

SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food
Systems in Africa

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

March 2023

KENYA



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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







BUILDING ORGANIC CHIA INTO BUSIA OIL CROPS COOPERATIVE

Kenya

Busia is a county in the former Western Province of Kenya that borders Kakamega County to the east, Bungoma County to the north, Lake Victoria and Siaya County to the south, and Busia District, Uganda, to the west. The people in Busia County rely on agriculture as their primary source of income.

The EOA project sought to focus on mainstreaming ecological organic agriculture practices while stimulating market access for smallholder farmers. Several reasons led to the selection of Busia County, one of them being the potential impact of working with smallholder farmers; the other being that the agro-ecological conditions of Busia County are conducive to agricultural production. The proximity to Uganda, where organic farming is widely practised made the cultural connection to organic much more robust than we would have expected anywhere else. Due to its regional appeal, Busia Oil Crops Cooperative was selected as a main value chain actor from a stakeholder mapping exercise.

The cooperative began its operations in 2015 with a membership of 500 farmers and has increased to 800 (417 females, 383 males with 142 youth) producing oil crops such as organic sesame, chia and soybeans. Recruited farmers were trained in organic practices; to date, the production of these crops was and is still under intensive organic management practices. Farmers practised crop rotational and organic soil fertility management to maintain organic compliance.

Despite these initiatives in growing Organic Sesame, Chia, and soybeans, the cooperative still faced significant challenges in

accessing viable markets.

The Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN), the value chain management pillar implementing partner, conducted a stakeholder and root cause analysis to understand why, despite the efforts of the Cooperative, they still suffered from market access challenges. A key challenge identified was that farmers were getting meagre yields for Sesame, Chia and felt the crop was not providing any profit and hence did not put much effort into them; this had a spillover effect of the cooperative underperforming with interested buyers and eventual loss of interest. Despite having marketing incorporated, the cooperative structure was not aggressive in providing the needed linkages for the farmers, hence the loss of confidence in the farmers which created a vicious cycle that threatened the overall survival of the cooperative.

Through the EOA initiative, the Cooperative was linked to Egerton University's research Pillar, which worked on productivity challenges. In addition, the project ToTs for 30 trainers and 15 inspectors in collaboration with FarmKenya and Egerton University.

As part of the field trials and soil fertility improvement capacity building, KOAN focuses on building the capacity of cooperatives' Internal Control System (ICS). The reason behind this was first, to be organically certified, the cooperative needed a sound ICS. Secondly, from the gap analysis, farmers responded well and positively when they saw the cooperative engage them.

The internal inspectors and trainers who graduated from the ICS training also serve an important role in the dissemination of new research and EOA practices. Lastly, Egertonuniversity strategically

situated their trial, demo and training plots in the main cooperative zones of Lukolis, Amungura, and Kidera for ease of access by members.

KOAN also identified the management gaps and built the cooperative's confidence in the management after taking them through capacity building and organizing exchange visits with other cooperatives. KOAN also built communication skills, where the management was encouraged to work with the county government to engage the membership in county activities. This reached a point where the cooperative organized regular engagements with county extension and marketing officials.

Markets remained a pressing issue; farmers had started getting good harvests of sesame and chia but could not access markets effectively. The cooperative identified Base Organic Foods France as a potential buyer from our training. As these developments continued, it became apparent that despite the interest from the company, the earliest transaction was months away and was contingent upon organic certification. The cooperative made inroads in developing relationships with small processors of sesame oil based in Nairobi. They were able to market their sesame and chia in the short term and keep the members happy and revenue flowing.

It became apparent that the cooperative could not export directly and clean the sesame and chia before export. From the stakeholder assessment exercise with KOAN, Base Organics France recommended the cooperative approach of Fine Aromas, a company they had some experience dealing with in Kenya. Due to their close association with the cooperative, Base Organics France agreed to a tripartite agreement to buy from Fine Aromas, who would buy from Busia Oil Crops. On the other hand, Fine Aromas agreed to work with the cooperative for 3 years to build their export capacity and product portfolio since there was still a lot of untapped potential in sunflower and soybeans.

Unfortunately, in 2022, Base Organics France, due to internal policy change, dropped out of all sourcing contracts outside Francophone Africa and Kenya happened to fall under that list. However, Fine Aromas was able to identify other export buyers and fill the gap. This relationship has taken on new dimensions as Fine Aromas has just completed purchasing and processing the 1st batch of chia from Busia Oil Crops Cooperative. With the news of these engagements, other companies (such as Momentum Limited) have started showing interest in other crops from the cooperative (soyabean and sunflower). The cooperative has also been receiving support from the Kenya Women's Finance Trust Bank in building its financial literacy capacity to engage in purchase order financing for the cooperative eventually. All in all, the cooperative has shown much growth and potential.



Get in Touch

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