the manure which should be from non-industrial sources.
- **Soil:** Soil tests help a farmer identify imbalances in their soil. Not all farm assessments require a farm to provide an annual soil test. If there is a concern that either dumping or chemical activity could have taken place then ask for a test for chemicals or heavy metals. Test reports can be difficult to analyse. If you need help, ask your PGS network if you can send the report for comment.
- **Crop Rotation and Companion Planting:** Ask the farmer to describe their rotation process and point out companion plants.

## HELPFUL TIPS



**Compost:** Dig your hands into the compost, feel if it is warm, smell it – it should smell earthy. Look for signs of life. Check if ingredients in the compost have broken down and are not recognisable. A developing compost system is not a reason to deny certification but should be listed in the report to monitor its progress at the next assessment, or earlier if the participants request.

These practices are important for farm fertility.

- **Mulch:** Check the source of the mulch. If the farm is using straw, check that it is not chemically tainted. If it is, it cannot be used as mulch. The same applies to wood chips.
- **Green Manure:** Using green manure and digging it in keeps the soil fertile. Find out if the farmer plants oats, buckwheat or legumes.
- **Animal Welfare**
  - **Crop Assessment:** If this is a crop assessment and there are animals on the farm, check that the animals look healthy, that they are free to move, have sufficient space and have access to water. They need to comply with the minimum housing spaces in the SAOSO Standard (See Section 6 of the SAOSO Standard on Animal Husbandry).
  - **Livestock assessment:** If this is an animal husbandry (livestock) assessment, you will need to ask questions about the origin of the animals, the source of the feed and treatment of animals. Ask the question; are the animals able to express their “natural behaviour”.
  - **Seeds:** Quality organic seeds are difficult to find in South Africa. In the SAOSO Standard, conventional untreated seeds are permitted if organic seed is not available or of poor quality. There is allowance for a notifiable exception for treated seed if permission is requested in advance by the farmer. Should treated seed be used, PGS farmers are required to plant with a biological treatment like EM or worm castings (see Section 4.1 of the SAOSO Standard on Crop Production for more on seeds). Ask the farmer to describe their harvesting process if they keep seeds.
  - **Water:** If the farmer is using municipal water, no test is required. If there is a lot of chlorine in the municipal water, many farmers let it sit for at least 24 hours, ideally in the sun with no lid on, to allow the chlorine to evaporate. A water test is required for borehole water on the first assessment and thereafter when the participants identify a need.
  - **Nature- Biodiversity and ecosystem management:** The SAOSO Standard says a minimum of 10% of the farm’s total area should be dedicated to biodiversity. Fence lines, orchards, pathways, ponds, can all count towards this percentage.
  - **Plants- Pest and disease:** The poorer the soil the more inputs are needed to manage pests and diseases. Ask the farmer to lay out all the products so that you can take pictures and follow up with research needed to find out if the products are acceptable.
  - **Contamination risks:** Ask questions about the farm neighbours. On the drive to the farm make a mental note of what you see. If the farm is adjacent to a chemical farm then good buffers are needed. Most farmers

discuss their concerns with their neighbours.

- **Harvesting and packing:** View the packing areas looking out for the handwashing station and general cleanliness. In terms of products used, there are many eco-friendly products on the market. Regardless, washing down with water or white vinegar in between cleaning and packing is recommended.
- **Cleaning and sanitation:** Check the toilet facilities, there should be a basin and soap to wash hands.
- **Farm workers:** Invite farm workers to join the assessment. They are in touch with the soil and plants and should be encouraged to share their experience and knowledge. (See section 6.b of the SAOSO Standard for information on contracting farm workers).
- **Record keeping:** It is very common for smallholder farmers to have poor record keeping. A PGS farm assessment does not include a full financial audit. You are trying to assess through the examples provided that there is a system for recording purchased inputs, planting, harvesting and sales records. Should an investigation be required, the records will reflect the produce grown and sold from the farm and any inputs purchased for production.

### **Making the decision**

- Gather in a comfortable space and review the farm assessment

questionnaire to identify any outstanding information or documents that are needed. This is an important element of the farm assessment process but sometimes, at the end of the assessment, is rushed.

- Ask participants if they have any outstanding questions or concerns.
- Ask participants to complete and submit their checklists (**Attachment 6**). This is a way of ensuring that everybody is on the same page and to invite people to ask additional questions to the farmer if needed.
- Discuss any corrective actions and record them with timelines.
- Record any notifiable exceptions e.g. use of conventional seed. A notifiable exception does not automatically mean the farm cannot be approved as organic. Rather, and as long as it's noted and reported to PGS SA, farmers may be certified organic with a notifiable exception.
- As a group, come to a decision concerning certification (or refer to your committee depending on your rules)
  - Take into account the participation of the farmer in other farm assessments and annual meetings. Farmers need to be compliant with the rules of the group (in the SOPs)
  - If there are too many corrective actions or notifiable exceptions it may be better to reschedule. This can be handled by offering support from the farmers in the group to assist the farmer where they are not meeting organic production requirements.

- Take a group photograph of participants
- Record information on farm assessment, e.g. date of farm assessment; number of participants; approved organic or organic in-conversion or reschedule the assessment.
- Thank the farmer and participants and let them know that a draft report will be circulated for comment or corrections by all participants, including the farmer, within two weeks of the farm assessment and that the final report will be distributed to all.

### **Writing the report**

- Follow up on outstanding actions or information like farm records and attestation certificates for inputs.
- Complete participant comments on the farm assessment questionnaire including knowledge exchanges, corrective actions with timelines and notifiable exceptions on the farm assessment questionnaire.
- Note the number of participants and whether they are farmers, consumers, local markets, NGO reps, etc.
- Distribute to participants who attended the farm assessments, including the host farmer/s so that all can comment.
- If no corrections or additions are received within a specified time, send them to your committee or PGS group for confirmation.
- Upload pictures and files to the Google Drive folder that PGS SA set up for your PGS group (if your group is a PGS SA member).
- Update social media and website (if applicable).

### **d. Approval Confirmation**

Before confirming an approval made by the assessment team, the committee or PGS group can do a risk assessment when reviewing the report and documents submitted by the administrator. They will:

- ✓ Assess critical corrective actions and timelines
- ✓ Confirm notifiable exceptions permitted
- ✓ Assess any history of non-compliance
- ✓ Assess participation of the farmer in other farm assessments and group activities
- ✓ Decide if necessary to flag an additional assessment during the year
- ✓ Endorse the approval by the assessment team
- ✓ Issue certificates or approval letters

### **e. Rescheduling a Farm Assessment**

If the committee or group decides, after doing the risk assessment, that the farm is not ready to sell their products as organic they send a letter to the farmer suggesting that the assessment be rescheduled, stating their reasons. All participants in the farm assessment who have submitted their checklist must receive this communication.

### **f. Committee/Group Actions**

- Update the PGS farm assessment reporting log (**Attachment 8**) for review by committee at next meeting, including:
  - Farm details,
  - Outcome of farm assessment (including corrective actions),
  - Number of participants,

- Other PGS farms visited by the assessed farm,
- List notifiable exceptions (share with PGS SA), and
- Upload all documents to drive or file and store.

Although this seems like a lot of work – and it is – it is very helpful to be able to see the work of your farmers and your group at a glance. Also,

- If you start rotating the administrator function, it will help the committee/group ensure there is consistency in the assessments.
- It is an easy way to track farmer participation on other farm assessments.
- It is a way to report to PGS SA so that they have all the relevant information in one document.

## 4. EXAMPLES FROM PGS GROUPS THAT MANAGE PROCESSES DIFFERENTLY

The above guide will differ based on the group structure, which is informed by the community in which the group is created or exists. Examples of differences shared by groups are described below:

### a. Decisions: Adjudication/ Evaluation committee

Some groups supply mature urban and semi-urban markets where there is strong demand for certified organic products. They may use the PGS SA

templates and have a committee that drives the work of the group, but they differ in who makes the final decision on a farm assessment. Their committee reviews farm assessment reports from two experienced members present on the farm assessment as well as the completed checklists from participants and, based on the information supplied, does a risk assessment and makes the final decision on whether or not the farm is approved.

### b. Expert support: Extension officers

Other groups work closely with farmer associations and have extension officers who are trained in organic agriculture to assist in the assessment of farms. Farmers in the area join these assessments where training also takes place, often supported by NGOs operating in the area. Customers are welcome and groups hold events where consumers can visit the farms and meet the farmers.

### c. Skills development: Rotation of functions/mentorship

There are groups that rotate the roles within the group so that members' skills grow together. Every member takes a turn in administering a farm assessment and the secretarial functions are also rotated. These groups are often small and may have an NGO partner member where the PGS "office" functions are housed. Groups networked with NGOs also obtain assistance with ongoing training. Other groups have developed informal mentoring, with experienced administrators who guide inexperienced administrators through the first two assessments before managing their own.



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**IFOAM PGS Guidelines:**

It is important that producers are directly engaged in the day-to-day operations of their PGS, particularly in the certification, verification, and monitoring of the other farms and farmers. In the case of small initiatives (a few producers or local groups), all producers should be directly involved in all activities. In the case of larger initiatives, all producers should at least participate in peer reviews. However, elected persons may represent local groups of stakeholders at the final approval stage.

## 5. INSIGHTS ON INPUTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As the adoption of PGS in the country has grown, so has the need to assist groups with understanding what inputs are allowed in the SAOSO Standard (**Attachment 4**) as well as accessing suppliers of acceptable sources of these inputs.

If inputs are produced from and used on a farm, there is no need for formal certification. When purchased externally, inputs must be certified and must be registered with the Registrar's Office: Act 36, 1947. Certified organic inputs in South Africa are often certified to international standards such as the EU and the NOP. These are acceptable for use.

If there is none, call the supplier or manufacturer of the product and ask them to send you the certificate or attestation. Check that the dates are valid and send them to PGS SA so as to inform their database.

If the supplier does not have any supporting documentation, ask for a

detailed list of ingredients and check against the Appendix list of the SAOSO Standard (**Attachment 4**) on whether or not those ingredients are allowed. If a substance is not listed in the SAOSO Standard, it is not an acceptable organic input.

### a. Common issues relating to inputs allowed in the SAOSO standard.

#### Seeds

Many farmers struggle to find organic seed. Because of the lack of supply and the dominance of the seed market by a handful of global multinational companies, there is an allowance for the use of conventional untreated seed. There are some seed varieties that are difficult to find untreated. Seed companies can be approached to keep aside untreated seed for organic farmers.

When weighing up the pressures on whether or not to take the route of purchasing conventional seeds, farmers and groups should consider that their demand for organic seed will stimulate supply and provide affordable access to organic seed. Should conventional seeds be used, the farmer should supply



**Look out for one of the accredited certifying bodies logos on the packaging.**



the group with a plan to secure organic seeds in the future. Groups should also consider a seed exchange/swap at their annual general meetings.

### **Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)**

In the area of hybrid and genetically modified seeds, we are inundated by information that is confusing, often inaccurate and misleading. Genetically modified seeds are not permitted in organic agriculture. There are organisations with good reputation who share accurate information within our network e.g. the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). This organisation has developed several factsheets (**Attachment 11**) explaining the technology in a clear way and showing the differences between farmers' varieties, hybrids and GMOs.

### **Animal feed**

The SAOSO Standard states that animals must be fed organic feed. The commercial production of genetically modified maize and soya which is allowed in South Africa, has had a major effect on organic livestock farmers as a large proportion of animal feed includes these crops.

*Notifiable exceptions may be permitted in regions where organic feed production is in an early stage of development or temporarily deficient, or in cases of unpredictably low crop production on the farm or in the region*

Within the organic network, there is supply of GMO-free animal feed, although it is not certified organic as a portion of the feed

might still be from a conventional source. As part of its plan, PGS SA will be building a database of acceptable suppliers of animal feed and can be contacted to access this information. The alternative is for PGS groups to develop their own local feed supply chain; this is really an option to consider, and it will create local economic opportunities.

PGS groups can motivate for an increase in the percentage of non-organic and GMO-free feed allowed in the standard.

*Notifiable exception: Operators may feed a limited percentage of non-organic under specific conditions in the following cases (See Section 6.5. of the SAOSO Standard):*

- *Organic feed is of inadequate quantity or quality;*
- *Areas where organic agriculture is in early stages of development;*
- *Grazing of non-organic grass or vegetation during seasonal migration.*

*In no such case may the percentage of non-organic feed exceed 10% dry matter per ruminant and 15% dry matter per non-ruminant calculated on an annual basis. Operators may feed a higher percentage of non-organic feed for a limited time under specific conditions, following extreme weather conditions or manmade or natural disasters beyond the control of the operator.*

In the same way as it applies to seed, demand from the organic sector for organic animal feed is the catalyst for change.

## **Manure**

The SAOSO Standard states that animal manure from “conventional intensive” farms is not permitted for use on an organic farm, including in compost made on farm or purchased, unless prior permission is requested from the control body. In PGS, the farmer would need to get permission from their group. The group would then share this information with PGS SA.

*From Appendix 2 in the SAOSO Standard: Farmyard manure, slurry and urine: Shall not constitute the main source of nitrogen in the absence of complementary and additional nitrogen generating practices on farm and shall not be from conventional intensive livestock production systems without prior permission from the control body.*

*Definitions of these terms from Section B of the SAOSO Standard are copied below:*

**Intensive farming:** means those practices that do not fit within the “factory farming” or “extensive farming”.

**Extensive farming:** means farming that corresponds to at least the stocking densities as indicated in these standards and includes

the prescribed outdoor area requirements for the animals.

**Conventional:** means any material, production or processing practice that is not organic or organic “in conversion”.

**Factory farming:** means industrial management systems that are heavily reliant on veterinary and feed inputs not permitted in organic agriculture and/or where the animals are hindered from moving freely around 360°, or kept in obscurity or deprived of litter and thus include animals kept in batteries or fattening of chickens with more than 25kg weight/m<sup>2</sup>.

Some farmers and groups have found it difficult to access acceptable sources of manure. The best option is to use the manure from your own farm or from other farmer members in your PGS group. Manure from local free range production has been accepted by groups as it is classified as being from an “extensive” farm source, i.e. the farmer complies with the number of animals in the indoor and outdoor spaces as described in Appendix 6 of the Standard. As soon as inputs are purchased from an off-farm source, it creates complexity as establishing whether the input is really “organic” requires investigation.

## **HELPFUL TIPS**



A well-constructed compost is heated to 64 degrees Celsius and is understood to break down pathogens that may be present in manure. There are, however, concerns that the development of life and worms in the compost may be slow if the manure is from animals that have recently been dewormed.

## **Minerals**

Groups have shared their difficulties in sourcing minerals from acceptable sources. Minerals sourced from mines using a chemical extraction process are not permitted in the Standard. These sources are much cheaper than purchasing naturally extracted minerals making it difficult for farmers to comply due to costs. There are WhatsApp groups that can help with suggesting alternatives. Get in touch with your network.

## **Pest control**

In the experience of groups on farm assessments, many farmers make their own preparations to deter pests from their plants. We know that these “pests” are indicators that soil health needs attention. However, many farmers,

especially farmers establishing their farms or rehabilitating neglected or eroded soil, have problems with pests that need to be dealt with in order to maintain production and keep their businesses going.

A common homemade recipe is garlic, chilli and Sunlight liquid or bar soap. Sunlight soap was recommended in the 1950s for use in natural biological control but when you look at the ingredients on the bottle of Sunlight today, you will see they do not appear in the appendices of the Standard. Sunlight is used as a “surfactant” so that the homemade mixture sticks to the plant. A good resource to take along on farm assessments and provide advice on organic pest control is the Lindle Booklet (**Attachment 9**).

Some alternatives allowed in the Standard are simple soap (which can be bought in most hardware stores) or vegetable oil.

There are commercial alternatives to Sunlight e.g. Better Earth Dishwashing Liquid (which is approved by the Soil Association, Ecocert and BDIH); Pure Simple Castile Liquid Cleaner has three simple ingredients allowed in the Standard – water, olive oil and potash (also called lye or potassium hydroxide). Whatever is used, check the ingredients are listed in Section C of the SAOSO Standard (**Attachment 4**).



## **6. REFERENCES AND DOCUMENTS OF SUPPORT**

The following relate to areas identified by groups where farmers are not compliant with the Standard.

### **a. Poor or absent record keeping**

Farmers are required to keep records of their planting, harvesting, inputs and sales. Many groups report poor compliance with this requirement.



Below is a record-keeping method shared for planting and input records. This does not substitute from having a hard copy record book, but does facilitate knowledge exchange on farm assessments.

1. Collect 2 litre milk bottles
2. Write (with a permanent marker) on one side of the milk bottle
  - a. Name of crop
  - b. Date planted
  - c. Inputs added
3. Amount and date harvested to be written up on a separate log linked to sales
4. Stick on bottle on a stick in front of the bed you are planting
5. At the next crop rotation, turn milk bottle and repeat

The information on the milk bottles can be transcribed into a ledger or photographs taken and logged. Besides assisting with record keeping, this method is very helpful for farmers when assessing the performance of their crops against the history of what was planted in the bed.



Farm maps drawn by hand are an important tool used by some groups to describe all the aspects of a farm and its production in preparation for a farm assessment.

## b. Areas to focus on in the farm assessment while unpacking the design and layout of the farm

1. **The sun:** See the path of the sun on site and shade casted.
2. **Location of trees on site:** Placement of the main trees on site in relation to production area.
3. **Boundary fences or property boundary:** The borders of the site and any opportunities to maximise edge of the property often good for windbreaks or buffer zones.
4. **Water Catchment and management:** The source of water and the opportunity to store, slow, sink and spread water on site.
5. **Soil Type:** Quality of soil and content of organic matter in the soil.

6. **Slope of the land:** The slope of the land which would influence the land design process for the site e.g. swales.
7. **Biodiversity or indigenous plants or trees:** Noting any specialist or unique biodiversity that are indigenous to the specific biome.
8. **Production areas:** Areas zoned for primary production and animal husbandry.
9. **Nutrition cycle on farm:** Locations of composting sites and fertility systems located in relation to the production zones.
10. **Energy flow of the site:** How the site is laid out in relation to the primary production zone and slope of the land. Fertility at the top of the land for example.

### c. Contracting farm workers

The SAOSO Standard includes a list of social justice clauses with which farmers are required to comply. Farmers are legally obliged to comply with the Basic Conditions of Employment and the Sectoral Determination 13 for farm workers.

While many PGS farmers embrace these obligations, some have informal arrangements with their farm workers and do not comply with requirements regarding contracts.

The focus of the PGS assessment group during the farm assessment is to ensure that the farmer is aware of and provides all workers with fair working conditions, such as the prescribed minimum wages, maximum hours of work, overtime, leave, etc. and follows the correct procedures, such as when terminating the

employment of a worker. These aspects are a requirement and are described in the SAOSO standard.

A copy of this guide should be kept by the administrator of the farm assessment in order to share with the farmer these resources to enable compliance.

Groups have shared on many assessments that the inclusion of farm workers in the farm walkabout not only provides a platform for further information on the production practices on the farm but also gives the team an opportunity to observe the relationship between farmer and worker.

To assist with resolving any non-compliance where it occurs, we share the following attachments (Attachment 12) containing useful information for farmers employing farm workers.

## 7. CONCLUSION

You do not have to be an expert in organic agriculture to administer a PGS farm assessment as you have peer farmers that likely have a good understanding of organic production. Your job is to make sure that the right questions are asked in order for the participants to be able to make their decision and to record the interactions and conclusions of the farm assessment.

## Pollinator Quote:

“We are all connected. Our focus is on success. Failure of one of us is a failure for all, it’s in all our interest to stand strong behind the integrity of PGS and our declaration to follow the principles of organic agriculture.”

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