

SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food
Systems in Africa

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

March 2023

ETHIOPIA



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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







Ethiopia

I WANT VERMICOMPOSTING TO EXPAND – REACHING MORE FARMERS

Mohammed Ali is a smallholder farmer residing in Gobeya Village, Tehuledere district of South Wollo zone in the Amhara Region, Ethiopia. Prior to joining the EOA-I project, Mohamed and his neighbours experienced low crop yields that were insufficient for their families to subsist on. Mohamed and his peers had been applying the conventional system of farming.

He was recruited by Wollo University researchers as one of the lead farmers to be trained on how to make and effectively apply vermicompost.

Vermicomposting is a type of composting in which certain species of **earthworms** are used to enhance the process of organic waste conversion and produce better soil nutrients.

Mohamed was trained on how to convert a wide range of organic residues, such as straw, husk, leaves, stalks, weeds, and animal waste into vermicompost. With the new knowledge, Mohammed set about producing vermicompost to increase his crop production. A dedicated farmer of vegetables, fruits, and cereal crops, Mohamed fully replaced synthetic fertilizers with vermicompost for vegetables and fruits in his backyard and for cereal crops grown in larger plots away from his homestead.

The use of vermicompost has resulted in healthier crops with

little or no sign of pest attack, eliminating the need for pesticides. This success has attracted the attention of other farmers in his neighbourhood, making Mohammed become a key resource person for the district agriculture office by providing training and inputs for 55 farmers beyond his village. He now plays an important role in the expansion of vermicompost beyond the Tehuledere district, providing vermicompost and vermiculture training for free to two districts via the Tehuledere district agriculture office.

Mohammed sells his surplus vermicompost to his neighbours to make an extra income. In the last four months of 2022 alone, he earned USD 1,000 by selling vermicompost and vermiculture. With the nationwide shortage of agrochemical inputs in Ethiopia since 2021, Mohammed's income from selling vermicompost and vermiculture has become even more critical for his family's economic well-being.

Mohammed's experiences and results with vermicompost have become a focus area for agriculture extension who are using vermiculture as a part of the solution to the agrochemical inputs shortage in Ethiopia. Mr Aragie Abate, an agriculture officer in the Tehuledere district, reported that the government, through the ministry of agriculture, is promoting composting technology through mainstream media and extension systems and training farmers on different composting techniques.

Mohammed's commitment to promoting vermicomposting technology and providing training to other farmers has made him an essential player in expanding vermicomposting beyond his village and improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia.





EVIDENCE-BASED FARMER-LED KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES DISSEMINATION

Ethiopia

In Medagudina village, Holeta district, Oromia region of Ethiopia, Workie Shumye has become a local celebrity in the farming community. Workie runs a small farm based on the principles and practices of the ecological and organic agriculture (EOA) program.

Workie grows 19 crops on the farm, including Swiss chard, Lettuce, Habesha Gomen, Green Beans, Faba Beans, Chilli pepper, Carrots, Leek, Garlic, Potato, Beetroot Maize, Lemon, Lime, Avocado, Rue, Rosemary, Garden cress and Ocimum. She blends mono-cropping, intercropping and crop rotation systems to maintain sustainable soil health and continuous output from the plot. For soil nutrition, Workie uses mulching, compost, and farmyard manure to maintain and enhance fertility on the farm. She uses plant extracts from a mixture of chilli and garlic for pest management and sometimes concocts a milk solution to control disease infestation.

Before joining EOA and picking up the practice of organic farming, Workie was a conventional farmer relying heavily on synthetic fertiliser and chemical pest and disease control. While the complexities of environmental damages from the chemicals were lost to her, she struggled to afford these farming inputs that seemed inalienable to her survival at the time.

Without sufficient funds to buy and apply chemical inputs, her produce diminished, and the unquantified income from her farm could no longer sustain her and her family. She joined EOA-I

through the Ethiopian partnership with the Pesticide Action Nexus association (PAN). She was trained on organic farming principles and practices such as soil fertility management, bio-pests and disease control, organic crop management and integrated sustainable mixed farming through the EOA extension system.

Today Workie is a successful lead farmer producing enough food for her family and generating an average income of USD 1,500 a year.

“Feeding my family with healthy food is a priority for me, and what I take to the market is the surplus production,” says Workie.

From successful organic farming, Workie has expanded into an integrated crop, and livestock production where biomass from crop production is used to feed the animals and manure from the cattle is added back to the farm. Through the EOA’s knowledge dissemination strategy, the success of Workie’s farm is evidence drawn upon to provide training and inspiration to more than 300 farmers from around her village and other far parts of the region. There have been a steady increase in the area’s volume of organic produce. As a result, EOA, through the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), has organized consumer awareness initiatives and created market linkages that have enabled organic farmers from Holeta to sell their produce in Addis Ababa.





Ethiopia

IMPROVED INTER PILLAR SYNERGIES TO DELIVER PROJECT RESULTS

During the initial phase of the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) in Ethiopia, the pillars implemented project activities without a focus on crop-specific value chains, leading to lack of coordination between partners and the identification of project challenges. One pillar implementer, Mekelle University in northern Ethiopia, was unable to continue its operations due to the outbreak of war in November 2020. Consequently, the research works initiated in farmers' fields and Farmer Training Centers (FTCs) were destroyed, resulting in a challenge in generating EOA technologies to support value chains.

To address the challenges faced in the selection of partners, the Country Lead Organization (CLO) took crucial steps towards bringing on board a competent pillar implementer. By working closely with the National Steering Committee, Wollo University was selected to replace Mekelle University, leading to the improved synergy among the pillar implementers and the adoption of a crop-specific approach in conducting value chains.

Moreover, the Ethiopian Association of Organic Agriculture (EAOA), established as a national platform to bring together different actors in the industry, had collapsed due to a lack of resources to support its secretariat services. The CLO provided office space and other resources to support the revival and re-establishment of the association. In 2021, the CLO provided small financing to map potential members, enabling the conduct of a national platform meeting and the production of all necessary documents for the re-establishment of the EAOA. The platform is now reregistered by the Ethiopian Civil Society Agency and has resumed its legal status.

Currently, the platform comprises 20 members, including NGOs, private companies, cooperatives, and government institutions, selected based on their engagement in EOA interventions. The members pay annual membership fees to support the platform's functionality, while the elected board members provide technical and professional support to the secretariat to raise funds.

The improved coordination among the pillar implementers and the re-establishment of the EAOA has been crucial in enhancing the implementation of EOA interventions in Ethiopia.



Get in Touch

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