

JOINT STUDY PROJECT

REDE ECOVIDA (Brazil) - ICEA (Italy)

**ON PARTICIPATIVE CERTIFICATION AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF COMPARISON,
COMMUNICATION, RECIPROQUAL RECOGNITION BY OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED
CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS (REG. EC 2092/91- ISO 65).**

Final Report.

Bologna, January 2006.

ICEA – Istituto per la Certification Etica e Ambientale

*Francesco Ruzzi
Michele Coladangelo
Fabio Piccioli*

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES**
- 3. PLANNED AND COMPLETED ACTIVITIES**
- 4. ICEA'S MISSION IN BRAZIL - CHRONOLOGY**
- 5. ICEA'S MISSION IN BRAZIL - REPORT**
- 6. FINAL REMARKS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**
- 7. ANNEXES**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Certification in Organic Agriculture

The certification model officially recognized at the international level today (often called “Third Party Certification”), came about as a consequence of many factors, among which:

- *The coming out of the European Community’s Reg. 2092 in 1991, which also regulates the aspects relative to certification, (including that of product import from third countries within the EC) followed at a distance, over the last few years, by NOP (USA) and JAS (Japan) norms;*
- *the development of export, in particular from the southern hemisphere to the main markets in the North (Europe, USA, Japan);*
- *the fitting of the certification systems (including accreditation of the certification bodies) to the ISO 65 international norms.*

However, this certification model (also particularly linked to the export processes) leaves behind a large number of small organic producers mainly, but not only, in Developing Countries, who have limited access to certification because of high costs.

This has been an incentive for development of different initiatives aiming at resolving these issues, using different approaches and objectives; such as, for example the Internal Control System (ICS) or other systems considered as “alternative” such as Participative Certification.

1.2 The Internal Control System (ICS)

It is a form of Group Certification, recognized by the *European Community* (also thanks to the efforts of *IFOAM** and the *Fair Trade* world – Fair and Solidal Trade), which regards productions coming from Developing Countries and that are exported to the EC.

It is based, when some form of organization and/or association allows it, on the management of control inside the organization itself, with inspection, supervision and audit carried out by an external Certification Body (usually foreign): this allows to reduce the costs for the control activity carried out by the Certification Body.

However, an issue still remains: the specific conditions of small producers that have difficult access to certification inside the EC and for which the ICS is not yet accepted.

1.3 Participative Certification and the proposal of a joint study by Rede Ecovida – ICEA.

On the other hand, Participative Certification (or Participative Guarantee System, PGS) is a system developed by local movements on different continents, which features an active, “participative” role of the producer, and is mostly linked to the local market and to the direct relationship with consumers. This came up in the seminar on “Alternative Certification” organized by *IFOAM* and *MAELA*** in April 2004 in *Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil*. The outcome was, with *IFOAM*’s support, the creation of a Task Force, representative of the various continents, for coordinating and publishing the various experiences. (See Annexes 1, 2, 3.)

At the moment, such a system is not yet recognized by the official norms of specific countries, except in some possible and important cases where the matter is being discussed (for example in *Brazil*), nor by the ISO 65 norms.

From that seminar, and from following contacts, was born the idea of a joint study and a desire to compare the two systems, through the collaboration of *Rede Ecovida* (who works in the field of Participative Certification in the three States in the south of *Brazil: Paraná, S. Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul*) **and** a control body such as *ICEA*, accredited to the *EC, USA, Japan*, and ISO 65 (UNI EN 45011) norms.

The institutions involved were: the Brazilian *Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Agrario (MDA) **** and the *Region of Emilia Romagna* (both already have a well established cooperation relationship).

* International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements

** Movimiento Agro Ecológico de América Latina y el Caribe

*** Minister for Agricultural Development

2. PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES

2.1 General Objective

In a situation where numerous local economies are at risk of crumbling and are found outside of the globalization processes, causing social, environmental and economical damage to the local communities and territories, both in southern and northern countries, the objective is to **evaluate** to which extent Participative Certification can be a tool to favor the development of a market that promotes local productions and family farming (a condition to guarantee adequate rural development), using the characteristics that are attributed to it, such as: active participation of the various actors involved, their awareness of the historical, social and environmental value of their agriculture, all major quality and reliability elements of certification.

2.2 Specific Objectives

- a) To evaluate to what extent Participative Certification could be a certification model that contributes to improving the reliance of the officially recognized certification systems, with particular reference to the following aspects: *Independence, Impartiality, Transparency, Competence*.
- b) To evaluate to what extent Participative Certification contributes to improving awareness about the environmental, cultural, socioeconomic value of rural communities' and the territory's productions, and to improve the development of the local market and of the relationship between producer and consumer, also as a potentially interesting experience for the local Italian and European communities.
- c) To do a joint study of the relative procedures for carrying out certification activity, aiming to compare and exchange opinions and experiences, as well as highlighting strong and weak points.
- d) To do a study and an evaluation on the possibilities of recognizing the certification activity carried out by *Rede Ecovida*, from an official certification's point of view, for an eventual product that might be potentially exported.
- e) To do a study and an evaluation on the activity of Participative Certification also in function of possible Fair and Solidal Trade Projects.

3. PLANNED AND COMPLETED ACTIVITIES

1. Mission of Rede Ecovida in Italy for agreements on the project

Contacts with ICEA and FAO;

Agreement with ICEA on the details of the project and activities;

Preliminary report on the reciprocity study.

2. Mission of Rede Ecovida in Italy: study on the ICEA certification system and "Third Party Certification"

Control by Rede of ICEA's certification methodology;

Training of Rede's members that are under certification;

Report on the weak points of Rede's methodology compared to ICEA's methodology;

Report on the weak points of ICEA's methodology compared to the Rede's methodology.

3. Mission of ICEA in Brazil: study on the Participative Certification system

Control by ICEA of Rede's certification methodology;

Report on the weak points of Rede's methodology compared to ICEA's methodology;

Report on the feasibility of exporting a specific Rede's product to the European Community (case study).

4. Seminar of Rede Ecovida with the participation of ICEA technicians

Training on certification of a group of Rede members and of some other invited participants;

Discussion on the continuity of this exchange project.

3.1. Missions of Rede Ecovida in Italy

3.1.1. Mission of Laercio Meirelles in Italy for agreements on the project (April 27th – May 4th 2005).

Completed activity: Rede Ecovida' representative Laercio Meirelles was present in Italy, on invitation of the "International BIOL Prize", as speaker for the Conference on "Global and Local Organic Agriculture" organized in Bari on 29.04.2005.

He has participated to a Seminar on Participative Certification at the FAO in Rome on April 28th; he had many meetings with ICEA management, the Region Emilia Romagna, the Province of Modena, all aimed at defining the most crucial activities of the Study Project, but also of the possible developments and future perspectives, among others with the Director of Eco-agriculture of the *Comunidad Autonoma de Andalucia*, Manuel Gonzalez De Molina (present at the conference in Bari).

The mission was supported financially by the "International BIOL Prize".

3.1.2. Mission of Luiz Santos Rebelatto and Gilmar Zolet Vieira in Italy for the study on the "Third Party" certification system, and of ICEA in particular (June 24th – July 6th, 2005).

Completed activity: the mission of the two Rede Ecovida technicians consisted of an in-depth internship and study (and also exchange of experiences) of the Certification system based on Reg. 2092/91, and in particular of ICEA, of its structure and of its activity. It was carried out mostly in ICEA's regional offices in Puglia, Emilia Romagna and in the national headquarters in Bologna. Moreover, it was a good opportunity to know better Italian organic agriculture in general (producers, markets, shops).

More in details, the Program consisted of:

Choice of an organic method by the operator; Predisposition of the Notice; Adhesion to the Control System, Inspective visits, Evaluation of the documents; Certification Commission; Certificate management and Authorization for label printing; Visits' scheme, Surveillance, Sampling and analysis, Management of a certification system; Technical assistance, Promotion of consumption, Valorization of the productions, Role of the certification.

The mission was supported financially by Brazil's Minister of Agricultural Development.

3.2. ICEA's Mission in Brazil

The mission of the three technicians:

Dr. Francesco Ruzzi, ICEA's Control System Manager;

Dr. Michele Coladangelo, ICEA's Control System Coordinator for Emilia Romagna;

Agr. Fabio Piccioli, ICEA's International Relations Collaborator,

was carried out between 16.11.2005 and 06.12.2005, following the meetings at the "Bio Fach Latin America" Fair in Rio de Janeiro, on the territory of the three southern Brazil States where Rede Ecovida operates (Rio Grande do Sul, S. Catarina, Paraná).

For this mission, we had asked for the financial support of the Region of Emilia Romagna.

4. ICEA's Mission in Brazil – CHRONOLOGICAL REPORT

16 - 20 .11 .2005. Departure of **Fabio Piccioli** and **Michele Coladangelo** for **Rio de Janeiro**: participation to **Latin America Bio Fach**, International Fair for Organic Agriculture, to meetings organized during the Fair, the mission's preparatory meetings with "Rede" representatives, meeting with the **Secretary for Family Farming of Brazil's Minister for Agrarian Development, Valter Bianchini**.

Transfer from **Rio de Janeiro** to **Montenegro**, State of **Rio Grande do Sul (RS)**, with representatives of **Rede**, of the international Cooperative "Sin Fronteras" and of the Consortium **CONAPI**.

21.11.2005. **Montenegro (RS)**. Visit to the "Ecocitrus Cooperative" (member of **Rede** and of "Sin Fronteras"): to a producer, to the facilities where the orange juice is stored and produced, as well as the composting structures.

Transfer to **Caxia do Sul (RS)**, visit of a local organic shop, and then to **Antonio Prado (RS)**. Visit of the fruits and vegetables producer Mr. **Pedro Lovato** (member of the Serra Nucleus), together with the technician **Leandro Venturin**.

Evening: participation, as speakers, to a Seminar at the Town Hall on Organic agriculture and certification, with the attendance of other international speakers (Cuba, Costa Rica, Sweden).

22.11.05. **Antonio Prado (RS)**. Participation to the meeting of the **Ethics Council** of the "Serra" Nucleus, at the **Cooperativa AECIA**, member of the Nucleus (processes the products of the members, especially grapes for producing juice): "Monitoria de Revalidação" (renewal of conformity) of the **Coop. AECIA**, Visit to the producers **Volmir Forlin**, **Vicente Scolaro** ("parceiro" of Mr. **Forlin**, rather a producer "presented" by the latter, who in a certain way is his "warrantor" in the face of the Nucleus and of "Rede"), **Dalla Costa**, **Tonello**.

Attending: technicians, **Cesar Volpato**, and **Leandro Venturin** (**Centro Ecologico**, Nucleus' technician); representatives of producers Groups **APESA**, **S. Antonio Abate – Ipè**, and **APESC**, **S. Catarina – Ipè**; a consumers' representative.

Evening: the Group's general reunion.

23.11.2005. "**Centro Ecologico Ipè – Serra**". Morning: Seminar addresses to the participants of the Course on eco-agriculture, with speakers from various countries (Cuba, Costa Rica and others). Speeches by **M. Coladangelo** and **F. Piccioli** on the aspects that characterize "Third Party" Certification.

Afternoon: Transfer to **Lages**, State of **Santa Catarina (SC)**. Meeting with technical NGO: "**Centro Vianei de Educação Popular**", of **Lages**, at the headquarters of the NGO.

24.11.2005. "**Planalto Serrano**" Nucleus (SC). Participation, with the technician of the "**Centro Vianei**", **Natal Magnanti**, and producers belonging to their respective Groups, to the Visit to two farms of the "Renacer" Group in the Municipality of **Urubici**, and to a farm of the Municipality **Alfredo Wagner** (part of the above mentioned Nucleus "**Planalto Serrano**" of "Rede").

Evening: Transfer to **Florianopolis**.

25.11.2005. **Florianopolis (SC)**. Arrival of **Francesco Ruzzi** (left Italy on 24.11) at the **Florianopolis** airport. Meeting with **LuiZ Santos Rebelatto**, ex coordinator of **Rede Ecovida**, (and participant, with **Gilmar Zolet Vieira**, to the mission of 2 technicians of **Rede** in Italy at ICEA, June – July 2005), on the general and specific themes of the Mission.

26.11.2005. Transfer to **Curitiba**, State of **Paraná (PR)**, and visit to "Feria Organica", participation of about 20 stands of **Rede** producers, coming from various zone around **Curitiba**.

27.11.2005. **Palmeira (PR)**. Meeting with the representatives of the Municipality of **Palmeira**: **Antono Ribeiro** (Councilor **Planejamento**), **Edir Abrethek** (Chief of Cabinet) **Rogério Lima** (Secr. Mun. Ind. Comm. Tur.); **Marcos Robinski** (trade union **FETRAF-DESER**); **Ednei Bueno do Nascimento** representative of the **Minister for Agrarian Development**. The area features school cafeterias with organic products.

A particular experience for the territory's history is that of the rural community – after the “*Colonia Cecilia*”, which was founded by the Cremonese anarchist *Giovanni Rossi*. There are plans to carry out a Project of historical recovery, also linked to the themes of rural tourism and agro –ecology.

28.11.2005. Araucaria (PR). Visita to two farms of the “**Mauricio Burmaister do Amaral**” Nucleus (and of the Group “*Fruto Caipira*”: *Comunidade “Tercero Plano*”, and *Luiz Moreira Pinheiro*) going with *Marcelo Passus* (technician-producer of the Group “*Campina Grande do Sul*”), *Luis Bueno* and *Marcelo Caldera* (Grupo “*Bejaflor*”, Municipality of *Lapa*).

29.11.2005. Curitiba (PR). Meeting with “**Mauricio Burmaister do Amaral**” Nucleus at the headquarters of the NGO “*APOA*”, (which gives technical assistance), various Group representatives were attending: *Marcelo Passus*, *Adailton de Freitas Santos* (Gr.*Campina Grande do Sul*), *P.Ulises de Godoy* (Gr. *Pintassilgo*, *Município Tunas*), *Wesley Maschio* (Gr.*Sabogueiro*, *Mun. Colombo*), *Mario Barbiroli* (Gr. *Graciosa*). Inoltre: *Mun. 4 Barras*: *Municipal Secretary for Environment* part of the Group; *Moacir Darolt*, (**Pres. Consumers Assoc. ACOPA**); *Luiz Rebelatto*.

The *Prefeitura* (Municipality) of *Curitiba* participates to Visits to all the producers that participate to the 7 weekly *Feiras* organized in the city.

Students of the *Universidade do Paraná*, and of other private institutions participate to studies on the quality of agro-ecological products (ex .analysis of milk).

30.11.2005. Francisco Beltrao (PR). Meeting with “**Sud Oeste do Paraná**” Nucleus, at the headquarters of technical NGO “*Asesoar*”.

Attending: *Luiz Santos* and *Gilmar Vieira*;

- technicians of NGOs “*Asesoar*” (*Fabia*) and “*CAPA*” (*Elisangela*)
- representatives of producers Groups “*Chopinzinho*”, “*Verè*”, “*Planalto*”, “*Clevelandia*”, “*Coronel Vivida*”, “*Marmeleiro*”, “*Peroba do Oeste*”, “*Francisco Beltrao*”, part of the Nucleus
- representatives of the *Municipal Secretary for Agriculture “Cruzeiro do Iguaçu*”;
- one Master's student, who is doing a study on *Rede* (in particular on the Nuclei of *Curitiba* and *F. Beltrao*).

01 - 02.12.2005. Francisco Beltrao (PR).

Seminar: “Participative Certification and Third Party Certification – Possibility and challenge: Rede Ecovida/ICEA”:

1-“Regulation and analysis of the conformity of organic products. International and national conjuncture” – **Maria Fernanda Fonseca** -*PESAGRO Ag. of Research, State of Rio de Janeiro* (Debate)

2-“Exchange *Rede Ecovida - Italia*” – **Gilmar Zolet Vieira**

3-“Weak points of Participative Certification in comparison to Third Party Certification” – **Luiz Santos Rebelatto** (Debate)

4-“Exchange *ICEA - Brazil*: report of Third Party certification, impressions on the *Ecovida* system” – **Piccioli/Coladangelo/Ruzzi** (Debate)

5-Group work: in-depth study of the issues

Participants: representatives of groups/nuclei of agronomists, producers (representatives of groups and single farms), consumers.

Transfer to **Foz de Iguaçu**.

05 - 06.12.2005. Departure from **Foz de Iguaçu** to **Sao Paolo** and return.

5. ICEA's mission in Brazil - REPORT

5.1. Summary. Present situation.

Rede Ecovida is an entity that, altogether, involves almost **3000 family farmers** organized in almost **300 groups**, which in turn compose almost **30 territorial Nuclei** that form the *Rede*, operating in the field of Participative Certification in the vast area of southern *Brazil (Paraná, S. Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul)*. This form of “Certification” (or better yet, “*Avaliação de conformidade* - Conformity evaluation”, as we may prefer to call this process in the future, leaving the term “Certification” to “Third Party” systems) is linked above all to the development of the local market (at the moment, also national) and the direct relationship with consumers. It also foresees an active and “participative” role of the producer in the system. The origins of this associative process go back 20 years ago. It started at the local level (in part thanks to the technical and organizational support of various local NGOs), and was brought, first, to territorial coordination levels; then national (one country), and finally, to the development and actual size of *Rede*. These origins are derived mainly from the needs for technical assistance, sharing experience and knowledge, associative development, organization for putting products on the market, with the fundamental involvement of the consumers.

In fact, there are approximately **30 NGOs** involved, providing **technical assistance** and organizational functions, **15 Consumers' Cooperatives**, about **10 commercialization structures**, about **20 sales points**; the “**Feiras**” (markets), daily or weekly, in different cities, big and small, where the “*agroecologistas*” producers organized in *Rede* sell their products: they are about **100**.

Therefore, we start from a form of capillary diffusion, at the municipal level, and end up with a coordination level that includes the three States mentioned above, based however on the principles of decentralization, autonomy, and bottom-up organization.

The solutions brought forward by this form of organization to the demands of the producers that follow the principles of agro-ecology certainly appear as adequate and remarkable, just as the involved actors' sense of belonging to a whole; and they contribute to making this reality into a model certainly worth noting.

The same consumers' recognition and reliance on *Rede Ecovida's* “*Selo*” (Seal) derives from a process of spreading roots, information, exchange and involvement strengthened over time, independently of the lack of official recognition.

However, the *Rede's* Participative Certification is not recognized by the official norms (not at the Brazilian level, not at the international level, nor by the ISO 65 norms).

It is worth underlining that, in Brazil, there is a law (n° 10831 of 23/12/2003), which normalizes “organic productions”, and states at point 1 of art. 3: “in case of direct commercialization to the consumer by family farmers inserted in a proper organizational process and social control, previously recognized by the authorities, **certification may be facultative**, once assured to the consumer and the authorities, the traceability of the product and the free access to production or processing facilities”.

This, as we will later see, could be a first step to recognizing *Rede* at the national level.

At the moment, some *Rede* farms that dispose of productions exceeding the absorption potential of the local market, and that are able to access export (or to distribute in large cities such as *Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo*, etc.), find themselves asking for a double certification: other than that of *Rede Ecovida*, they are certified by a Control Body (*IBD, Ecocert, BCS*, etc.) that may be defined as “Third Party”.

5.2. The Participative Certification Process of *Rede Ecovida* for obtaining the Seal Norms

The *Rede Ecovida* Norms include:

- The technical Norms for Plant & Animal Production and Transformation that refer to the *Instrução Normativa n°007* of Brazil's *Ministerio da Agricultura e do Abastecimento*;
- A set of social and environmental rules that rely on the Principles of Agro-ecology; with particular attention to the ethical and solidal aspects in the social relationships, and additional measures for respecting the environment during both production and commercialization phases.

Steps of the process

Adhesion to Rede Ecovida

Certification request with appropriate module addressed to the Nucleus' Ethics Council

Done through the Regional Nucleus.

The Nucleus must be formed and have a functional Ethics Council.

A Module, with all the information about the farm, must be filled for each productive unit (as well as the conversion plan).

Analysis of the Module by the Ethics Council

Eventual request for more information, before the visit.

*Visit of the farm by the Ethics Council
Opinion of the Ethics Council*

Report by each member of the Council and joint opinion.

May be positive or negative, in both cases the Council may suggest improvements to be made in the management.

Approval of the certification by the Regional Nucleus, who transmits the request for use of the Seal to the "Conselho de Certificação" (responsible body of the Rede)

The renewal of the certification is annual

In case of non-conformity, the Ethics Council decides what to do (ex. withdrawal of the certification, and/or corrective measures)

5.3. Strong and weak points of the Participative Certification system of *Rede Ecovida*

5.3.1 Strong Points

The *Rede Ecovida* "system"

Citing the considerations based on the General Objective of the present Project, it is possible to state that, "in a situation, which sees numerous local economies at risk of crumbling and are found outside of the globalization processes, causing social, environmental and economical damage to the local communities and territories, both in southern and northern countries", *Rede Ecovida's* system is certainly "a tool that favors the development of a market that promotes local productions and family farming (a condition to guarantee adequate rural development), using the characteristics that are attributed to it, such as:

- active participation of the various actors involved: producers in first place, technicians and consumers;
- their awareness of the historical, social and environmental value of their agriculture, (all major quality and reliability elements of certification);
- confidence of the consumers".

Therefore, the *Rede Ecovida* system, "contributes to raising the awareness about the environmental, cultural, socioeconomic value of rural communities' and the territory's productions, and to the development of the local market, as well as of the relationship between producer and consumer".

This evaluation is applied within the *Rede Ecovida* system in its functional and integrated globality, where certification is only one aspect.

Rede Ecovida's Participative Certification

Speaking about strong and weak points, in this context, we must clarify on thing; more precisely, to **what parameter** are we referring to, in order to make a judgment:

- about the criterion stated by a precise norm, such as ISO 65, which became an international reference point regarding certification, both for the market and the certification bodies themselves (besides, obviously, the specific norms for organic agriculture of specific Countries);

- or about a more “common” criterion, but which is adopted, in many cases, or by the consumer himself or by the companies acquiring the product (who, upon getting acquainted with the system, get an image of reliability), but also by organizations, institutions and local, national and international authorities: on may picture, for example, the involvement of various municipalities and of governmental agencies operating at the local level, such as *EMATER*, the interest of the *Ministerio de Desenvolvimento Agrario de Brazil*; but also of *IFOAM* and of the *FAO* (whose representative *Pilar Santacoloma* made an appearance at the Seminar in 2004. This theme has been recently introduced also in the “*IFOAM-UNCTAD-FAO Task Force*” on harmonization of the international norms for organic agriculture and certification).

The *strong points* and the reliability of the *Rede Ecovida* Participative Certification system are as such, based on the *second evaluation criterion* (and often will be paradoxally considered as *weak points*, when evaluating them according to the ISO 65 norms...) and are precisely characterized by the element of **participation** and by what is defined as “**social control**”.

First, indeed, a producer may access the certification service and use the “*Ecovida*” seal for his own products only if he is involved in any way in the associative process: this prevents the producer from being isolated, and rather makes him part of a **Group**, (and a **Network**), and therefore of a **continuous** process of comparison, control, sharing experiences, knowledge, information, aiming at individual and collective growth, which also becomes, at the same time, a further **guarantee system** (along with the more “official” part of the Ethics Council's visits) for the consumer regarding the agro-ecological quality of the management and of the productions.

Moreover, we should underline how the *Rede Ecovida* standards, besides the technical norms of production, consider aspects of particular ethical value, which refer to the principles of agro-ecology, regarding social relationships and the protection of the environment (ex. protection of natural springs, prevention of erosion, animal welfare, even if the breeding is not certified, etc.).

5.3.2. Weak Points

As mentioned, the *weak points* of *Rede Ecovida's* Participative Certification system listed here are considered as such **in reference to the ISO 65 norm**.

The points of the ISO 65 norm are summarized as follows (in Italy, corresponding to the UNI EN CEI 45011/99 norm), concerning independence, transparency, impartiality, or to be more precise, as the above-mentioned norm defines these aspects, in the concept of “**Tertiarity**”:

- The access to certification must be free and not constrained by association or membership.
- The Certification Body must dispose of appropriate financial and human resources.
- The Certification Committee (a guarantee for competence and independence in the decision-making process) must be from outside of the organization.
- The following concerned sectors, at least, must be represented: Technical, Scientific, Consumers, Producers.
- Each phase of the decision-making process must correspond to written procedures and policies, and therefore documented for anyone who might need to verify it subsequently.
- The procedures, policies and module must be the same and therefore contain the same information.

- In order to preserve impartiality, some kind of structure must be guaranteed, which represents all parties. Such a structure must be separate from the one that manages the activity.

The *in loco* controls concerned farms that belong to the Nuclei “Serra” (in Rio Grande do Sul) “Planalto Serrano” (Santa Catarina) “Mauricio Burmaister do Amaral”, Curitiba, and “Sud Oeste do Paraná”, Francisco Beltrao (in Paraná).

Moreover, at the end of the visits, there were meetings with the respective Nuclei.

At the end of such process, all the interested Nuclei participated to a seminar in Francisco Beltrao (in the State of Paraná). The theme was: development, growth and evolution of *Rede Ecovida* in function of certification.

The **critical points**, compared to the European certification 2092/91 and ISO 65, can be resumed as follows:

- *In primis*, *Rede Ecovida* is not a Certification Body, nor a legal person, and does not have a structure dedicated to certification activity.
- The access to certification must be free and not constrained by association or membership. In the case of *Rede Ecovida*, access to certification is conditioned by the membership to a group and therefore to a Nucleus that is part of the *Rede* (Network).
- There is a lack of homogenous and systematic procedures among the various regional Nuclei, both for the carrying out of the inspective visits (in some cases, for ex., it is not done by the *Nuclei Ethics Council*, but by the *Group’s Ethics Commission*) and the composition of the Nuclei themselves.
- In the *Nuclei Ethics Councils*, for ex., all the parties are generally not represented (Technical, Scientific, Consumers’, Producers’ sectors), and it is even more difficult to have them represented equally. For example, the consumers’ component was present in a single Nucleus among those visited. As for the technical-scientific component, the present technicians, as it happens during visits, are the same as those who provide technical assistance. The prevalent component, and the only one to be regularly represented, is the producers (giving emphasis to aspects of Participation and Social Control, to the contrary to what is prescribed by Third Party Certification). This has brought an imbalance among the different components, which could affect the outcome of the conformity assessment of the farm.
- There is a lack of separation between the Management of the control activity and the decision-making certifying Body (equivalent to the Certification Committee).
- Another issue has to do with economic and organizational sustainability of the process: the understandable choice of keeping the producer’s costs low (12 Reais per year) raises some doubts on the possibility to guarantee efficiency, which anyhow mainly relies on the support of NGOs and of the *Ministerio do Desenvolvimento Agrario*, as well as on voluntary work (participation; where this component should disappear, the effectiveness of the system would be affected).

It is interesting to note the correspondence between the conclusions made by ICEA technicians and those of the *Rede* technicians who have carried out the Mission in Italy.

(see *Att. 4: Rede Ecovida - ICEA Realidades e Perspectivas / Luiz Santos Rebelatto and Gilmar Zolet Vieira, Att. 5: Certification Rede Ecovida / Michele Coladangelo*)

5.4. Scenarios and Perspectives of *Rede Ecovida*

Whereas there is no doubt about the validity of the Participative Guarantee System within *Rede*, there is however the problem of those producers that, while disposing of productions that can be intended for export (or also for the supermarkets in Rio or Sao Paulo), find themselves forced to ask for

certification other than that of *Rede Ecovida*, from a Third Party Control Body, since it is required by the international trade system.

At a seminar on December 1st-2nd in *Francisco Beltrao*, (which has also been a somewhat culminating point of the exchange activities between *Ecovida* and ICEA), some scenarios were conceived.

Scenario 1: Recognition of Rede by the Brazilian Minister of Agriculture (MAPA).

Unlike the EC, with its Reg. EC 2092/91, Brazil has not yet made a definite norm for organic agriculture: this provides a margin for negotiations to *Rede Ecovida*, as well as to the other subjects active in Participative Certification in other areas of Brazil (or in any case supporters of this process), to obtain some kind of **recognition** at **Brazil's** national level for the productions commercialized on the **national market**.

According to the outcome of the seminar (1/2.12.05) in *Francisco Beltrao*, this option is considered as the **priority**.

Scenario 2: Adaptation of the Rede system aiming at becoming recognized by foreign Certifying Bodies as a group Certification (Internal Control System - ICS).

This option (estimated more feasible than the next one –Scenario 3) would require an effort of adapting the *Rede Ecovida* system to the procedures of the ICS functioning, which could allow the recognition by a Third Party Control Body.

Scenario 3: Creation of a Control Body by Rede.

It could happen in two ways: or by activating an already existing legal person (“*AECP*”), created by *Rede* for such an occasion, but never used; or creating a new structure. In any case, this is a hypothesis not easily executed, for the numerous changes that need to be made in the system (as it was already extensively underlined) in order to give it back the character of a structure that could work and be recognized as a Third Party Control Body.

5.5. Evaluations made regarding the Project's objectives (Point 2.)

Regarding the **Specific Objectives**, (**Point 2.2**) it is possible to do the following evaluations:

a) – b) Of all that was said until now, one should deduce that the aspects of *independence*, *impartiality*, *transparency* and *competence* are prerequisites not of the Participative Certification, but rather of the certification systems officially recognized, based on Reg. EC 2092 and ISO 65.

In reality, the “*participative*” aspect that counts on an *active* and *resourceful* attitude of the producer (single or associated) regarding the principles, the standards and the management methods used is certainly an element of **major guarantee for both the consumer and the Certification Body**.

(One may risk a comparison with certain certification schemes applied in Europe, but mostly outside of “organic”, which require the Farm to write its Quality System itself, and therefore gives an attitude of someone who is not simply subjected to “passive control”).

One of the risks of “Third Party” certification may be of having a structure (from the Inspecting Technician, up to the Certification Commission) that is fully conform to the ISO norms, but which could then find itself carrying out a single annual visit, frequently finding an unaware producer and/or who has limited knowledge of the norms and principles; and thus having the burden of giving an ever-growing amount of attention to check the ever-growing and more complex documentation required from the producer himself.

Undoubtedly, a very positive aspect of the “*Ecovida*” system, which is found outside of the mere certification scheme, is the associative relationship system in which the producer finds himself, (compared to the needs strongly expressed by a good part of his Italian organic producers colleagues) such as technical assistance, commercial organization, relationships with the consumers.

Regarding problems of certification access for groups of small producers in the EC, it is worth mentioning IFOAM's initiative for developing discussions on possible recognition of the Internal Control System in countries of the northern hemisphere, as it is already the case in Developing Countries. See *Att. 6 : ICS_North_WS_proceedings*.

c) The modalities and results of the conducted reciprocal study, are highlighted in the previous points.

d) Orange Juice is an example of product that is predisposed for export. It is produced by the “*Cooperativa Ecocitrus*” (part of “*Cooperativa Sin Fronteras*”), which is presently certified by both *Ecovida* and a “Third Party” Certification Body: *IBD (Instituto Biodinamico*, with headquarters in *Sao Paulo*). The problem of the recognition of the *Ecovida* certification is not really linked to the product’s particular characteristics, but to the set of themes already highlighted in the previous points (5.3. Strong points and Weak Points; 5.4. Scenarios and Perspectives).

e) The principles that form the base of the associative and organizational system of *Rede*, create conditions that guarantee the respect of the principles of democracy, non-discrimination, organizational sustainability, transparency (in particular regarding the management of the premium paid by Fair and Solidal Trade, which must be invested back into the a producers’ community). This same “*Cooperativa Ecocitrus*”, mentioned above, already has *FLO* certification (*Fairtrade Labelling Organization*).

6. FINAL REMARKS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The mission has shown how the evaluation of *Rede Ecovida*’s Participative Guarantee System could base itself on two different criteria:

- on the conformity with the “Third Party Certification” characteristics (ISO 65 norms, Reg. CE 2092/91, etc.);
- or a more general criterion, but still recognized by consumers, national and international buyers (ex. fair and solidal trade), local and national governmental institutions and agencies, organizations such as IFOAM or FAO (who has carried out a research on the costs of various certification systems, among which the participative one, including *Rede Ecovida: “Costs and Managerial Skills in Organic Certified Products”/Pilar Santacoloma, FAO*).

Therefore, if on one hand, we have highlighted the critical aspects that *Rede* must adjust if it wants to obtain this form of recognition, on the other hand we have seen the positive aspects of the system, firstly if considered in its wholeness, as a form of associative development that gives to the organization the answer to different problems common to (small, in particular) organic producers worldwide (technical assistance, market, access to certification...); but also how the certification’s participative and active aspect could represent, in essence, a quality element, to consider also in such system as the Italian one, where too often we face the problem of a lack of knowledge and awareness on the part of some producers.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is an ever-growing tendency for starting discussions (among which the mentioned international organizations), which may still be far from reaching any conclusions, but which bring forth a doubt if the current normative structure linked to ISO 65 could really be reassessed, or at least if it couldn’t coexist with other organic agriculture guarantee systems.

It is also worth noting how other European countries (ex. *Spain*) are becoming increasingly interested by these aspects, especially in the *Comunidad Autonoma de Andalucia* (but also *Valencia, Canarias*) where the role of the *Dirección de Agricultura Ecológica* is to develop these themes, which could eventually be the foundation for collaboration projects with other Italian and European regions (like, for ex. The *Region of Emilia Romagna*) and which could have such objectives as:

- to expand the drafted theme of certification access to small producers and to introduce new quality elements into certification, also at the European level;
- integration into a more complex context of rural development (of which organic agriculture is considered an important element), and linked with resulting aspects, such as:
- local and international market access, development of the market itself, education, information and promotion directed to consumers and their involvement;
- development of research and technical assistance services;
- multi-functionality, rural eco-tourism;
- typical and quality products, and all the other themes linked to the development of local communities and of the territory.

7. ANNEXES

Att. 1: Organic Standards and Certification / IFOAM (from: www.ifoam.org)

Att. 2: Workshop on Alternatives on Certification for Organic Products /A. Pipo Lernoud and M. F. Fonseca

Att. 3: Alternative Certification and a Network Conformity Assess Approach / M. Fernanda Fonseca

Att. 4: Rede Ecovida Certification / Michele. Coladangelo

Att. 5: Rede Ecovida - ICEA, Realidades and Perspectivas / L. Rebelatto and G. Vieira

Att. 6: Palestra Ecovida-ICEA/ M. Fernanda Fonseca

Att. 7: ICS _ North _ WS _proceedings / IFOAM

ICEA – Istituto per la Certification Etica and Ambientale

Francesco Ruzzi Control System Manager

Michele Coladangelo Emilia Romagna Control System Coord.

Fabio Piccioli International Relations Collaborator