



CBTF

UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development

Overview of the Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and the Opportunities for Regional Harmonization

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Prepared under the CBTF Project 'Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa'



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Preface

Organic agriculture offers a wide range of economic, environmental, social, health and cultural benefits for developing countries. It is a powerful tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to poverty alleviation and environment. For these reasons, organic agriculture was selected by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as one of the three thematic areas to be addressed in the framework of the UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Taskforce on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF).

In 2005, after a year of consultations and preparatory activities, the CBTF launched the project "Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa". Benefiting Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, the project comprises a number of background studies on key issues such as best practices for organic policy, national integrated assessments of organic agriculture, and regional cooperation, including development of an East Africa Organic Standard. Since 2006, Burundi and Rwanda have joined regional activities. For more information, please see the CBTF website at www. unep-unctad.org/cbtf.

Partnership is the key feature of this project. At the international level, CBTF has joined forces with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) to support project activities. At national level, regular multi-stakeholder meetings and public-private sector dialogue are creating synergies and dynamism in the sector. At regional level, public-private sector dialogue is reinforced and ideas exchanged on the best way to move forward at national and regional level. The "East Africa Organic Team", comprising all those committed to the development of the sector, grows stronger by the day.

This "kick off" study was commissioned in 2005 by the CBTF as a foundation for subsequent project activities. The study's major aim was to present a "snapshot" of the status of Organic Agriculture in East Africa as seen in mid-2005. To take this picture, Alastair Taylor of Agro Eco Uganda Branch was asked to bring together different country snapshots as presented primarily by the lead organic movements/associations in each country, namely the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN), the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) and the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU). Because of its experience in spearheading national standards development and certification in the region and an interest in organic policy issues, Grolink of Sweden was asked to bring into the snapshot the aspects of certification and policy, including opportunities for harmonization and cooperation within the region. No less than 22 experts have contributed to the preparation of this study—a concrete example of partnership in action.

The contents of this study were presented and discussed at CBTF regional workshops in Kampala (October 2005) and Arusha (March 2006). Feedback received has been incorporated into the final version. Most of the data is still from the time of initial drafting (i.e. mid-2005). Since that time, production and export of organic products in the three countries have continued to grow rapidly. The work of the CBTF project has also continued, and many new events have taken place.

Integrated assessments of organic agriculture are being conducted in the three countries.

The national institutions undertaking the assessments have used this overview study as a reference for background information on organic agriculture in their country. National project implementation teams are Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), Ugandan Export Promotion Board and NOGAMU in Uganda; Envirocare, Ministry of Agriculture and TOAM in Tanzania; and Bridge Africa, National Environmental Authority and KOAN in Kenya. Final drafts of these assessments, with recommendations for government policy, are expected by mid-2007. Partly due to project activities, public sector awareness of and engagement in organic agriculture have increased and broadened considerably. In all three countries, Ministries of Agriculture and Trade have become more active, and processes are under way to develop policies and actions to promote the organic sector.

At regional level, public and private sector stakeholders have met several times to discuss various project themes. A series of CBTF-IFOAM events in December 2006 in Nairobi included an East Africa Organic Policy Workshop, where key stakeholders involved in national organic policy development exchanged ideas and experiences and formulated action plans.

The harmonization of East African organic standards called for in this overview study is well on the way to becoming a reality. Under the auspices of CBTF and IFOAM, a Regional Standard Technical Working Group (RSTWG) has met four times to write the East African Organic Standard (EAOS). The RSTWG itself is a unique public-private sector regional partnership, comprising representatives from the national bureaus of standards, the organic movements and organic certifying bodies in the five East African countries plus the East African Business Council. In the second half of 2006, the second draft of the EAOS was circulated widely for public comment, debated in six national consultations, and tested in the field by a team of organic inspectors. Results were discussed at the fourth meeting of the RSTWG in December, which also held a joint session with the IFOAM Standards Committee with a view to ensuring international private sector market acceptance of the EAOS. It is expected that the third draft of the EAOS will enter the official East African Community standards harmonization process in 2007. The launch of the EAOS will coincide with the launch of a consumer campaign in the region to promote domestic market development and build supply capacity for export.

Regular workshops and meetings in the region have strengthened and broadened the organic network identified through this study. A sense of commitment and optimism is pervading the East African organic agriculture network. Future workshops are planned for the final year of the project, and it is anticipated that the information, technical knowledge and strong relationships generated though this project will provide the East Africa Organic Team with the capacity and momentum to continue the dynamic expansion of this promising and rewarding sector in the region.

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