

# SOWING THE SEEDS

for Sustainable Food  
Systems in Africa

MANAGEMENT, COORDINATION, AND  
GOVERNANCE

**PILLAR IV**

March 2023



The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

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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 4. MANAGEMENT, COORDINATION, AND GOVERNANCE

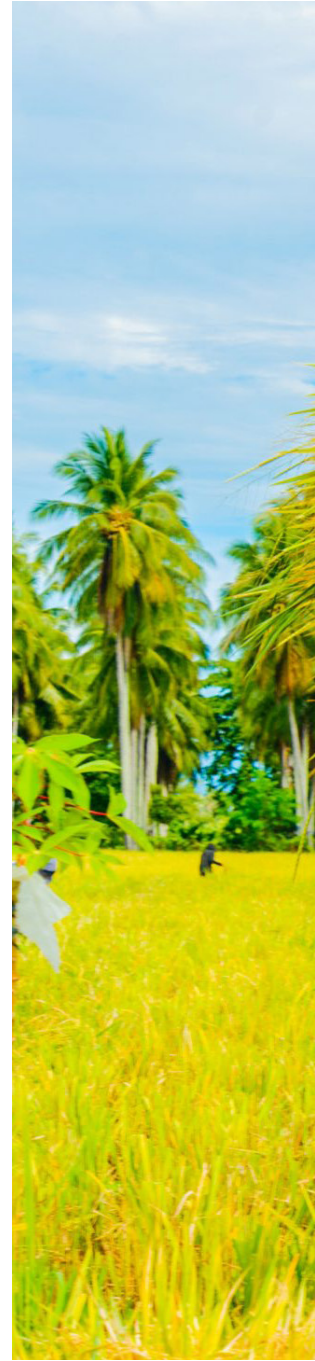
The EOA Initiative emphasizes the potential of organic agriculture to enhance food security, increase farmer incomes, and improve environmental sustainability as major milestones under Pillar 4 of the project. The process to achieve these milestones requires an integrated approach for policy and capacity enhancement at multiple levels.

## **Policy Enhancement:**

- Working with national partners, EOA-I developed a comprehensive policy framework that outlines the objectives, strategies, and implementation plan for the EOA Initiative.
- Reviewed existing agricultural policies and regulations to identify gaps that hindered the achievements and contravened the collectively agreed principles of ecological and organic agriculture between EOA-I and her partners.
- Collaborated with in-country policy agencies to establish a regulatory framework for organic certification and labeling to ensure that consumers have access to high-quality EOA products.
- The project also promoted the policy of incentivising ecological and organic agriculture through subsidies to farmers to encourage the adoption of EOA practices and their participation.

## **Capacity Enhancement:**

- A significant amount of efforts under the EOA-I went towards training extension officers, farmers, and other stakeholders on principles and practices of organic agriculture as captured under pillar one of the project.
- Developed EOA research and development programs that focus on improving crop yields, pest management, soil fertility, and water conservation.
- Established EOA demonstration farms and centres to showcase the benefits of EOA practices.
- Fostered public-private partnerships to promote the adoption of EOA practices and facilitate the transfer of technology and knowledge.







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.





## THE VOICE OF ORGANIC STAKEHOLDERS IN RWANDA

Rwanda

Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM), the Country Lead Organization implementing activities related to management, coordination, and governance, in collaboration with other stakeholders and National Steering Committee members, has facilitated different stakeholder consultation meetings.

In line with the promotion of ecological organic agriculture in Rwanda, ROAM signed a memorandum of understanding with the Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) to promote the implementation of East Africa Organic Product Standards (EAOPS) and certification and to strengthen the development of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) in Rwanda to promote local and regional organic market products.

Due to the instability resulting from the Ukraine conflict, Rwanda's agricultural sector faced challenges, including the high cost of mineral fertilizers. In response, the Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) advocated adopting organic fertilizers, particularly those produced locally, to reduce dependency on expensive imported fertilizers.

"Our organic fertilizers are now allowed to be distributed and used by farmers after the whole period of testing them, as proved by the list provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI). Thanks to ROAM for advocating for using ROKOSAN organic fertilizers on different levels. The fertilizers have been tested on two value chains: rice and coffee," said Ndore Rurinda, the Managing Director of ROKOSAN Rwanda.

ROAM, in collaboration with civil society organizations, namely the Nile Basin Discourse Forum (NBDF), and with the support of the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), facilitated a study conducted by the University of Rwanda, led by Prof. Elias Bizuru, to document the current status of agroecology and ecological organic agriculture in Rwanda.

The study's primary objective was to document the current practices and existing policies on agroecology/ecological organic agriculture in Rwanda, evaluate the potential impact of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and provide an overview of sustainable wetland use in the context of Rwanda. The study findings have identified several areas requiring further attention from policy and research actions to ensure that ecological organic agriculture is effectively and progressively mainstreamed in sector planning. ROAM and NBDF organized a high-level stakeholder meeting to develop a policy brief, emphasizing science's importance in informing policies.

The study findings confirm the significance of ecological organic agriculture in contributing to the green growth and climate resilience strategy in the agriculture sector and in realizing the vision of Rwanda 2050 and relevant sector strategies. The research also identified the most commonly used pesticides for pest control in the study area, including *cypermethrin*, *dithane*, and *Roket*. In particular, the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) has classified cypermethrin as a possible human carcinogen (Group C) and highly toxic to fish and water insects, highlighting the need for alternative pest control methods in agriculture.

ROAM, as the Country Lead Organization, is preparing a consultative meeting aimed at convening policymakers, ministries, civil society organizations, development partners, and research institutions to develop an action plan based on the policy brief's action points.







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.





## 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)**

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DE RECHERCHE AGRICOLE  
ET PÊCHERIE

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PACOFIDE  
REPUBLICAINE DU BENIN

giz

Cotonou, Palais des Congrès, le 23 Septembre 2022

# Get in Touch

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