

# SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food  
Systems in Africa

VALUE CHAIN AND MARKET  
DEVELOPMENT

**PILLAR III**

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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.

## PILLAR 3. VALUE CHAIN AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

One of the key objectives of the EOA initiative under this Pillar is to increase the market penetration of ecological and organic agricultural products at domestic, national and international markets. This was achieved through various activities such as capacity building for farmers and processors, certification of organic products, and marketing support. By promoting the consumption of ecological and organic products, the initiative aims to create sustainable market demand and increase the income of smallholder farmers.

The EOA initiative partners invested time and resources towards policy engagement with key stakeholders to create an enabling business environment for ecological and organic agriculture. This included advocating for supportive policies, creating networks among stakeholders, and promoting public-private partnerships. By creating a conducive business environment, the initiative aims to attract investments and support the growth of ecological and organic agriculture.

For quality control, the EOA initiative partners facilitated capacity building and created linkages with important biosafety agencies across the project countries to ensure that ecological and organic agricultural products meet the required standards and certifications. A record number of farmers' training and stakeholder engagement forums for farmers and processors on good agricultural practices, quality control systems, and certification procedures.

EOA initiative activities are meant to promote sustainable agriculture practices, increase the income of smallholder farmers, and promote the consumption of ecological and organic products. Some of the results obtained from these efforts are highlighted in this section of the publication.







Kenya

## BUILDING ORGANIC CHIA INTO BUSIA OIL CROPS COOPERATIVE

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.





Rwanda

## RWANDAN FARMERS ENHANCE THEIR SKILLS SKILLS IN VALUE ADDITION TO ACCESS BETTER MARKETS

The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative in Rwanda is a collaboration between the Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) and pillar implementing partners, namely the University of Technology and Arts of Byumba and the Huguka Organization. The initiative is supporting approximately 1,145 farmers in strawberry and pineapple value chains located in four districts of Rwanda namely Rulindo, Gakenke, Kamonyi, and Muhanga.

After conducting an assessment of the challenges faced by farmers in the strawberry and pineapple value chains, including limited knowledge and skills on organic agriculture practices, value addition, and lack of appropriate packaging materials, ROAM coordinated activities related to the value chain and market development under pillar three. Through this effort, a group of 27 out of 120 farmers in the strawberry value chain were supported with capacity building on growing strawberries and training on value addition. The training included processing juice, jam, and wine, and providing packaging materials for these products as a sample for linking farmers to suppliers of the materials.

Irene Nyirabarigira, a member of the CODFM cooperative, shared her experience:

"We grow organic strawberries, and we produce 150 kg of strawberries on a weekly basis, making a total of 53 USD in a week. We were fortunate to receive training from the EOA-I project through ROAM to enhance our skills in value addition, specifically processing strawberry juice, jam, and wine. We have customers in Kigali and in one of the supermarkets in the Muhanga district called Lumina Supermarkets. After the training, we sold the processed jam and have received many positive comments from our customers on the improved quality of the jam. We started as a small factory, but we hope that with the improved skills we gained in the training, we will be able to grow into a big factory, hence improving our income, and livelihood, and accessing more markets and customers. We are grateful to ROAM for connecting us to other partners, and we are looking forward to their continuous guidance."

Through this initiative, ROAM has been able to improve the skills and capacity of smallholder farmers in the strawberry value chain, leading to an increase in income and access to markets. This highlights the potential impact of ecological organic agriculture in improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Rwanda.







Tanzania

## INFLUENCING CHANGE FOR AN EOA-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

The National Agriculture Policy 2013 in Tanzania, which is currently under review, expresses support for ecological organic agriculture (EOA) through statements such as “initiatives for regulation and certification of organic products shall be promoted” (section 3.21, pages 24-25). However, little has been done to put these statements into action, primarily due to inadequate public awareness and lack of policy instruments to enforce the regulations.

To address this policy silence, the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM), in collaboration with other EOA stakeholders, including the Ministry of Agriculture, has undertaken several initiatives. These include organizing two National EOA Conferences, pre-conference meetings, sharing EOA progress reports, and exposing policymakers to EOA-related events, such as the Biofach Trade Fair event in Nuremberg, Germany, in July 2022, which was attended by the Deputy Minister for Agriculture.

Over 650 stakeholders, including farmers, agriculture experts, policymakers, civil society organizations, practitioners, private sector representatives, development partners, and media, attended the conferences from Tanzania, Zanzibar, East Africa, and other foreign countries.

As a result of these collective efforts, the government has increased its agricultural budget for the period 2022–2023 from about \$126 million to \$409 million. The National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (NAEOAS) is also being formulated, with the first draft now in its completion stage.

The establishment and strengthening of partnerships and networking among stakeholders have contributed to the mobilization of a significant sum of \$230,728 to support the development of the National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (NAEOAS). In addition, public awareness of the significance of ecological organic agriculture (EOA) has increased, exemplified by the training of eight extension staff members on EOA from Zanzibar. Furthermore, 29 middle-level agricultural training institutions have reviewed and implemented training curricula, awarding certificates and diplomas in recognition of the importance of EOA.

These collective efforts have demonstrated promising developments towards the advancement of organic agriculture in Tanzania, emphasizing the need for further interventions and follow-up to achieve the desired outcomes.





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, Kasala 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.





# Get in Touch

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