

SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food
Systems in Africa

Success Stories from the Ecological Organic
Agriculture Initiative, Phase I & II

March 2023

BENIN



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Introduction

In 2011, the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) took a decision to build an Africa-wide organic agriculture platform. The African Union Commission (AUC) accepted the mandate, launched the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) and established the Continental Steering Committee (CS) as the apex in the governance structure of EOA in Africa whose members serve to provide EOA in Africa and its membership with guidance, oversight and decision-making regarding the operations and activities of EOA Initiative in Africa. , EOA-I has received alot of support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Corporation (SDC) in the framework of the Global Program on Food Security (GPFS), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SIDA) and from Africa Union Commission - DARBE through funds from EU.

The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) was established to transform and create sustainable food systems in Africa by promoting ecologically sound strategies and practices among diverse stakeholders in production, processing, marketing, and policymaking, to safeguard the environment, improve livelihoods, alleviate poverty, and guarantee food security.

The initiative entails a holistic system that aims to sustain the health of ecosystems by relying on functional natural cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of synthetic inputs, which have adverse effects on human, animal, plant, and environmental health. With agroecology as its cornerstone for achieving sustainable agriculture, the initiative placed emphasis on all facets of the food systems from production to processing, marketing and consumption with ecological, economic, and social aspects benefits. EOA-I promotes agricultural techniques tailored to local conditions and encouraged practices, technologies and innovations that enhance beneficial biological interactions between various plants and species to build long-term fertility and soil health.

Recognizing the value of conventional, traditional and indigenous

knowledge in creating sustainable agricultural systems, the initiative lays a heavy emphasis on community involvement and information sharing. The EOA-I aims to transform and create sustainable food systems by promoting ecologically sound strategies and practices among diverse stakeholders in production, processing, marketing and policy-making, to safeguard the environment, improve livelihoods, alleviate poverty and guarantee food security.

From its inception, the initiative harbors an ambitious goal to mainstream EOA into national agricultural production systems by promoting agricultural practices that maintain the health and fertility of the soil, conserve water resources, and safeguard natural habitats and ecosystems with respect to the interconnectedness between plants, animals and the environment.

To achieve this goal EOA-I is organized around four objectives:

1. To increase documentation of information and knowledge on organic agricultural products along the complete value chain and support relevant actors to translate it into practices and wide application.
2. To systematically inform producers about the EOA approaches and good practices and motivate their uptake through strengthening access to advisory and support services.
3. To increase the share of quality organic products at the local, national, and regional markets; and
4. Strengthen inclusive stakeholder engagement in organic commodities value chain development by developing national, regional, and continental multi-stakeholder platforms to advocate for changes in public policy, plans, and practices.

This booklet highlights some of the outstanding success stories from direct beneficiaries of the project in the nine countries at farmer, processor, and policy-actor levels and as a reflection of the effective implementation of the project action plan through strong partnerships and beneficiaries' needs-oriented interventions.

COUNTRY IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS BY COUNTRY AND PILLAR	
ETHIOPIA	
Pillar 4	Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Wollo University
Pillar 2	PAN Ethiopia
Pillar 3	Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD)
KENYA	
Pillar 4	The Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Egerton University
Pillar 2	FarmKenya
Pillar 3	Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN)
UGANDA	
Pillar 4	Pelum Uganda— County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Uganda Martyrs University (UMU)
Pillar 2	Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda
Pillar 3	Kulika Trust

RWANDA	
Pillar 4	Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Regional Research Centre for Integrated Development (RCID)
Pillar 2	Radio HUGUKA
Pillar 3	Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM)
TANZANIA	
Pillar 4	Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania
Pillar 2	Pelum Tanzania
Pillar 3	Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM)
MALI	
Pillar 4	Fédération Nationale des Producteurs de l' Agriculture Biologique et Equitable du Mali (FENABE Mali) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Institute of Rural Economy (IER) Mali
Pillar 2	Association Malienne pour la Solidarité et le Développement (AMSD)
Pillar 3	Union des Producteurs de Sésame de Banamba (UPSB)

SENEGAL	
Pillar 4	National Council for Concertation and Cooperation of Rural People (CNCR) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Environnement Développement Action pour la Protection Naturelle des Terroirs (EndaPronat)
Pillar 2	Environnement et Développement en Afrique (IED)
Pillar 3	Agrecole Afrique
BENIN	
Pillar 4	Beninese Organization for the Promotion of Organic Agriculture (OBEPAB) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Research Laboratory on Innovation for Agricultural Development of the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Parakou (LRIDA/FA/UP)
Pillar 2	Platform of Civil Society Actors of Benin (PASCiB)
Pillar 3	Research and Technical Assistance Center for the Environment and Agricultural Development (CRATEDA ONG)
NIGERIA	
Pillar 4	Association of Organic Agriculture Practitioners of Nigeria (NOAN) — County Lead Organization (CLO)
Pillar 1	Kwara State University
Pillar 2	Farmers Development Union
Pillar 3	Ibadan Go Organic Multipurpose Cooperative Society

EOA Initiative Coverage







TRAINING AND PROMOTION OF ORGANIC PLANTAIN FARMING CHANGING LIVES OF LOCAL FARMERS IN BENIN

Benin

For years, plantain farming in Benin by smallholder farmers has been a secondary and neglected affair. Most people would leave opportunistic plantain trees to grow with little to no care by the roadside, riverbanks and backyard overgrowth. This is in spite of the fact that commercially, plantain is one of the most in-demand food sources in the whole of west Africa.

According to a survey by Platform of Civil Society Actors in Benin (PASCiB), apathy toward this crop among smallholder farmers is caused by high costs and difficulty in getting plantain seedlings and low yields due to poor cropping practices. PASCiB, a renowned organic agriculture extension not-for-profit organization, also found that most farmers obtained suckers from their peers with little regard for the quality or variety of what they are planting.

With the support of the Ecological and Organic Agriculture Initiative, PASCiB set about to train lead farmers on advanced skills for organic farming of banana plantain on and off-season and seed production. The training covered good agronomic practices, dry weather crop irrigation, plant spacing and seed multiplication in local home nurseries.

PASCiB trained more than 300 banana plantain producers and created a network of farmers in the value chain for ease and collaborative marketing of their produce. Each of the 300 trainee farmers was tasked to recruit, train and support 20 other farmers within their local area.

This knowledge and skills dissemination approach saw the number of highly trained plantain farmers expand, creating new demand for seedlings as well as a bigger supply, thus lowering the cost of seed significantly. Easy access to good quality and well-maintained seed, as well as the skills to properly look after the crop, increased the quality and yield of the banana plantain.

The previously neglected crop was now averaging 2,000 more plantain bunches per hectare compared to previous yields from traditional practices. The sale of both seedlings and mature crop produce has changed the livelihood of the farmers, improving both food security and household income. Farmers who had previously relied on seasonal weather to manage their crops can now manage and produce banana plantain both on and off-season, which guarantees them income.





EOA-I PARTNERS CATALYZE MAINSTREAMING OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN BENIN'S NATIONAL AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

Benin

Before 2016, the government of Benin did not have a national agricultural strategy or policy for developing ecological and organic agriculture. No official government was committed to organizing and promoting ecological and organic agriculture. All efforts to create organic farming among local communities, a mainstay, came from civil society and non-government and research organizations.

Ecological and Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative in Benin, run by the Beninese Organization for the Promotion of Organic Agriculture (OBEPAB) in partnership with EOA technical implementing partners, advocated and lobbied for ecological and organic agriculture to be included in the national policy as a sub-sector in agriculture.

EOA partners facilitated engagements with key governments and policy stakeholders in Benin, showcasing research-backed evidence for the benefits of organic agriculture. The advocacy activities of EOA-I partners in Benin align with the initiative's implementation pillar four. Under the implementation within pillar four of EOA-I, the project seeks to facilitate mainstreaming of ecological and organic agriculture into national policies, strategies, and programs in Africa.

In Benin, successful advocacy resulted in the inclusion of ecological and organic agriculture into the "Strategic Plan for the Development

of the Agricultural Sector" of Benin 2017–2025, under the "Action Plan for Popularization and Support for Implementing Production Systems That Limit Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Promotion of Organic and Ecological Agriculture."

With funding from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Beninese government has requested OBEPAB, a member of the EOA initiative, to lead the process of writing the national strategy on ecological and organic agriculture for Benin and to present it to the minister of agriculture's office.

EOA-I and partners have also contributed to the organic agriculture section for the Beninese parliament to draft the Agricultural Law on Agricultural Orientation, Food, and Nutrition Security.

These efforts have resulted in Benin's structured and vibrant organic agriculture sub-sector and created synergies amongst key stakeholders to promote organic farming with concerted efforts at the policy level to operationalise and monitor the national strategy on ecological and organic agriculture.



MINISTÈRE DE L'AGRICULTURE
DE LA PÊCHE ET DE LA PÊCHE
REPUBLIQUE DU BENIN

**Atelier de validation de la Stratégie
de Production de l'Agriculture
Ecologique et Biologique (SNAEB)**

INRAB INSTITUT NATIONAL
DE RECHERCHE EN AGRICULTURE
ET EN PÊCHE

PROCAR

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Get in Touch

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