

Sustaining food systems through Ecological Organic Agriculture Practices within the Counties in Kenya



A Policy Brief for County Governments in Kenya

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POLICY BRIEF: A SOLUTION TO SUSTAINABLE COUNTY FOOD SYSTEMS LIES IN ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE PRACTICES

ABBREVIATIONS

EOA	Ecological Organic Agriculture
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement
KIOF	Kenya Institute of Organic Farming
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OA	Organic Agriculture
SACDEP	Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Program
SACRED	Sustainable Agriculture Centre for Research for Research and Development in Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line to the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal # 2, 3 and 12, on Zero Hunger, Good Health and well-being and Responsible production and Consumption respectively), it is time Counties adopted Ecological Organic Agriculture to ensure sustainable food security to the growing population. Ecological Organic Agriculture is a production management system that considers the diversity and ecosystem in a holistic manner. Although Formal Organic Agriculture in Kenya dates back to the early 1980s, there was need to scale it up to Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative at a continental level in Africa as Ecological Agriculture was seen to hold the promise of increased productivity by small scale farmers although Modern farming systems involves high inputs of synthetic fertilizers and pesticide to support high-yielding, hybrid varieties of crops have contributed to soil erosion, environmental pollution, loss of indigenous crop diversity and poorer health among rural people. Chemicals certainly provide a quick fix but are ultimately self-defeating, and whereas in temperate countries it has taken many years to see their ill-effects, in tropical countries like Kenya with poorer soils the effects have been short-lived and the impacts more damaging therefore necessitating a solution.



INTRODUCTION

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.



If county governments can have a collaborative approach and adopt policies that promote Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA), food security will be ensured and therefore attain an improved state of livelihoods for small-scale farmers.

KEY STATEMENTS

- i. Much evidence shows that implementation of organic Agriculture (OA) increases productivity, and that it will be possible to feed a growing population with food produced in OA systems. OA is explored, analysed and discussed in relation to the principles of Ecology, Health, Care and Fairness as enunciated by IFOAM, as a developmental strategy.
- ii. General and organic agriculture policies should support each other to the greatest extent possible to promote effective policy coherence, especially if organic agriculture is promoted as a mainstream solution.
- iii. There are no integrated policies for organic agriculture targeting small holder farmers at the County levels and the key challenge to recognition of Organic Agriculture and revitalization of the agricultural sector as a whole is the unfavourable policy environment. Revision of various pieces of legislation and related policies in the past has been sporadic and uncoordinated with passing of new legislation while leaving the existing ones intact.
- iv. The necessary intensification of the productivity and climate resilience of African farming systems can and should be ecological, maintain ecosystem services and be based on restoring, building and maintaining the natural resource base, particularly soil, water and biodiversity.



- v. Farmers represent one third of the world population. Small-scale farmers, many of whom are women, produce about 70% of our planet's food. As the earth's primary ecosystem's managers farmers are best placed to ensure sustainable development (IFOAM, 2014) Organic agriculture has a significant contribution to make in relation to sustainable development and the newly established Sustainable Development Goals.
- vi. Due to high production of food through Organic Agriculture, the growing global population and increasing urbanization can be easily tackled and this can be scaled up from the County Level.
- vii. EOA encourages responsible production where future generations are considered thus farming without harming the environment i.e., using ecosystem friendly pest and disease control methods.
- viii. Organic Agriculture plays a significant role in reducing food in security.
- ix. Organic farming is a sustainable production method that ensures continuous food production as the soils are continuously healthy and the inputs required are cost friendly.
- x. EOA approaches in a form of sustainable agriculture to ensure adequate food production

POLICY SITUATION AT COUNTY LEVEL

Analysing the Agricultural documents and policies from the county governments in Kenya, there are no explicit policies for Ecological Organic Agriculture and therefore, there is an urgent need to develop policies that will promote EOA at the county level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. An action plan for the organic sector should be developed based on analysis of the state of the sector, participatory consultations, a needs assessment and proper sequencing of actions. The action plan should state measurable targets for the organic sector to help agencies and stakeholders focus their efforts.
- ii. Needs assessment is needed in each County to ensure research is relevant to the needs of organic farmers.
- iii. There should be accelerated effort in development of County organic markets and consumer education.
- iv. Organic extension services need to be established and the staff trained. Organic extension should be developed and implemented in a participatory manner and have the farm and the farmer as the centre of attention at all County levels.



CONCLUSION

Findings of the study on barriers to adoption of ecological organic agriculture in Kenya established that slow response from the both county and national government to mainstream it into its national programs, financial problems/poverty, and lack of clear policy framework for EOA hinders the initiative adaptability.

If clear EOA policies can be developed and implemented from the county level, it will be easy to scale them up to the national level ensuring a great milestone in achieving food security for the Kenyan growing population.

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The EU regulation that defines the standards and inspection measures for any product sold as organic within the European Union.