



SUSTAINING MOMENTUM FOR ORGANIC FARMING IN KENYA

Introduction:

Formal organic agriculture (OA) in Kenya dates back to the early 1980s when the first pioneer organic training institutions were established. Major pioneers being driven by the belief that OA system is the best in solving the rural and smallholder problems of food insecurity & soil degradation.

The organic sub-sector is relatively small but fast growing especially in fruit and vegetable export components. Initial efforts to promote organic agriculture in Kenya were made by rural development non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations, individuals and community-based organizations (CBOs), who sought to help rural farmers address the issues of declining agricultural productivity (especially the degradation of soils and the natural resource base), high poverty levels, food insecurity and low incomes, which prevented farmers accessing high cost inputs. By 2011 the subsector had grown to 151,371 hectares of certified organic land. Demand is high and largely going unmet. There are companies now listed as producing organic products for local and international markets, large supermarket outlets and restaurants are selling organic products and food.

The starting point in every marketing initiative is production. Hence this policy brief which is focused on the fostering policies that favour increased production in OA which do not degrade the environment.

Objective & Methodology:

Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) in collaboration with the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) and National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) wish to create an influential joined-up lobbying and advocacy mechanism to tackle policy barriers to trade in organic products, as well as creating a One Stop Shop for the Organic Sector in East Africa (OSOSEA).

In conducting this study mixed methods approach comprising of a desk study, key informant interviews as well as borrowing from farmer case studies that were carried out under the baseline study of farmers which has been reported on separately. The plan was to reach 45 respondents and at least pick four crops for referencing. Respondents were selected among many after consulting with KOAN. Some were physically visited and the rest were reached by telephone and emails. Ten farmers around Nairobi and Limuru were visited.



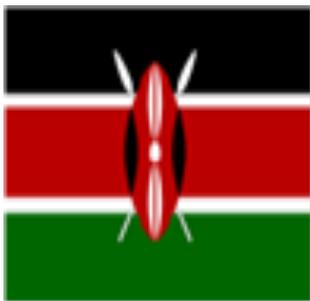
Findings

- The organic sector is relatively small but fast growing and led mainly by civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector (companies growing organic produce for export).
- The major barriers to improved production in OA in Kenya are mainly poor quality produce, high cost of inputs, and limited access to markets. Low productivity and inferior quality of organic produce is mainly observed in small scale farming system compared to that of large-scale farmers, resulting in poor prices. This low productivity is caused by inadequate knowledge and access to technical information about OA production for a particular crop.
- Organic produces, mainly vegetables and fruits produced on large-scale farms — have been exported from Kenya over the past two decades. Over the years, exports have developed beyond vegetables and fruits to include other products such as essential oils, dried herbs and spices, as well as products for the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries which are more often produced or collected by smallholders. Most



smallholders are organized into groups and some of these are registered.

- Kenya has organized organic macerates through two main organizations of producers; Kenya Organic Farmers Association (KOFA), and Kenya Organic Producers Association (KOPA). Together they are linked by a national supporting organization KOAN
- The demand for organic produce far exceeds the volume of production, which calls for investing on promotion of OA. Production is still very low when compared to demand to the extent that Kenya imports and packs organic produce from other countries in East Africa. The supply is not consistent in terms of volumes and quality, with unstable supply and seasonal variance. In most cases OA requires constant customers with constant demand. For instance, Kawamwaki farm was at low season during the visit because most of the customers travelled abroad for summer vacation. Other factors includes lack of irrigation infrastructures, inputs, and capital for expansion
- Organic agriculture production requires certification that takes into consideration the production system and practices. However, the process of certification is quite tedious which limit many farmers to join OA.
- In general, there is no policy and law for organic; the production and market depend on EAOPS; other related policy is Environmental Management and Co-Ordination Act that elaborates issues of conserving and protection of the ecosystem.
- Little research has been done in OA technologies and practices. The sector lacks appropriate inputs according to organic requirements. Resources to this players is also not enough



Policy implications

Results from various studies show that organic agriculture has great potential to improve the livelihood of smallholder farmers in the developing countries. Organic production allows access to new markets for farmers to obtain premium prices for their produce (export and domestic) but also to use extra incomes for extra foodstuffs, education or healthcare. Furthermore, evidence shows that organic agriculture can build up natural resources, strengthen communities, and improve human capacity, thus, improving food security by addressing many different causal factors simultaneously (Hine & Pretty, 2007)

- National organic agriculture policies that are comprehensive enough to ensure that the necessary political, technical and financial resources required to develop the subsector become available and to make clear the priority areas requiring support from development partners.
- Technical assistance is needed in the areas of policy formulation, analysis and advocacy in OA.
- Strengthen extension services on best crop husbandry in OA to enable improve productivity

Hine, R. & Pretty, J. (2007): Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa – Capacity Building Study 3: Organic Agriculture and Food Security in East Africa. Centre for Environment and Society, University of Essex

Research PLUS Africa (2015). Kenya Policy Gap Analysis, A consultancy report submitted to OSOSEA, Nairobi Kenya

Taylor, A (2006). Overview of the Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and the Opportunities for Regional Harmonization. *UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development*, Geneva

Proudly sponsored by

TRAC Fund

Swiss Development Cooperation (EAAI)

KOAN