

Adopting Ecological Organic Agriculture Development Strategy



A National Policy Brief for Government of Kenya

April 2021



Adopting Ecological Organic Agriculture Development Strategy in Kenya

ABBREVIATIONS

ABLH	Association of Better Land Husbandry
AKIS	Agriculture Knowledge and Information System
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EOA	Ecological Organic Agriculture
EU	European Union
KALRO	Kenya Agriculture Livestock Research Organization
KIOF	Kenya Institute of Organic Farming
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OA	Organic Agriculture
SACRED	Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Program
UNEP	United Nation Environment Program
UNCTAD	United Nation Conference on Trade and Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture is one of East Africa's most important sectors, with about 80 percent (80%) of the population of the region living in rural areas and depending on agriculture for their livelihood. The agricultural sector is dominated by smallholder mixed farming of livestock, food crops, cash crops, fishing and aquaculture.

The Organic agriculture sector has been growing rapidly in East Africa, alongside a growing trend of consumer awareness and demand for organic produce. The majority of organic products from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are destined for markets in Europe and North America. Meanwhile, organic cross border trade within the region is extremely low, despite considerable demand. This is considered to be largely due to poor coordination between the EAC member states, resulting in higher trade costs, and dissatisfied consumers. It is recommended that the East African Community work to promote the organic sector and to strengthen coordination, through the use of public authorities mandated to support organic operators and through the promotion of regional organic trade. Trade in particularly advantageous crops in each country would be especially effective.





INTRODUCTION

Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on natural cycles and systems adapted to local conditions, combining tradition, innovation and science in production systems that promote fair relations along supply chains.

The Kenyan Agricultural sector is characterised by small scale farmers who contribute greatly in ensuring there is providence of food domestically and for export markets.



However, in the recent past, agricultural productivity has declined significantly due to climate change, declining health of soils and a recorded increase in human population that puts pressure on food systems and arable land resulting to food insecurity in the country (Quan, 2011). Around 75% of Kenya's population is engaged in agriculture. Despite being a major exporter of cash crops Kenya is also a larger recipient of food aid in Africa (Arnold, 1997; Milestone and Lang, 2002).

The high input agriculture otherwise referred to as “Green revolution” has been challenged due to its negative impacts on biodiversity. The green revolution was initially designed to increase food production for the growing global population which has resulted in negative social, environmental and economic consequences which has inspired alternative agriculture systems and Ecological organic Agriculture has emerged as the viable Alternative. The growth and development of organic agriculture (farming) in Kenya was initially an initiative of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Private Organisations.

These (a group of six organisations) included the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming (KIOF) formed in 1936; Manor House Agricultural Centre (formed in 1984); Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme (SACDEP formed in 1992); and the Association of Better Land Husbandry formed in 1994; Baraka Agricultural College and the Sustainable Agriculture Centre for Research and Development in Africa (SACRED).The initiative has realised increased food production and achieved sustainable soil health and environmental conservation outcomes.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

This Policy Brief utilized a double pronged approach which included review of relevant policy documents and validated by interviews with key informant interviews.



KEY STATEMENTS

- Organic Agriculture plays a significant role in reducing food insecurity by creating of a sustainable production. Production method that ensures continuous food production as the soils are continuously healthy and the inputs required are cost friendly.
- Studies demonstrate organic products as safe with no risk of containing chemical residues (UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF, 2008). Organic farming system is shown to be more resilient and less risky thereby providing the base for immense potential towards food security (Pimentel et al., 2005; Kerselaers et al., 2007; UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF, 2008).
- The liberalization of Kenya's agricultural sector in the early 1990s led to increase of prices of farm inputs as parasternal subsidies were withdrawn. This situation caused many smallholders to rethink their production strategies and question their need for fertilizers. Organic inputs were therefore the best solution to agricultural production systems.
- Ecological Organic Agriculture is environmentally friendly.
- EOA is Well suited to small scale farming and can increase the yields and incomes of subsistence farmers in developing countries like Kenya – Majority of whom (close to 70% are women).
- There are gaps in policies for organic agriculture targeting small holder farmers in Kenya and the key challenge to recognition of Organic Agriculture and revitalization of the agricultural sector as a whole is the unfavourable policy environment.
- Review of various pieces of legislation and related policies in the past has been sporadic and uncoordinated with passing of new legislation while leaving the previous ones intact.
- The Agricultural Act, Revised Edition 2012 does not recognize organic agricultural producers, yet, there is increasing barriers to Kenya's fresh produce in the main export market that is the EU. There is very little data and information on organic production and export. Many of the exporters are large-scale farmers, already engaged in the export agriculture and horticulture that are diversifying into organic production to meet demand from their established customers.

EOA POLICY SITUATION IN KENYA

- i. The draft of the organic agriculture policy developed by agricultural experts from the ministry of Agriculture, Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) is complete and ready to be deliberated upon by the cabinet. The referenced document remains a draft.
- ii. Currently, the agricultural sector in Kenya is governed by 131 pieces of legislation including legislation for supporting institutions. The principal Act governing the agriculture sector is the Agriculture Act Chapter 318. The Act does not give specific reference to Organic Agriculture (OA) while most provisions are not relevant to the current production trends. Examples are in Box 1;



Box 1

- *Part VIII, Section 100. The Act ensured production of a sufficiency of food for the requirements of Kenya. The Minister shall declare essential crops necessary for good land management and for the requirements of Kenya or obligations to supply East Africa. Sub-section (3) states that scheduled crops include maize as defined in the maize marketing Act. Elsewhere in section 13 maize is defined by the National Cereals and Produce Board Act.*
- *Part XII, Section 184-Rules for the Preservation, Utilization and Development of Agricultural land. Reference is made to Good estate management, good husbandry, and reasonable standard of efficient production. Practices on land may also be covered by Subsidiary legislation, Section 48, The Agriculture (basic land usage) Rules.*

- iii. Players in the ecological sector believe that it cannot develop to its full potential without government support. Among the issues that require government support are curriculum development, harmonization, validation of organic research findings by the government research authorities, and mainstreaming of organic agriculture.
- iv. The government has for instance come up with the Strategy for Revitalizing Agriculture (SRA) and a draft of National Food and Nutrition Policy. In their objectives and scope, these tools do not give any mention to the direction the government wants to take on OA and its integration in the agriculture sector reforms. Operation in the OA is still left ungoverned with a lot of intervention coming from the CSOs which conduct research, training, certification promotion, marketing and lobbying and advocacy.
- v. Policy reforms in Kenya have revolved around: Institutional frameworks, Agricultural taxation Production and infrastructure, Value addition and Marketing. There has not been any deliberate attempt to analyse and present Kenyans with policy options around agricultural farming practices such as, conventional agriculture, genetic engineering and/or organic agriculture.
- vi. There are no official policies at the national level for organic agriculture in Kenya with an exception of some counties in Kenya, even though there is increasing public interest and recognition of organic agriculture. The organic sector has developed to date without any explicit official government policy support. Past attempts by the ABLH, KIOF and other interested parties to get the government to work on this issue has received a cold reception.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Introduction of organic farming and other farming systems in all educational levels - primary to higher education institutions.
- ii. Policy guidelines from the Ministry of Agriculture favouring organic agriculture.
- iii. Increased research both at public, community and private institutions.
- iv. Development of local organic markets and consumer education.
- v. Legislation in parliament



- vi. Although KOAN has done well in promoting access to EOA information, EOA should be mainstreamed in to AKIS and other information systems. More awareness of these systems be created to increase access.
- vii. Friendlier national or regional standard for organic production should be developed, through close cooperation between the stakeholders, private sector and Government. It should be well adapted to the conditions in the East Africa Communities and Kenya and mainly focus the domestic market.
- viii. Government of Kenya (Ministry) regulating the agricultural sector should develop the regulations in close consultation with the EOA sector and ensure that the regulations are enabling rather than controlling in nature.

CONCLUSION

- The EOA initiative draws its biggest strength from the fact that this is an African driven process whose decision was supported by all African national governments at AU meeting. This therefore means that the agenda and theme of the EOA initiative can only be decided and managed internally and any external input will go to support the cause but not determine its process and outcomes.
- Wide adoption of EOA brand e.g KILIMOHAJ mark is needed and an advocacy and awareness focused on buying Ecological Organic products as a way of promoting the benefits of consuming ecologically grown food.
- Findings of the survey on EOA's limitations and challenges in Kenya established that slow response from the government to mainstream it into its national programs, financial problems/poverty and lack of clear policy framework for EOA.
- Need for the government to develop an all-inclusive policy on organic agriculture. For instance, food supplied to schools must be organic like it has been done in the United States and United Kingdom.

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