



Slow Food®

Coffee Coalition

SLOW FOOD COFFEE COALITION PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SYSTEM MANUAL



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The Slow Food Coffee Coalition supports and suggests using the PGS to identify Good, Clean and Fair Coffee.

WHAT IS A PGS INITIATIVE?

“Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally-focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on the active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange.”

Official Definition, 2008

A Participatory Guarantee System initiative is an **alternative certification** that consists of the creation of a **second party certification model** for geographically close producers and external actors who share the following core pillars: a **set of commonly defined standards and norms**, a set of **common procedures**, at least one **coordinating body**, a **common logo** and defined consequences for non-compliance.

The Slow Food Coffee Coalition believes that no existing certification is perfect and flawless, but it does prefer a certification based on **trust** and **collaboration** that **does not burden producers financially**, as is the case of third-party certifications.¹

Key Elements: the Slow Food Coffee Coalition PGS initiative has the following key elements:

- Shared vision
- Trust, horizontality
- Participation
- Shared responsibility
- Learning process
- Community of producers with ownership of the process

Are you interested? To find out more, write to us at coffee.coalition@slowfood.it

¹ Third party certification, carried out by independent bodies, external to production, paid to carry out visits, with the aim of checking that producers comply with the norms and standards imposed by the protocols.

DOCUMENTS NECESSARY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PGS

1. SLOW FOOD COFFEE COALITION MANIFESTO

The Manifesto represents the vision we have of our network, of the coffee world we wish for. It was written by farmers, coffee experts and Slow Food leaders from all over the world, from California to the Philippines, and highlights one fundamental aspect: that each of us has **roles and responsibilities to ensure a Good, Clean and Fair Coffee for all.**

2. GOOD, CLEAN AND FAIR COFFEE GUIDELINES & PGS PLEDGE

The first part of this document consists of the coffee production guidelines, which define what the Slow Food Coffee Coalition means by Good, Clean and Fair Coffee: from the plant to green coffee ready for export. They were written by the Board of Experts and the farmers interviewed. These guidelines need to be adapted to the local context, as necessary.

This document also includes the Coffee Coalition PGS pledge. The pledge is comparable to a contract in which participants declare that they are following the production guidelines and are willing to start a PGS initiative. Signing the pledge is the first and most important act that all participants must undertake. Having the participants (producers and non-producers) sign the same pledge also means creating a bond and establishing a record for future reference. This document is also where the members of the governing body (Ethical Committee) are listed and sign.

3. GUARANTEE SHEET

The Guarantee Sheet is the checklist used by the Guarantee Group during field visits. The Guarantee Sheet reflects the principles and rules listed in the “Good, Clean and Fair Coffee Guidelines”, as well as socio-cultural factors and organoleptic quality. It is used not only for the report on each specific producer’s production but also helps build the story of the specific Coffee Coalition Community for future reference. Each Guarantee Sheet is nominal and must be signed by every participant in the course of a visit.

4. VISIT REPORT

The Visit Report is a document filed by the Ethical Committee that provides a summary of matters that have emerged during field visits, meaning not only problems or discrepancies in relation to the guidelines but also suggestions made while filing the checklist, problems solved and feedbacks. It also serves as a vital link between local areas and Slow Food staff, insofar as the report is sent to the Slow Food Coffee Coalition office, where the information is analyzed and, if no additional actions are needed, filed.

5. COFFEE COALITION TRADEMARK CODE OF USE

The Trademark Code of Use is the document that sets out the rules for the use of the Slow Food Coffee Coalition logo on the final product.²

²The rules for the use of the logo are still in the course of being drawn up.

GROUPS AND FUNCTIONS

There are three main bodies involved in the PGS: two governing bodies, the Ethical Committee and the Guarantee Group, and one supervising body, the Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group. For the management groups it is important for the roles and responsibilities to change among the stakeholders over the years to avoid any conflict of interest and to share the workload.

1. THE ETHICAL COMMITTEE

The Ethical Committee is the body that sets out and manages the PGS for the Slow Food Coffee Coalition. **It corresponds to the Community that signed the pledge** and is made up of the following actors:

- A group of producers, from which a leader is selected
- The community coordinator
- Other actors (e.G., Buyers, roasters, other farmers and other actors from the supply chain such as consumers, representatives of ngos or institutions, experts and technicians)

As one of the two main PGS bodies, the Ethical Committee has important functions. It meets at least twice a year: generally, before field visits, to select the sample of producers to be visited, and after field visits to discuss the results. It oversees the Community's PGS, identifies the Guarantee Group and receives its reports. It also discusses the possible application of sanctions or corrective measures, and also prepares the Visit Report, which will be then sent to the Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group.

2. THE GUARANTEE GROUP

The Guarantee Group is responsible for conducting field visits. Selected entirely by the Ethical Committee, it is made up according to the following guidelines.

It is formed by a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 individuals, including, for instance:

- Farmers' representatives: at least 2, or 3 if they represent between 31 and 60 producers, or a maximum of 5 if they represent between 61 and 100 producers.
- 2 Consumers' representatives.
- 1 Roaster or bartender (or another actor from the supply chain).
- A maximum of 3 representatives from policy areas, civil society and public or private actors.

The Guarantee Group organizes and performs field visits according to the decisions of the Ethical Committee and the producers to be assessed. During field visits, it collects data and may also provide technical support, if and when needed. The Group then sends field visit reports to the Ethical Committee. As the two PGS governing bodies, the Ethical Committee and the Guarantee Group should be two separate groups, composed of different members (without overlapping), though this is subject to change if the number of actors involved in the Community is six or less. In this case, the Guarantee Group may coincide with the Ethical Committee. Conversely, if the Community is particularly large, it is recommended that two or more Guarantee Groups be created within the same Community.

3. THE SLOW FOOD COFFEE COALITION GROUP

The Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group is composed of the Board of Experts, the focal point of the Slow Food Coffee Coalition. It receives field visit reports and submits the results and discusses the serious cases of non-compliance. With its expertise on PGS issues, the Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group runs thematic courses on the PGS for the Ethical Committee and the Guarantee Group. Lastly, it acts as a guarantor of the uniformity and validity of the process, settling any conflicts of interest. In this case, the Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group assumes a third-party role with the specific function of preventing conflicts, while ensuring the uniformity and validity of the process. In cases of severe non-compliance, it discusses the course of action with the Ethical Committee. If necessary, it also communicates decisions regarding the suspension (or other sanctions) of producers or of the entire Community when agreed upon with the Ethical Committee, and in the event of repeated serious non-compliance in the course of time.

FIELD VISITS

Field visits are carried out by the Guarantee Group. The sample of producers to be visited is chosen by the Ethical Committee by drawing lots and must constitute at least 35% of producers if it is to be representative. Once the PGS has been fully implemented, **every producer should be visited once a year**. The most important task, however, is to find a structure that is feasible and ensures that all producers are visited within a reasonable timeframe following the implementation of the PGS initiative. The visits must always be announced, in order to give the producers time to prepare to receive the visiting group and to answer its questions. It is highly recommended that each producer and all the members of the Guarantee Group have a good knowledge of the Guarantee Sheet³ in advance, in order to optimize the time used for the field visit. The Ethical Committee is in charge of deciding the most suitable time of year for the visits, based on the production process, and communicating the visits to the selected producers. At the end of the visits, the checklists will be given to the Ethical Committee, which will upload the results on the Google Form provided to make the results easily available for the Slow Food Group.⁴

³ For specific information regarding the Guarantee Sheet, please refer to the “How to read the Guarantee Sheet” document.

⁴ If this option is not feasible, another agreement may be found upon forwarding the results.

HOW TO START A SLOW FOOD COFFEE COALITION PGS INITIATIVE

Here is the roadmap, namely the procedure for a community of coffee producers to create a PGS initiative under the umbrella of the Slow Food Coffee Coalition:

1. Producers officially enter the Slow Food Network by creating a **Slow Food Community**, and they also read and sign the Slow Food Coffee Coalition **Manifesto**, which sets out the overall vision of the initiative.
2. The Slow Food Coffee Coalition staff, experts and facilitators conduct **the first PGS training**, presenting the structure to the Slow Food Community (formed by producers and stakeholders)
3. The Slow Food Community reads and shares among its participants the material provided during the first training: **PGS Manual, Good, Clean and Fair Coffee Guidelines & PGS Pledge**.
4. The **Ethical Committee** signs the **Good, Clean and Fair Coffee Guidelines & PGS Pledge**
5. **Second Training** coordinated by Slow Food Coffee Coalition staff, in which the **Guarantee Sheet** is explained and discussed.
6. **Peer Review**.⁵ The Guarantee Group conducts a field visit and submits the Visit Report to The Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group.
7. **Final evaluation** of the process by the Slow Food Coffee Coalition Group.

Throughout the process, Slow Food Coffee Coalition staff provides Slow Food Communities with follow-ups to the based on their needs. Feedback from the Slow Food Communities is very important during the process, partly because they may need to adapt concept and documentation to the local context. The final goal, in fact, is to transfer ownership of the process to the Slow Food Communities. During the process, coffee roasters on the Board of Experts evaluate coffee from the Slow Food Communities with one or more cuppings.

8. **Commercial Value**. The Slow Food Coffee Coalition proposes the coffees of the Slow Food Communities that have completed the PGS initiative to Italian and European roasters to enable them to buy the coffees and brand them for the European market with the Slow Food Coffee Coalition logo, according to the Coffee Coalition Trademark Code of Use.

⁵ A process whereby people in similar situations (in this case smallholder producers) in some way assess the production practices of their peers. The process can be formal or informal.