



TERMS OF REFERENCE

**International Conference on Advancing Institutionalization of the
Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) in Vietnam
Hanoi, Vietnam
September 17-19, 2013**

I. Background and Rationale

VECO Vietnam has been undertaking the Sustainable Agricultural Chain Development (SACD) Program in North Vietnam since 2008 and is due to conclude by the end of 2013. Over the past 3-4 years, VECO has promoted a mechanism for quality assurance on safe vegetable chains in the Provinces of Lang Son and Phu Tho among the farmer organizations it is supporting. With the technical assistance of the Provincial Plant Protection Departments (PPDs) in these two provinces and coaching support by VECO, the farmer organizations have applied the participatory guarantee system (PGS). Both cooperatives - the Tan Duc Safe Vegetable Cooperative and the Na Chuong Cooperative - are running Local Coordinating Committees (LCCs) tasked to enforce the standards and procedures set-forth in the PGS. Having been convinced with the advantages of this internal guarantee system, PGS logos have been developed and displayed prominently in selling stalls that were established around the cities of Viet Tri (Phu Tho Province) and Lang Son (Lang Son Province). Vegetables sold by the members of the two cooperatives are now commanding 15-30% higher selling prices compared to vegetables produced through conventional methods.

With the good news being heard about PGS in Phu Tho, the adjacent Province of Vinh Phuc has sought the assistance of Phu Tho PPD to replicate PGS in its province. Vinh Phuc became attracted to PGS because the Provincial Government has made vegetable production one of its priority programs in agricultural development and they need a quality control system. Responding to this need, the Phu Tho PPD, with some financial support by VECO, is now rendering technical assistance to the PPD of Vinh Phuc Province in order to mainstream PGS in its vegetable production program. A manual on PGS replication has been developed out of this partnership and guiding Vinh Phuc in its work on PGS.

Outside Phu Tho, Lang Son and Vinh Phuc Provinces, one of the VECO partners, the VINASTAS has introduced PGS in six other provinces in North Vietnam as part of its consumer education program. This promotion is gaining interests from various quarters, such as consumers, private chain actors (supermarkets), research and extension agencies, parents and other stakeholders. VINASTAS¹ is motivated to expand these educational events to other provinces in Central and South Vietnam but resources needed are beyond the provision of VECO.

Two other partners of VECO have been engaged to undertake action research and multi-stakeholder dialogues on food safety and PGS at the national level. Most recently, IPSARD² and CASRAD³ produced a Policy Brief on “Management and Safety Certification for Vegetable Production of Smallscale Farm Households in Vietnam” aimed as a tool for influencing policy and decision makers

¹ VINASTAS is a national consumer association in Vietnam with Chapters at the Provincial level.

² IPSARD = Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development.

³ CASRAD = Center for Agrarian Systems Research and Development.

on certification and food safety. These advocacy interventions need to be sustained and broadened to effect more meaningful changes in the policy environment aimed at greater benefits to farmers and consumers.

At the national level, food safety has recently become a major issue and topic of discussions with the passage of the *“Food Safety Law”* which took effect on 01 July 2011. Being new, the implementing guidelines is under formulation, and its absence is creating some confusion among actors and stakeholders. Although the government has promoted the VietGAP (Vietnam Good Agricultural Practices) as a tool for food safety standard, this system is too expensive and complicated for smallholder producers to comply. It has been seen to not work for vegetable producers in the country, most of which are small scale. An alternative system suitable to smallholder producers is therefore needed. The PGS, as experienced by VECO and ADDA⁴, presents a better choice for smallholder producers but has not been officially recognized by the Vietnamese Government. Without any official recognition, the PGS cannot be used widely in the country and Government resources cannot be invested thereto. While there is a PGS Network operating in Vietnam in collaboration with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), and formerly with ADDE, the Network is relatively young and limited in operation. It is yet to engage with active policy advocacy work on PGS. Clearly, various initiatives on PGS are gaining grounds but more could be done towards its institutionalization in Vietnam.

Collaboration with Both ENDS

Both ENDS is an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) that works towards a sustainable future for our planet. It identifies and strengthens civil society organizations (CSOs), mostly in developing countries that come up with sustainable solutions to environmental and poverty-related issues. Building on such effective alternatives, Both ENDS create and support strategic networks capable of promoting social-environmental interests. At the same time it directly influences policies and promotes its vision in fora that matter, both on national and international levels.

In its meeting and discussions with VECO Vietnam in late 2012, Both ENDS agreed to cooperate on the theme of PGS certification system. Further it expressed willingness to assist in organizing an international conference in Vietnam on PGS. Both ENDS is co-funding this International Conference.

II. Objectives of the Conference

The general objective of the conference is to consolidate the gains of VECO and partners in promoting and advocating the PGS towards its institutionalization in Vietnam. Specifically, this event aims to:

- a. Develop a platform for sharing and learning among practitioners, supporters, policy and decision-makers, donors, consumers, private chain actors, and other key stakeholders about PGS implementation; and
- b. Formulate and issue a joint statement by participants on the relevance and application of PGS on family farmers in general, and with Vietnamese smallholder farmers in particular.

⁴ ADDA = Agricultural Development Denmark Asia

III. Participants

Participants from about five countries implementing PGS will be invited, together with practitioners, researchers, extension officers, policy makers, consumers, private chain actors and donors from Vietnam. A total of about 30 participants are expected to attend this conference: 20 from Vietnam and 10 from other select countries.

IV. Schedule of the Conference

The Conference will be held in Hanoi, Vietnam on September 17-19, 2013 and includes a half-day field visit to organic and safe vegetable farms where PGS is being implemented by smallholder farmer groups/associations.

V. Methodology of the Conference

Planning and implementation of the conference involve three phases:

A. Preparation and pre-conference Phase:

1. Formation of the Steering Committee chaired by VECO. Expected members are representatives of the PGS Network Vietnam, MARD, I/NGO, private sector and consumer groups (Both ENDS will serve as adviser to the Steering Committee). The role and functions of the Steering Committee are as follows:
 - a. Overall supervision of the international Conference
 - b. Finalize the programme (content and methodology) of the Conference
 - c. Develop guidelines for presentation by participants. Presentations will focus on PGS principles/concepts, practice and relevant studies
 - d. Select participants and presenters in coordination with Both ENDS
 - e. Review draft presentations by invited presenters
 - f. Select sites to be visited by the participants

The Steering Committee, composed of 5-6 members, is expected to meet a total of four half-days, or approximately 12 hours.

2. Selection by VECO of the Conference Organizer cum Facilitator using the criteria in Section VII. The Conference Organizer cum Facilitator reports directly to VECO and his/her role and functions are defined in Section VI.

B. Conference Proper:

1. The Conference Organizer cum Facilitator implements the approved Conference Programme of Activities and Schedule. Key parts and tentative structure of the conference are as follows:
 - Day 1: Opening Ceremony
 - Presentation by participants
 - Workshop group discussions & plenary
 - Day 2: Presentation by participants (continuation)
 - Workshop group discussions & plenary
 - Video showing on PGS
 - Field visit to PGS sites – participants divided into groups
 - Day 3: Discussion of field visits by respective groups

Presentation of group outputs and plenary discussion
Formulation of joint statement by participants
Closing program

2. Presentation by participants - six to eight selected participants will render presentations on their experiences from different countries in implementing PGS. Presentations need to comply with the guidelines provided to them before the conference. The Organizer cum Facilitator will capture the key points and highlights of each presentation.
3. Video showing on PGS – the video produced by VECO on the PGS in Vietnam will be presented in the conference to trigger further discussions and to advocate for official recognition of PGS by the VN Government.
4. Field visit – participants will visit some organic and safe vegetable projects sites applying PGS to take some actual field situation in the VN context. The sites will be decided by the Steering Committee. Project sites of VECO and ADDA are candidate locations.
5. Formulating the joint statement by participants – as advocacy call, the participants will formulate a statement about the relevance and appropriateness of PGS on small-scale producers in VN, including its significance to consumers’ health and food safety and with the environment as a whole. This statement will draw from the summary and conclusions of the conference. All participants will be encouraged to affix their signatures on the joint statement.
6. Documentation of the conference outputs and discussions will be the responsibility of the Organizer cum Facilitator. VECO will extend staff support in this process.
7. At the end of first and second days’ sessions, the Organizer cum Facilitator meets with the Steering Committee for brief reflection and re-planning. Adjustments will be taken as necessary to ensure effective course of the conference.

C. Post-conference Phase:

1. Post-meeting by the Steering Committee. A reflection meeting of the Steering Committee shall be held after the conference. The Conference Organizer will join the meeting to document the highlights of the meeting which will form part of the Conference report.
2. Report preparation. Summary documentation of the conference proceedings, compilation of materials presented and workshop findings and outputs will be prepared and consolidated by the Conference Organizer cum Facilitator. VECO will review and ensure the quality of the output. Copy of the joint statement and outputs of the reflection sessions by the Steering Committee shall form part of the conference report.
3. Publication and dissemination of the joint statement.

VI. Major Roles and Tasks of the Conference Organizer cum Facilitator

The Conference Organizer cum Facilitator will be engaged by VECO for a maximum of 12 person-days, whose overall responsibilities are to organize and ran the conference until its successful conclusion. Her/his specific tasks for the three phases are as follows:

A. Preparation and pre-conference Phase: 5-6 person-days

1. Attend the Steering Committee Meetings
2. Formulate proposed programme for the conference, including instructions and guide questions for the field visit, for review and action by the Steering Committee.
3. In behalf of VECO, send invitation letters and communicate with participants and presenters about guidelines of presentation, arrangements and instructions for the conference. Make follow-up as necessary.
4. Ensure logistical preparations for the conference in coordination with VECO.

5. Compile presentation materials and handouts for distribution at the start of conference.

B. Conference Proper: 3 person-days

1. Lead coordinator and moderator
2. Facilitate workshop and plenary discussions, with staff support from VECO
3. Compile workshop outputs and presentations
4. Document proceedings of the conference
5. Coordinate the field visit with group lead persons
6. Guide participants in formulating the joint statement on PGS
7. Ensure logistical arrangements in coordination with VECO
8. Attend reflection session with the Steering Committee at the end of the first and second day of the conference.

C. Post-conference Phase: 2-3 person-days

1. Attend the post conference reflection session with the Steering Committee
2. Prepare conference report and submit to VECO on or before September 27, 2013

VII. Qualifications of Conference Organizer cum Facilitator

1. Experience in designing, organizing and facilitating international conferences and workshops
2. Proficient in oral and written English language
3. Skills in participatory approaches and methodology for group events
4. Gender-sensitive and exposed to multicultural setting
5. Lively personality and socially-sensitive
6. Ability to work with multi-disciplinary team
7. Open to learning and positive attitude
8. Technical background on sustainable agriculture or organic farming is an advantage but not required.

Qualified and interested professionals are required to submit a Letter of Intent, together with a 3-page (maximum) proposal with budget, addressed to:

Regional Representative
VECO Vietnam
No. 4, 249A Thuy Khue St., Tay Ho District
Hanoi, Vietnam
Email: eduardo@veco.org.vn

Deadline of this submission to VECO is June 28, 2013.