**Role and Responsibility of Local Group**

a. Organize farmers in the group and each member individually sign PGS organic pledge and group agreement.

b. Provide copies of PGS standards, operational manual and appraisal forms to all the members in the local language. If farmers are illiterate then they need to be explained details and standards orally and through pictorial representations.

c. Prepare necessary field documents with farm history. Each group shall maintain such documents in a group file comprising of application form, signed pledge, signed agreement, farm maps showing locations with GPS coordinates in respect of each member and last one year history on input usage and management practices.

d. Elect Group leader and core team of peer reviewers (minimum 3 in 5 members group). There is no upper limit. It will be an optimal situation if all members of the group can participate in peer reviews, as this contributes to capacity building and information exchange between farmers, and reduces conflicts of interests.

e. Participate in the activities of any other registered PGS group to understand the functioning of the PGS Group.

f. Implement standard requirements on the farms of all the group members and obtain endorsement from the other registered group. This endorsement is needed only once at the time of registration.

g. Register group on PGS-India website and obtain registration approval from the Regional Council.

h. Contact nearby PGS group for endorsement

i. In case no PGS registered group is there in the vicinity for endorsement then State Agencies (State Agriculture Department District Officer) may be requested to verify the requirement and submit necessary verification report toRC. Else request RC to do verification and grant registration approval. RCOFs can also be requested for verification and endorsements of Local Groups for their recognition by Regional Council. RCs can endorse the groups only after physical verification/ inspection.

j. In case of Groups constituted under some Government Programme (such as PKVY) endorsement of the group shall be done by the authorised District officer/scheme in-charge of the implementing state Government Department.

k. Organize time to time meetings and maintain attendance register. Participation of members in these meetings is a mandatory activity and is an indication of dedication of the member to the cause of group’s guarantee scheme. There should be at least 2-4 times a year (2 for perennial crop group and 4 times a year for annual crop group) compulsory meetings at key times of the year depending on the season, the crops, etc. One/two for peer appraisal planning and one/two for decision making.

l. Every member needs to attend at least 50% of the meetings in a year and signin attendance register.

m. Advise each other and share information to improve the capacity of the group as a whole.

n. Organize regular training courses by inviting practicing organic farmers from other groups, RC members or experts of other State Govt and Non-Govt agencies.

o. Chalk out peer appraisal strategy and ensure timely appraisal of each farm at least twice a year. Peer reviewers will ensure to complete Peer review appraisal form, sign and submit to the group leader. Each farmer is to be appraised by at least a two member team. Inclusion of consumer’s representative increases the credibility and trust.

p. Inspection of peer reviewer’s farms to be done by another peer reviewer group. To increase credibility and trust the group may have any number of peer reviewers.

q. All peer appraisal sheets in respect of each group member needs to be maintained in hard copy or digitally by the local group for future supervision activity. These are to be made available in the public domain and provided to RC or statutory authority upon demand during physical supervision

r. At appropriate times the group decides which farmers are to be certified. Separate out farmers which are yet to comply with the certification requirements. List out defaulters and impose sanctions.

s. Organize final decision meeting, explain the peer appraisal results to all the members. Collectively declare the group as conforming to PGS standards (in case of small groups, up to 10 members). If the group is large then elect a sub-group or certification committee, comprising of 5 or more members, which may review the results and decide upon the certification. Approval of majority group members is required only in the cases of negative decision (denial of certification or decertification). Full member body can also serve as an appeal body against the decision of the certification committee.

t. At appropriate time prepare peer appraisal summary sheet with list of farmers declared certified with details of crops and expected quantity of produce.

u. Upload peer appraisal summary sheet for the entire group on the PGS-India website along with necessary group decision and send signed hard copy to RC through post.

v. On being approved by RC on-line, RC shall issue the certificate.

**4.3 Role and Responsibility of Individual Producer**

In cases where an individual farmer (or a group of farmers less than 5) is interested inPGS-India certification and there is no group in the vicinity and no additional community members are ready to form a group, the individual producers can directly apply to the Regional Council for registration.

a. Make an application to available Regional Council with signed application form, pledge and a signed declaration stating their current inability to form a local group

b. Invite other PGS-India group members to endorse the application after physical visit to farm. In case if no

PGS-India group is accessible then request the Regional Council to physically verify the farm

c. Obtain PGS-India operational guidelines and standards from near by group or from RC

d. Request the RC to approve the registration and obtain user ID and password for PGS-India website.

e. Request the Peer appraisers of nearby group to physically inspect the farm and fill peer appraisal form. Filled peer appraisal farm to be submitted to Regional Council. In case if no group is close by then request RC to do physical inspection and grant certification.

f. Individual producer registration is an interim arrangement and the producer must initiate efforts to bring in other members from the village community to form the group in due course (maximum 2 years) and transform individual status to group status. In case if an individual farmer is unable to form a group even after 2 years, then Regional Council will attach the farmers with the nearest group.

**4.4 Off-farm processing and handling units/facilities away from PGS-groups**

To ensure collection, aggregation, processing and handling of PGS certified organic produce from one or more PGS groups for collective processing and trading, PGS- India programme provides for specific provisions for approval of stand-alone facilities away from the PGS groups. As such activities are not participatory, the approval system shall be based on conformity assessment system.

a. Only the Regional Councils authorized for “Off-farm processing and handling Approval” can register such units and approve their facilities for organic processing after necessary conformity assessment.

b. Applicant processing and trading unit shall be legally registered body with necessary licenses and approval from FSSAI and/ or such other licensing authorities as required by law of the land

c. Have necessary infrastructure for intended processing and handling

d. Fully aware and conversant with PGS-India standards and certification requirements and have developed operational manual, formats and checklists for entire operation, flow of material through the process and capable of maintaining uninterrupted audit trail starting from receipt of raw material(s), processing and handling operation, packing and finally up to sale to non-PGS operator or consumer.

e. Processing and handling agencies shall have to grant full access to documentation, recipes, raw material and processed products inventory and sale and purchase records to Regional Council. With holding of information, documentation and physical access to facilities may result in denial ofcertification.

f. PGS Secretariat will monitor such units on periodic basis