National and International Events

PGS Consultative Meeting held on Saturday 29 November, 2008, at IARI Campus, Pusa, New Delhi - A meeting of the Participatory Guarantee System Organic India Council [PGSOIC] members, representatives of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements [IFOAM] and other NGOs with the representatives of the Government of India's Ministry of Agriculture was convened at 14.00 hours (2.00 P.M.) on Saturday the 29th November, 2008 in the Seminar Hall of the Agriculture Extension and Economics Department, IARI campus, Pusa, New Delhi, on the sidelines of ICCOA- NCOF led India Organic Trade Fair 2008. Mr. Miguel Braganza made a presentation on PGS in India, made through the participatory process with inputs from Dr. Claude Alvares, Mr. John Mathew and Mr. Joy Daniel. It was informed that there are already 180 “Local Groups”, consisting of five or more farmers each, operating in India under the PGSOIC umbrella through nine Regional Councils. The “Basic Standards” are similar to those adopted by NPOP from the IFOAM documents on PGS in operation in many countries including USA, Brazil and New Zealand. Currently, the major growth centers of PGS are Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamilnadu. The states of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala have made a beginning and states of Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa have shown great interest. North East Indian states have initiated the process of harmonizing PGS with their organic shifting cultivation systems known as “jhum”. The standards, pledge and appraisal formats are available in English, Hindi and six other Indian languages. Products with the PGS logo on the package as a symbol of farmer-guaranteed, PGS endorsed “Organic” content, are already in the market. Coffee from Keystone Foundation, Groundnut oil from Timbaktu Collective and Millets from Deccan Development Society were on display at both, the IOFT and the consultative meeting. Initiating the discussions, Dr. A.K. Yadav Director, NCOF stated that the Government of India would support the growth of “Participatory Guarantee System” or PGS and would be willing to participate in an advisory capacity, if a suitable structure is agreed on. It would be necessary for the PGSOIC to become a legal “body” by registering as a Society, Trust or Company under the appropriate Act in India so that an identifiable structure is available for interaction with the Government agencies. The PGSOIC should be an independent body. Budgetary provision need to be made. There are costs when the institutional upgradation takes place and these have to be budgeted. Ms. Vanaja Ramprasad Member World Board, IFOAM raised the issue of the farmers’ participation in the planning and decision making processes if a central structure is agreed on. PGS is about organic growth of the farmers and goes beyond mere certification of products to issues of livelihoods and eco-restoration for the common good. Ms. Louise Luttikholt of IFOAM explained that under PGS practices are similar but the documentation is much simpler and farmer friendly. “IFOAM supports and promotes PGS”. She informed that PGS is used and/or recognized as “organic” in many countries. Mr. Joy Daniel, Secretary PGSOIC explained that the PGS process was that of “mentoring” and not “monitoring” as in third party certification. Mr. K. Tachinamurthy and Mr. S.Kiran explained how there is capacity building through hand-holding to enable farmer to reach the standards set by PGS. Ms. Louise Luttikholt stated that the application of the “Basic Standards” to the processes in PGS assured the minimum standards of product quality. The need for random testing for pesticide residues was not felt necessary for the organic produce in the PGS system however, some members advocated random testing of the labeled products to ensure integrity. Mr. Sanjeev Gupta, Joint Secretary [INM], Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, suggested that it may be possible for the Government to endorse “PGS Organic” through some executive order, without the need to legislate for organic produce in the domestic market. Provision can be made to support PGS but for this modalities and