

Participatory guarantee systems: organic certification to empower farmers and strengthen communities

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Abstract: *Participatory guarantee systems (PGS) can provide guarantees to consumers while avoiding the entry barriers of third-party certification. This study investigates farmers' motivations for, and experiences and outcomes from, participation in PGS. Interviews with 84 farmers from seven countries were analyzed in light of empowerment theory and social process theory. The results suggest that participation in PGS can empower farmers by basing their activities on long-lasting social processes and connection to their communities. Combining tradition and bottom-up collaboration within local level social structures enables PGS to overcome their challenges and ensure their future as an alternative system to third-party certification.*

Keywords: *participatory guarantee systems; organic; organic certification; social processes; community development*