

## Quality and Transparency Leader

rdna is a shop and food community initiative. We link local food producers who take responsibility for honest, clean, and affordable food production with consumers who take more responsibility for what they eat and support through their purchase. rdna store is growing rapidly and holds the vision to transform the food production and buying culture in Egypt and beyond. In order to be able to grow, besides the trust and transparency we build, quality standards and assurance need to be developed and implemented in a systematic manner. A big part of this role is the implementation of a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), which is described in the annex.

### Scope of Work

- Lead rdna PGS project and coordinate with project consultants
- Develop clear quality standards for rdna products that are based on the PGS project (i.e. banned ingredients, testing system, etc.)
- Approve new products to the shop
- Liaise with rdna suppliers including possible field trips
- Work closely with marketing and social media team as well as the commercial department of rdna
- Supervise the organization of talks around food, nutrition, agriculture, health
- Supervise the organization and implementation rdna excursions to our suppliers

### Skills and talents

- Knowledge about food, agriculture, health and environmental issues
- Facilitating groups
- Social and passionate
- Good at building systems
- Enjoys working in teams and with a variety of different stakeholders

### **Terms of Working**

- Location: Maadi, rdna branches, remotely to be discussed
- Working hours: full time
- Start date: asap
- Compensation: to be discussed

### **How to apply**

Send your Resume and Motivation letter to [soraya@rdnastore.com](mailto:soraya@rdnastore.com) until Thursday the 29th of October.

## Annex - rdna PGS

The ecosystem of agricultural farm distribution in Egypt is dominated by small farmers; “Family farming is the prevailing pattern in agriculture production particularly in old lands. (...) The land holdings are fragmented with an average farm size of 2.5 feddans.”<sup>1,2</sup> When exploring the notion of turning Egypt’s agriculture sector organic, one inevitably faces a major obstacle: in order to be able to afford organic certification, the minimum farm size is around 10 feddan in the old- and around 20 feddan in the new lands<sup>3</sup>.

In order to look at food sovereignty of Egypt, small farmers are a key, since they make up the majority of farmers and hence ones who feed the country to a great extent. Food sovereignty is “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/countries/egy/en/>

<sup>2</sup>

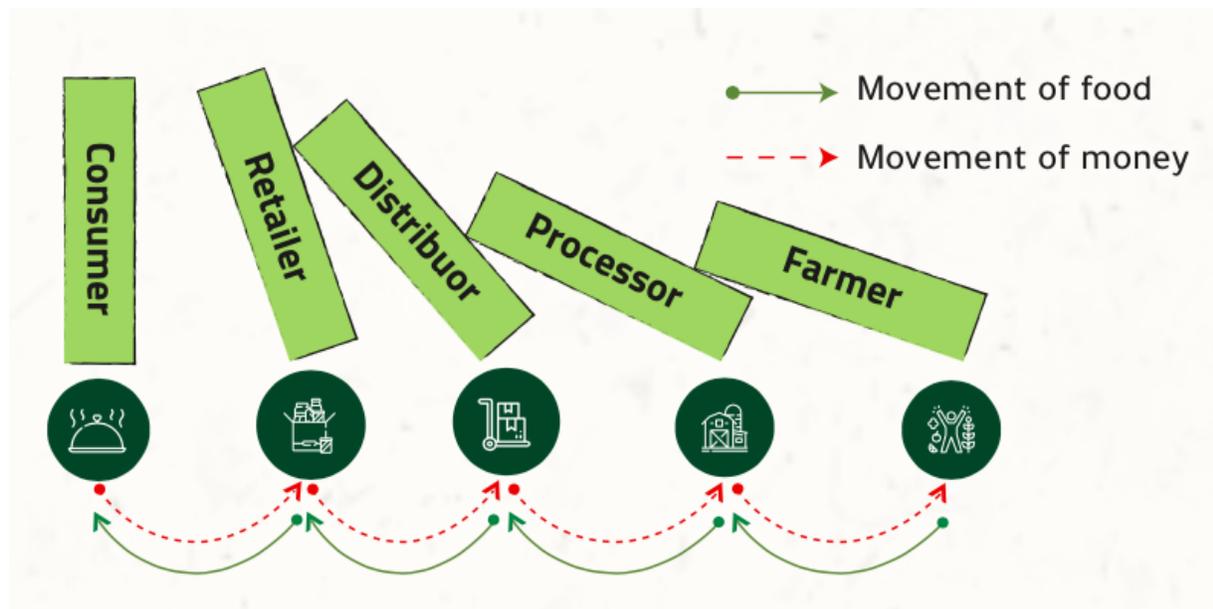
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321715482\\_The\\_challenges\\_of\\_food\\_sovereignty\\_in\\_the\\_Arab\\_region\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_Egypt/link/5a2d62c1a6fdccfbf898211/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321715482_The_challenges_of_food_sovereignty_in_the_Arab_region_The_case_of_Egypt/link/5a2d62c1a6fdccfbf898211/download)

<sup>3</sup> [Old lands refers to the fertile soils around the river Nile and its Delta, while new lands refers to newly reclaimed desert lands that are increasing in number in Egypt](#)

heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations”<sup>4</sup> And food sovereignty in Egypt is severely damaged.

Working with small farmers has been the focus of many international and national development projects. Organic Egypt is a project launched in 2018 to develop and enrich the organic agriculture sector in Egypt. Together with Egyptian farmers’ associations and local training centers, Organic Egypt empowers organic farmers and processors to expand the market for organic products. In order to benefit more farmers, mainly small scale since they dominate the Egyptian agriculture sector, together with Organic Egypt, rdna will develop a PGS for Egyptian small scale producers and farmers.

Agriculture and the food sector are very complex systems, with many internlinked factors. Since the food system is composed of four main aspects as shown in the following graph - namely farming, processing, marketing (distribution and retail), consuming - the solution has to put them all into consideration (and not just one or some of them).



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<sup>4</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321715482\\_The\\_challenges\\_of\\_food\\_sovereignty\\_in\\_the\\_Arab\\_region\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_Egypt](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321715482_The_challenges_of_food_sovereignty_in_the_Arab_region_The_case_of_Egypt)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5312en/ca5312en.pdf>

“Participatory Guarantee Systems” (PGS) is an innovative approach for these small scale farmers, which have been proven as very effective in the short and long term around the globe. PGS, as defined by IFOAM are “quality assurance initiatives that are locally relevant, emphasize the participation of stakeholders, including producers and consumers and operate outside the frame of third party certification.”<sup>6</sup> PGS represents an alternative solution, or “Alternative Certification” to the mainstreamed and often costly organic as well as Demeter certifications. According to FAO, “PGS are programmes where consumers and producers independently guarantee the agro-ecological origin, fair trade practices and sustainable use of local natural resources. PGS programmes are based on a fundamentally agro-ecological approach to agriculture and the social processes underlying it.”<sup>7</sup>

PGS works with all four aspects of the food system, namely producer (which encompasses farmers and processors), as well as consumers, and it shortens and minimizes the need for anonymous distribution and retail in the conventional sense and works on eliminating the gap between consumers and producers.

A FAO book titled *Innovative markets for sustainable agriculture*, which analyzes existing PGS communities from all over the world (namely Indonesia, Iran, Namibia, Nigeria, Columbia, Ecuador, India, Philippines, Thailand, Trinidad, Uganda, Benin, Bolivia, and Tanzania) states that “in all cases in this book (research), there is strong interest from dedicated groups of consumers of sustainable food that emerges from a basic concern for food safety.”<sup>8</sup> Food safety is also a big theme in Egypt, as a USAID report states:

The agriculture sector in Egypt is dominated by small farms which use traditional practices that do not comply with internationally recognized standards. For example, farmers tend to overuse and misuse agricultural chemicals and use outdated technologies and tools for land preparation, irrigation, and harvesting.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/page/files/pgs\\_guidelines\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/page/files/pgs_guidelines_en_web.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5907e.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5907e.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/egypt/agriculture-and-food-security>

The first “Lesson Learned” in IFOAM’s PGS Guidelines states that “right from the beginning engage as many stakeholders as possible, this process might be slow and feedback may be negative but work through this, as often many of the early opponents become advocates over time.”<sup>10</sup> “As the Consumers and producers have complementary interests. One party produces organic products and the other party buys and consumes them. Thus, the idea behind engaging consumers has many benefits and is a feature of many established PGSs.”<sup>11</sup>

In order to build on these experiences and lessons learned, Organic Egypt provides the required link to and experience in the farming sector in Egypt, while the other part of the solution is represented by rdna. Rdna is a food community initiative that links local food producers who take responsibility for honest, clean, and affordable food production with consumers who take more responsibility for what they eat and support through their purchase. Rdna believes that “our individual intention and collective effort is key to explore food sovereignty”. Through rdna the channel between supplier and consumer is made as short as possible through organizing farm excursions, creating sharing circles, creating short videos of suppliers and consumers and hosting food markets in the city.

In short, with our PGS, rdna wants to enable small scale suppliers to have access to know-how and capacity building, as well as the direct link to consumers. And through that work to also support consumers to get more knowledge and awareness as well as access to farmers and producers. Together, farmers, producers and consumers decide on their standards and how they want to work together, facilitated and managed through rdna. In this sense the gap between urban and rural worlds can be minimized, as through the PGS they are considered different aspects of the same organism.

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/page/files/pgs\\_guidelines\\_en\\_web.pdf](https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/page/files/pgs_guidelines_en_web.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5907e.pdf>