SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food Systems in Africa

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

March 2023

UGANDA

eoa ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE
Growing Sustainably

Biovision Africa Trust

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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 promots 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	Féderation 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 (CRASTEDA 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

Uganda

BORROWING FROM INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS: SUSTAINABLE HOUSEHOLD ASH-BASED STORAGE OF FRESH TOMATOES

To address the high cost of living beleaguering her, Dorothy Nankuta, a student at the Uganda Martyrs University, has developed a sustainable preservation formula that can impact the lives of many modest and low-income households. In 2019, Nankuta started self-motivated research to find a solution to preserving the highly perishable tomatoes.

Buoyed by support from Dr Marius Murongo, who linked her to the ecological organic agriculture initiative (EOA-I) for research support, Nankuta started trials to observe the decomposition of fruits when stored under different conditions. The conditions – doused in ashes from oily plants, Eucalyptus, sunflower, simsim and castor oil – are borrowed from witnessed rural preservation practised by her grandmother for other crops.

Nankuta decided to try this tactic on her tomatoes with astonishing results. Tomatoes have an average shelf life of three to five days, but when Nankuta preserved her tomatoes in the oily plants' ashes, the shelf life of the vegetable was longer with varied periods of durability depending on the type of incinerated plant.

The minimum number of days observed in this preservation method per type of ashes was 55 days for simsim ashes, 45 days for Eucalyptus, and 48 days for sunflower and castor oil. The control sample lasted 18 days to decompose. In some of the trials, the tomatoes lasted as far as 75 days.

According to Nankuta, the proposed plant ash preservation could save low-income households the expenses of tomato storage. The research results could also help smallholder farmers avoid losses associated with post-harvest storage of tomatoes.

The low cost and naturally organic nature of ash-based preservatives align with EOA's objectives to find sustainable and affordable innovations that address smallholder and low-income households' needs without damaging the environment.

Nankuta's research was partly supported by resources from the EOA-I under collaboration with Uganda Martyrs University in Nkozi, Uganda. More research is needed to validate these methods.

Uganda

ADOPTION OF THE ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE CURRICULUM BY TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING IN UGANDA

ESAFF Uganda, an implementing partner under the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) took on the responsibility to promote the adoption of the EOA curriculum among universities and other institutions of learning. This draws attention to the agriculture extension service in Uganda, which is a major component of agricultural production, but the present capacities and skills of the extension workers are inclined towards conventional agriculture. In order to advance the practice of organic farming, there is a need for the agricultural labour force to undergo re-orientation and re-learning processes in terms of farming practices and further develop their competencies in organic farming systems.

ESAFF Uganda embarked on this assignment and revisited the EOA Curriculum developed in 2014 in order to streamline EOA into education systems under the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I). ESAFF Uganda developed detailed course content of the existing curricula for the Diploma, Bachelor, and Masters degrees. The campaign behind the review was to increase the adoption of the curriculum by universities and other institutions not only in Uganda but also in Africa as a whole. Once the review was accomplished, the organization conducted a campaign to identify partner institutions to roll out the curriculum.

As such, Lira University, a public university in the country, that was in the process of rolling out an agriculture department at the time, was identified, and bilateral engagements started between the two institutions. On the 12th of October 2022, during its 4th National Organic Week celebrations, ESAFF Uganda paid an official visit to Lira University, where the course content was officially presented to the Lira University Chancellor, Professor Jasper Ogwal-Okeng. Fortunately, the University Vice Chancellor officially approved the partnership between ESAFF Uganda and Lira University and gave a go-ahead to the team to develop the content into a comprehensive agriculture curriculum for the university following the National Council of Education Guidelines in Uganda. Much as this is only an initial step in increasing the pool of organic agriculture experts in the country, it's the most critical and essential one. Currently, the Lira University team is reviewing the earlier developed course content for processing, and hopefully, by the end of 2023, components of ecological organic agriculture will be adopted for teaching in the university.

Once this process is finalized and the EOA course content is adopted into the university curriculum, more young people will be exposed to EOA farming practices as a means of bringing about a change in knowledge and perspective. Additionally, this will aid in re-orienting the extension services program in the country, with the university producing more extension workers skewed toward agroecological farming practices.

The partnership between Lira University an academic institution, and ESAFF Uganda a small-scale farmers' organization also lays a fertile ground for the interaction between members of the academia and farmers who are custodians of the much-needed knowledge, skills, information and fields for research and learning purposes.

Uganda

FROM LABORER TO FARM OWNER: ORGANIC TOMATO FARMING CHANGES THE FORTUNES OF A UGANDAN MAN

Kasala Joseph, a 34-year-old man with little formal education, lives in the Lusenke village in the Katikamu Subcounty of the Luweero District. He grows organic tomatoes with the support of Kulika Uganda – a non-governmental organization that trains rural farmers on ecological organic agriculture - in partnership with the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative EOA-I.

Kasala initially worked as a farm laborer on a nearby farm where Kulika trained staff on organic agriculture under the EOA-I project. Kasala was introduced to Kulika Uganda Trainers through his employment, to be trained on EOA practices. This training accorded him the foundational education in growing organic tomatoes.

Kasala then decided to venture into fulltime tomato farming as his main source of income. He received assistance in purchasing natural insecticides and tomato seeds resistant to bacterial wilt. He planted organic tomatoes in two plots, each measuring half an acre, using these and chicken dung. By diligently applying the skills learned from Kulika, Kasaala invested some proceeds from his organic farming enterprise into increased production and marketing of organic tomatoes for increased income generation. His enterprise has seen him grow from servant to proprietor of a successful enterprise employing full-time staff with a commendable loyal following of organic customers.

'I have ceased being an insecure garden laborer and have risen to the level of the landowner and manager of my farm', Says Kasala, reflecting on his growth.

Kasala has expanded his activities to engage in crop rotation and produce various crops, including tomatoes, green paper, nightshade, bitter berries, maize, sweet potatoes, and cassava. He is also hiring additional land to accommodate his growing farm enterprise. The good fortune enabled him to marry, an achievement that would have been a big challenge in his previous position.

Kasala's success has made him a champion of organic farming and made a name for himself as an expert and skilled organic farmer among his peers. He helps conduct training and promotion of organic tomatoes in the local markets to improve market access for his produce.

Uganda

THE JOURNEY TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE POLICY IN UGANDA

Based on a 2018 World Bank report, Uganda ranks second to Tanzania in organic agricultural land with 268,729 hectares. However, smallholder farmers in Uganda who are engaged in organic farming encounter challenges in marketing their products and ensuring the standardization and competitiveness of their produce due to the absence of a comprehensive policy framework that can guide them in their organic farming practices.

In Uganda, the quest for an organic agricultural policy dates back to 2004, with numerous organizations attempting and subsequently abandoning the pursuit of such a policy. However, PELUM Uganda and a few other civil society organizations, including Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA), Uganda Farmers Common Voice Platform for advocacy (UFCVP), and National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU), persisted in their pursuit. In 2018, under the Ecological Organic Agriculture initiative, PELUM Uganda focused on advocating for the development of the National Organic Agriculture Policy (NOAP).

The journey began with a situational analysis, consultative meetings, and a literature review, with PELUM Uganda actively involved in each step of the process. Despite the considerable investments made in the process, it took three years to realize the fruits of these efforts. Finally, in 2021, the long-awaited National Organic Policy was passed and launched.

After successfully launching the National Organic Agriculture Policy in Uganda, PELUM Uganda initiated a dissemination plan to ensure that smallholder farmers and local governments know about the new policy. The dissemination effort involved distributing 2,000 copies of the policy book to 87 districts across Uganda's Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western regions.

Additionally, PELUM conducted sensitisation campaigns that reached 90,500 smallholder farmers in 87 districts. The organization also held 17 radio and television talk shows to educate farmers about the benefits of the organic policy, resulting in 450 downloads from the EOA website.

The efforts made by PELUM Uganda and other civil society organizations to pursue the National Organic Agriculture Policy in Uganda have resulted in a significant milestone towards developing and promoting organic agriculture in the country. With the policy in place and the dissemination efforts, smallholder farmers and stakeholders in the organic agriculture sector are better positioned to access markets and compete favorably.

The impact of these efforts will continue to be felt for years to come and is a crucial step towards sustainable and resilient agriculture in Uganda.

Get in Touch

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