

A close-up photograph of a smiling woman, likely of Vietnamese descent, wearing a traditional conical hat and a colorful patterned headscarf. She is holding a large bundle of fresh green vegetables, possibly green beans or asparagus, which are tied together with a yellow band. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the vegetables and the hat's structure.

rikolto

PGS development in Vietnam

Laos, September 2018

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Rikolto at a glance

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- 📍 Vietnam



PGS introduction

First:

- ❖ Firstly introduced for organic vegetable by ADDA (2008) following IFOAM model;
- ❖ VECO (now Rikolto with diverse funds – DGD, CHF, Alisea, City of Leuven..) took it up and introduced to safe vegetable (2010)

And now:

- ❖ In the North: 4 organic PGS sites, 6 safe PGS sites
- ❖ In the Central: 1 organic PGS site
- ❖ In the South: 1 organic PGS site
- ❖ And more are coming soon...



What do people think about PGS?

GOOD:

- **Affordable & applicable** for smallholder farmers, **reliable** for consumers
- **Participation** of **all stakeholders**, particularly **producers** and **consumers**
- Suitable for **domestic market**, where all stakeholders can participate in quality control
- Environmental **pollution minimization**
- **Sustainability** of agricultural production
- **Biodiversity** protection
- **Market access** improvement



What do people think about PGS?

NOT VERY GOOD:

- **Limited** farmers' **knowledge** and **skills**
- **Difficulties** in organic **production**
 - **Low production yield** and **diversity** of PGS vegetables
- **Limitation** in **market, financial,** and **communication**
- **Not yet recognised** by government & consumers as a reliable control system.
- Low consumer **engagement**
 - Weak **linkage**
 - Not very active **participation** of consumer associations



Lessons learnt

- A **stable and strong market** is a key success factor for PGSs. PGSs that can sell their produce to regular buyers have grown in membership and production area over the years.
- PGSs that have invested in **local promotion activities** through media, workshops, seminars, a store at the local market and agro-tourism are better-known by consumers, more trusted and have better markets.
- Some PGSs are at a standstill because of the lack of **leadership** of their Local Coordination Board. The very low allowance provided as a compensation for their efforts doesn't incentivise them to act.
- In order to grow and become sustainable, PGSs must be able to **mobilise funds** from their members and from PGS vegetable sales.



PGS policy brief

Some key recommendations	National	Provincial	District
Analyse the Vietnamese institutional and policy framework related to quality assurance to identify where PGS could be integrated.	X	X	
Identify suitable areas for PGS development and include them in government planning .	X	X	X
Provide financial support to new PGSs to support initial training, sample residue analysis and investment costs.		X	X
Support PGS through comprehensive and participatory training programmes targeting farmers' organic/safe production capacity, business and organisational capacity.		X	

Policy Brief



Building trust in safe and organic vegetable chains through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS)

Key messages

- PGS is a **low-cost quality assurance mechanism** based on the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the inspection and monitoring process.
- After 10 years of implementation in Vietnam, most PGSs are yielding **positive results** in terms of food safety, environmental sustainability, community building and higher income for farmers. At the same time, 2 PGSs are currently struggling to maintain their operations in the absence of strong leadership.
- Efforts should focus on **securing stable markets** for PGS vegetables, mobilising internal resources for PGSs' financial sustainability and increasing the visibility of PGS with consumers.
- PGS should be **officially recognised** by the Government of Vietnam and included in its food safety and agricultural policies.

Context

Vietnam's agri-food systems are undergoing a rapid and deep transformation. While consumers have increasingly demanding needs regarding the quality, traceability and safety of their food, the supply of safe agricultural products is still largely unstable and expensive.

A reliable and trustworthy **quality assurance mechanism** is a key condition to provide consumers with the confidence that quality standards are met. Third-party certifications are often the method of choice to certify organic and safe food products. However, they are not always suitable for small-scale operators and local market channels because of the **high costs** involved, the paperwork required, and the **complexity** of their requirements. In Vietnam, while the total vegetable production area is estimated to be about 735,000 ha, only 63,000 ha (8%) have a VietGAP certificate (Dao Bach Khoa et. al. 2015).

To address these challenges, farmers, NGOs, and their partners have sought alternative certification systems that are better adapted to farmers' local contexts. In 2008, the Danish NGO ADDA was the first organisation to introduce Participatory Guarantee Systems to certify organic vegetables in Vietnam. Ten years later, PGS is implemented in 6 provinces and 9 districts, and involves approximately 400 farmers.

As part of the project "Capitalisation of Participatory Guarantee System experiences in Vietnam for upscaling & institutionalisation", Vietnam National University of Agriculture and Rikolto investigated all the existing PGSs in Vietnam to assess their strengths and weaknesses and come up with recommendations on how to improve PGS in the Vietnamese context.



Future development of PGS

We as Rikolto will:

- Support to expand safe vegetable PGS to more areas (North and Central) including consumer awareness education
- Develop human resource for PGS (ToT approach)
- Pilot PGS for SRP standards
- Introduce PGS to private sector
- Accelerate the governmental recognition - advocacy

What we need to make this come true?

- **Cooperation from PGS “sector” in Vietnam, region and internationally for learning/synergies;**
- **Additional financial support**





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