

Ecological Organic Agriculture Policy

Rwanda

Biovision Africa Trust
Secretariat to African Union-led
EOA Initiative



Growing Sustainably



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Prepared by

Prof Raymond Auerbach,
Biological Systems Consulting & Research,
George, Western Cape, South Africa.

For

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Biovision Africa Trust Editors :

Dr. David Amudavi, Executive Director

Ms. Venancia Wambua, EOA-I Project Manager

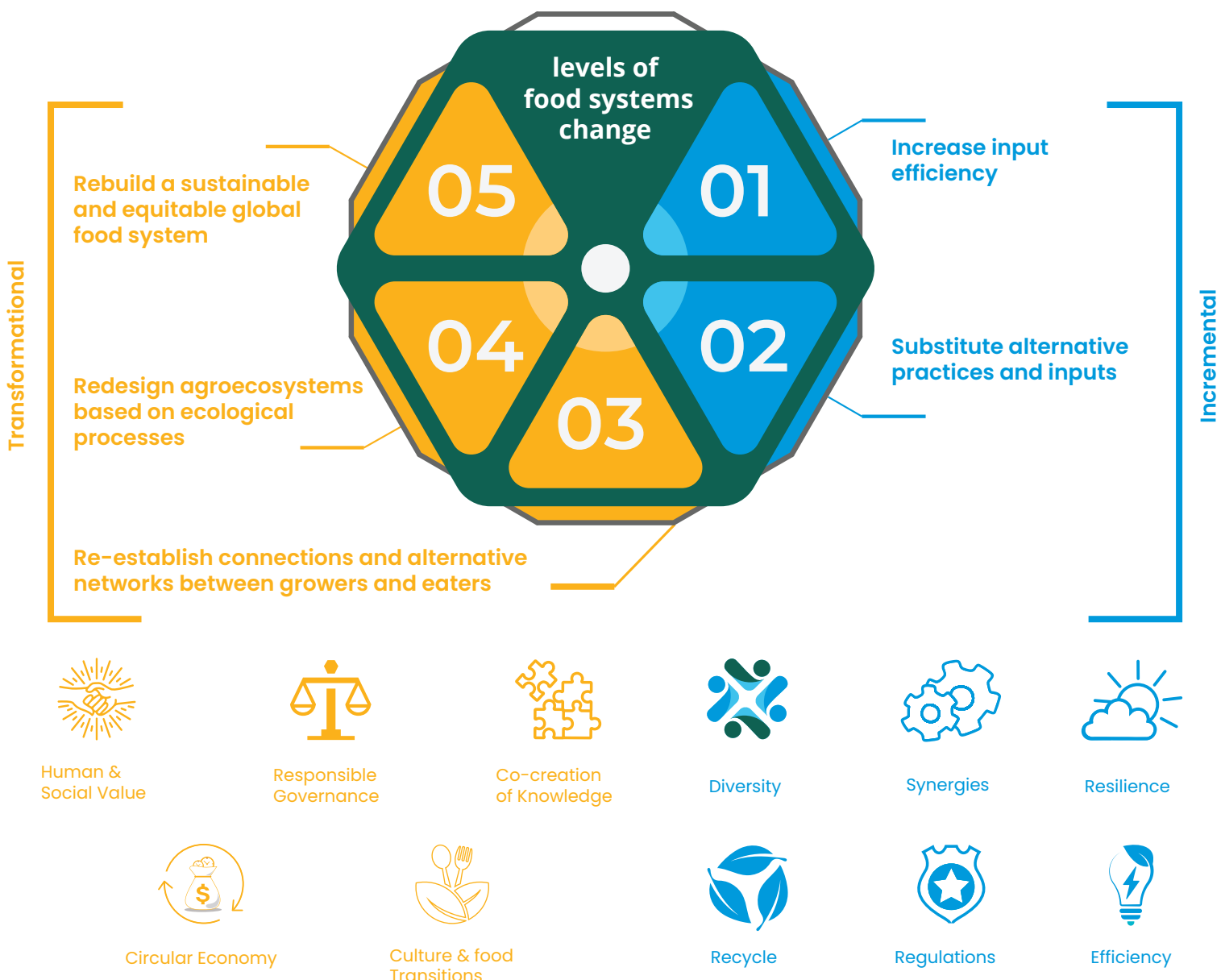
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W: www.ekarcommunications.com | E: info@ekarcommunications.com

East African Agriculture Context: Why Ecological Organic Agriculture?

Africa's food systems and agriculture face complex and interrelated challenges, requiring systemic solutions supported by an enabling policy environment for food systems transformation. Hunger and food insecurity are rising, and these issues are worsened by growing numbers of micronutrient deficiency and obesity-related health issues. Dwindling biodiversity and the impacts of climate change further threaten agricultural and food systems and require fundamental transformations. These transformations are essential in enhancing sustainability, resilience and increased production of quality and quantity of food under dramatically changing conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has painfully highlighted the poor resilience and equity in industrial food systems. Agroecology and organic farming increasingly take a whole food systems approach. [The FAO Agroecology Criteria Tool](#) distinguishes five levels of food systems change, the first two associated with incremental changes and the last three with transformational changes.

The Agroecology Criteria Tool + 10 elements of Agroecology



Using a typology developed for the African Union based on five EOA types, there are four (4) advanced EOA countries, eleven (11) active EOA countries, ten (10) developing EOA countries, twelve (12) infant EOA countries and eighteen (18) countries awaiting inspiration regarding Ecological Organic Agriculture. In West Africa, Benin, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal have joined EOA Initiative. In Eastern Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda have also joined the EOA Initiative.

Organic agriculture and agroecology provide systemic and evidence-based solutions to these interrelated challenges, resulting in increased sustainability, equity and resilience of food systems.

This, however, requires a major shift in funding and public policies. Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) will put carbon into the soil, not the atmosphere; it will reduce poison use, reduce pollution, improve food quality and increase water use efficiency. Since the 2010 decision on Organic Agriculture of the African Union (AU) Heads of State, the EOA Initiative has been implemented to support small-scale farmers and improve African food security and sovereignty. Eastern Africa has more countries supporting Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) than any other region of Africa through the EOA Initiative, but there is still a long way to go.

Several issues need to be addressed in Rwanda's agricultural development, such as:

- Transport infrastructure for access to markets.
- Equitable land rights.
- Public procurement schemes for sustainably country produced foods.
- Payment for ecosystem services to farmers.
- Communities and entrepreneurs.
- Elimination of subsidies for synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds.
- Integrated seed systems value traditional varieties and breeds and seed exchange systems.
- Promotion of agroforestry.
- Strengthening of agroecological research and development as well as participatory extension services.
- Integration of agroecology in the country's climate change adaptation plan.
- Organic waste strategies take principles of the circular economy into account.
- Formalised inclusive multi-stakeholder processes for policy development on food system change.

The situation in Rwanda: Food system and agricultural production

The Rwandan economy remains, for the foreseeable future, heavily dependent on the agricultural sector employing as it does around 90% of the population, providing 91% of the food consumed in the country, contributing 36% of GDP and accounting for 70% of revenue from exports. Rwanda has elaborate policies, strategies, and development frameworks on agriculture and rural development, focusing on food security, nutrition security, and poverty reduction. Since 2000, the food security policy has been guided by international, regional, and national commitments towards ensuring food security and poverty reduction among the rural population. As the policy formulation process in Rwanda is unusually progressive and participatory, much of the detail on the Rwandan agriculture policy formulation process from Kareko-Munene (2020) is presented here. World Bank and FAO projects have helped Rwanda develop infrastructure. Two reports are summarised below to introduce the general situation of agriculture in Rwanda and show the levels of transformation.

World Bank (2019) shows how half a million women have benefited from projects that help build terraces on the steep hillsides typical of Rwandan agriculture. Several projects have trained local people in terrace-building and helped develop irrigation infrastructure. They also allowed for investment in rural infrastructure, which has been put in place to link productive areas to markets. Many of the World Bank projects are also encouraging the use of compost, as shown in the video in the World Bank article of 2019 (summarised below):



Rwanda is a landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. Its 26,338 km² is dominated by highlands, giving it the name "Land of A Thousand Hills". With 441 inhabitants / km² Rwanda had Africa's second-highest population density as of 2015. In the last ten years, the population grew at a rate of 2.6% and reached an estimated 11.61 million inhabitants in 2015.



Land distribution shortage, degradation and soil erosion are among the main challenges faced by agriculturalists. Around 90% of Rwandan territory lies on the slopes with the consequent effect of soil loss, erosion and decreasing fertility. It is estimated that 1.4 m t/yr of soil is lost. The pressure of a growing population also has a negative effect on land availability. Rwandan agriculture presents a strong dependence on rainfalls and vulnerability to climate shocks.

*1.4 million tones
per year of soil
is lost as a result
of erosion.*



91% of Rwandan food is consumed by the country.



36 % of Rwanda's GDP is from Farming.



70% of Rwanda's revenues comes from exports.

Poor use of scarce water resources for irrigation makes agricultural production unpredictable from one season to another. Low productivity levels for crops and livestock are due to insufficient input use, poor production techniques and inefficient farming practices. The use of chemical fertilisers in Rwanda saw a steady rise in 2007 when the Government of Rwanda (GoR) started the Crop Intensification Programme (CIP). Under the programme, subsidised fertilisers are provided to farmers to cultivate six priority crops. Despite this, farmer adoption of fertilisers remains quite low compared to other countries in the region. The Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) was established in 2007 and started operating as a registered NGO in 2014. ROAM currently has about 1000 members and is working on a strategy for EOA in Rwanda.

Elements of policy required to transition to sustainable food systems in Rwanda

Organic products in Rwanda include: apple, banana, pineapple, coffee, tea, honey, gooseberry, avocado, passion fruit, mountain papaya, tree tomato, chillies, and essential oils. Even before the Maputo Declaration, Rwanda had already embraced the spirit of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) through the development of a clear strategic vision and complementary detailed implementation plans and performance accountability systems for achieving food security. However, as of October 2020, Rwanda does not have an explicit national organic agriculture policy document.

Organic certification

Although many farmers farm organically without certification, the development of the sector and access to high-end markets with a price premium for organics requires attention to quality management, either through Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) or through organic certification. In 2005, the Rwandan government's increasing interest in organic agriculture led it to join as an observer the first meeting of the Regional Standard Technical Working Group (RSTWG) for the development of a voluntary regional East African organic standard. One year later, having joined the East African Community, Rwanda was eligible to join the RSTWG as a full member. As an official member of the East African Community and alongside Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi, Rwanda ratified the first regional voluntary organic standard in Africa and the only regional organic standard in the world alongside the EU's, the "East African Organic Products Standard" (EAOPS). The EAOPS is the first standard in the world to have been developed in cooperation between voluntary organic movements and governmental National Standards Bodies. The EAOPS is also the first voluntary organic standard to be used in Rwanda.

The African Union commissioned an assessment of policy interventions to mainstream EOA in Africa. This study developed a system of measuring progress in EOA based on whether the Country has an organic policy, a product standard, government support for the sector, well-organised farmers, private sector involvement and developed domestic and export markets for organic products. Based on these seven criteria, a typology ranging from Type 1 (Advanced EOA sector) to Type 5 (Awaiting Inspiration) has been developed. Rwanda has been evaluated as Type 3 (Infant EOA Sector).

Preliminary EOA Type (Type 3)

Rwanda has a developing domestic and export market, some NGO activity, some guidelines and exports, but little government support.

The summary of evaluations for all 55 countries of Africa is shown in Figure 1; only four African countries achieved the status of “Advanced EOA Sector” (Type 1). Countries will be re-evaluated regularly according to the seven criteria mentioned above, and the assessment gives key policy interventions which are needed at each stage of organic sector development.

The elements of change identified for Rwanda are:



Nutrition education at school and for young mothers. (starting point for Type 5).



A school curriculum for healthy and sustainable food systems. (Types 5 & 4).



A training programme for agricultural extension officers. (Type 3).



Marketing and certification support for semi-commercial EOA farmers. (Type 1).



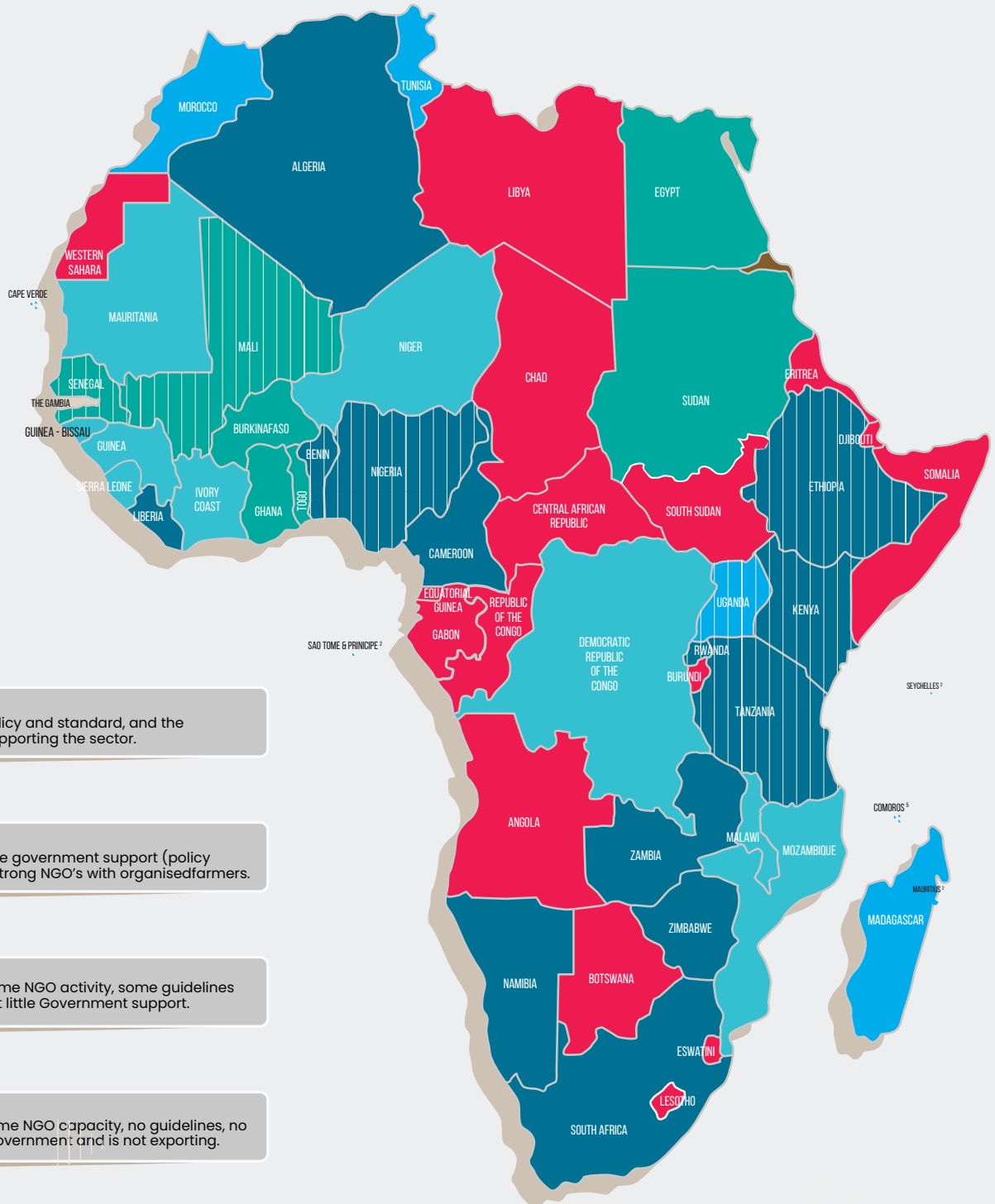
A support programme for EOA conversion, scaling up and quality management. (Type 2).



Support for quality management through training in participatory guarantee systems (PGS). (Type 2).



Projection : Geographic. Datum Hartesbeeshoek 1994.
 Source: Surveyor General.
 Insert : ESRI Data & Maps.



01
 Country has a policy and standard, and the government is supporting the sector.

02
 Country has some government support (policy underway) and strong NGO's with organised farmers.

03
 Country has some NGO activity, some guidelines and exports but little Government support.

04
 Country has some NGO capacity, no guidelines, no support from government and is not exporting.

05
 Country has very little institutional capacity, no government support and is not exporting.


 EOA-I member.

Figure 1: Ecological Organic Agriculture Status of the 55 Countries of Africa
 Source: Biological Systems Consulting & Research for the African Union Commission in 2020

Monitoring and evaluation of sustainable food systems in Rwanda

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is based on the five typologies developed for the assessment analysis study, using the following six criteria:



National Policy

The extent to which a national policy is in place for EOA and supported by a budgetary allocation.



Organic Regulations

The extent to which organic regulations have been promulgated and implemented.



National Standards & Certification

The extent to which national standards and certification are in place.



Government Support

The extent of government support to the organic sector.



Civil Society Involvement

The degree to which civil society is involved in the development of the EOA sector in each country.



Domestic & Export Markets

The performance of the domestic and export EOA markets, respectively.

While Uganda has now adopted an EOA Policy, and the East African Organic Product Standard is available for the whole East Africa Community (EAC), other countries could learn from Uganda and move ahead more swiftly with National EOA policies. All EAC countries need to integrate EOA into the training of their farmers and extension officers. The current FISP approach should largely be abandoned, except that EAC farmers can be helped to produce compost, and, where needed, basal dressings of rock phosphate should be made available at subsidised prices in order to rectify those soils which are deficient in available phosphate.

The African Union Heads of State agreed in 2010 that EOA should be supported. Each country should monitor progress and report to the AU through CAADP Programme every three years using the M & E Framework.

Food system targets and a monitoring and evaluation system to meet them



The indicator framework is built based on the five typologies developed for this study, utilising the six criteria given above:

Regarding the first criterion, the assessment requires the following process:

1(a) An in-depth integrated assessment **of general agriculture policies, programmes and plans should be performed to understand how they affect the competitiveness and production of the organic sector.**

1(b) Objectives for government involvement in developing the EOA sector **must be clarified and formulated**, and all relevant stakeholders should be involved in the development of policy, plans and programmes. Objectives can include increased income, environmental protection, biodiversity enhancement, smallholder competitiveness, human health, increased exports, and domestic growth.

1(c) **One government ministry or agency should be assigned a leading role in sector development**, and organic desks should be established in other relevant ministries and agencies.

1(d) **A national organic action plan or strategy must be formulated and implemented.** Plan typically would include aspects of standards, regulations, market development, production issues, capacity-building and research. The plan should be correctly sequenced (logic) and should state measurable targets for the organic sector to help agencies and stakeholders focus their efforts.

1(e) **A Country must formulate a national EOA policy based on participatory policy development with close interaction between the government and the sector.** Government should actively support the sector's organisation and its participation in the policy formulation process.

1(f) A Country has formulated and promulgated some EOA regulations.

1(g) A Country should formulate implementation decrees and action plans for the actioning of the EOA Policy.



1(h) EOA should be recognised and integrated into the main policies of the country, e.g. agricultural policy, food, health, education policies, environmental, and poverty eradication policies.

The development of mandatory regulations is considered to be the right policy response to develop the organic sector:

- They give organic agriculture a more respectable and credible image.
- Improved access to export markets.
- Development of the local market.

Regarding the second criterion (national certification and standards), the following is needed:

2(a) Standards are available.

2(b) A Participatory Guarantee System needs further development.

2(c) Governments should **facilitate access to certification services**. Rwanda could consider establishing a governmental certification service.

Indicator: Measure of government support for certification. A proxy may be the ease of access of farmers to certification (i.e. are certification requirements excluding some farmers?).

Regarding the third criterion (government support), the following is needed:





3(a) The coming strategy from ROAM should be used to develop a budget for EOA support.

3(b) Research and extension need to be strengthened in accordance with this Strategic Plan.

Regarding the fourth criterion (Civil Sector strength), the following is needed:

4(a) Mapping of civil society organisations must be performed & assessment of their capacity undertaken.

4(b) Government should support the development of a well-organized sector through ROAM.

Regarding the fifth and sixth criteria (civil society involvement & markets), the following is needed:

5(a) Annual growth in an organic agricultural area (ha) must be measured and evaluated against the strategy.

5(b) Measure the change in the number of EOA producers (no.) and set targets for the next three years.

5(c) Determine annual growth in EOA earnings through export and domestically (currency).

5(d) Assess changes in civil society involvement in the organic sector.





The Regions of Africa

Like many country borders in Africa, the regions of Africa are subject to discussion, and several countries are involved with more than one region. In developing regional policies for EOA in Africa, the **Eastern Africa** region countries include Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as Somalia. In the **Northern Africa** region the ten countries are Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, as well as Eritrea and Djibouti.

The fifteen **West African** countries of ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. As several Central African countries are also in the East African Community (EAC), we include only the following eight countries in the **Central African** EOA Policy: Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the island state, Sao Tome & Principe. Under the **Southern African** regional policy, we include Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, South Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and the Comoros Islands. In this way, each of the 55 countries of Africa is only included in one region for the purposes of this policy.



Biovision
Africa
Trust

Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT)
Secretariat and Executing Agency to the
Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative for Africa
P. O. Box 30772 – 00100,
Kasarani off Thika Rd, Nbi Kenya
E: info@biovisionafricatrust.org
Tel: +254 719 052 113



Biovision Africa Trust



@BiovisionAfrica