

# Insights into Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in Latin America

## A Paraguayan Case Study



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### Introduction

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are grassroots producer associations implementing “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, 2008, p.1).

PGS have gained increasing importance as a mechanism to provide domestic organic quality assurance for smallholder producers in the global south. In 2022, 323 PGS initiatives were active in 78 countries with more than **1.3 million producers** certified (Anselmi & Moura e Castro, 2023).



Fig. 1: Vegetable garden from a PGS producer in Paraguay (Hruschka)

### Aims

An exploratory study of the:

- A) Organizational structure of the PGS;
- B) Participation of PGS stakeholders;
- C) Social networks of PGS producers;
- D) Knowledge exchange within the PGS.

Key Elements of PGS  
(IFOAM - Organics International, 2008)

### Methods

**Case Study:** Paraguay Orgánico PGS “PGS PYOrgánico” and the two participating producer organizations (Oñondivé and ESCAP).

**Data:** Semi-structured interviews (n=26), producer surveys (n=26) and participant observations (n=3); online and onsite data collection between May to September 2022.

**Analysis:** Qualitative content analysis, descriptive quantitative statistics, Social Network Analysis.



Fig. 2: PGS PYOrgánico producer (Hruschka)

### Conclusion

The case study shows a producer organization with characteristics contrary to the proposed structure and elements of a PGS initiative. The results underline some of the challenges of implementing participatory producer organizations, the value of knowledge brokers and the importance of knowledge growth for smallholder producers in Latin America.

### Results

#### A) Organisation



Fig. 3: Organigram of the PGS PYOrgánico (own elaboration)

- Top-down organisational structure of the PGS.
- PGS managed by Paraguay Orgánico, producers have no say in the organisational structure or its implementation.
- 45% (n=26=100%) producers unaware of the functions of the PGS.

#### B) Participation

- Only four producers participate in the PGS internal control system.
- No other participation possibilities for producers.
- No common PGS activities across stakeholder groups.

#### C) Social Networks

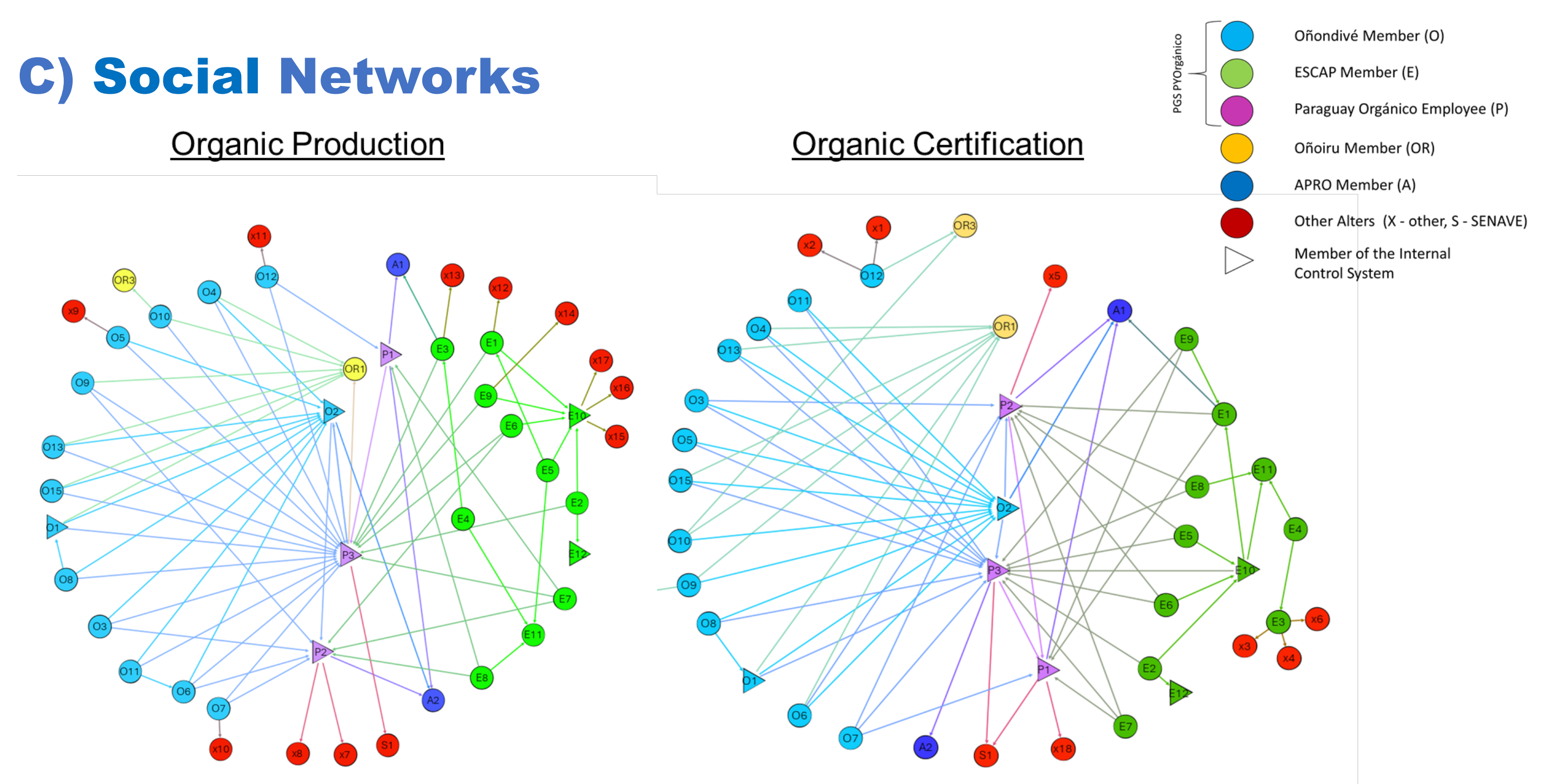


Fig. 4: Social network of knowledge sources for organic production (left) and organic certification (right) of PGS PYOrgánico producers

- Both networks primarily centralized on three stakeholders (P2, P3, O2).
- Segregated networks between the two producer organisations.

#### D) Knowledge Exchange

- Producer incentive for participation: knowledge gain by trainings through Paraguay Orgánico.
- Low diversity of sources of knowledge for organic production and certification.
- Producers knowledge exchange limited by low perceived understanding of organic production and certification.



Fig. 5: Training provided to PGS members by a Paraguay Orgánico employee (Hruschka)