



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

January 2008

Update on DTIE/ETB's ongoing work on the promotion of trading opportunities for organic agriculture

Background

In order to demonstrate that environmental protection is not only compatible with economic growth but can also promote trade, generate employment, and reduce poverty, DTIE/ETB launched an East African initiative on "Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products". The initiative is being implemented in partnership with UNCTAD under the auspices of UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF).

Organic agriculture (OA) offers a range of environmental, social, economic and market access benefits for developing countries. On the economic side, OA provides a niche to developing countries for accessing developed-country markets. The major markets for organic products are growing at rates of 10-20 per cent per year and price premiums are available for a number of goods. In Africa, where about 70 per cent of the farmers are women, it can have significant positive impact on women's income. On the environmental side, organic agriculture can play a significant role in tackling climate change by reducing GHG emissions and by sequestering carbon. Moreover, OA production is environmentally friendly and has been shown to have a positive effect on the local environment, including soil, water and biodiversity.

The stakeholder consultations, launched under this initiative, clearly emphasized that in order to reap these multifaceted benefits, governments must create an enabling environment that helps OA producers and exporters to overcome a number of obstacles. These include lack of information (on OA techniques, markets, etc), expensive certification systems, small domestic markets with few consumers, cumbersome import requirements in major export markets, and non-tariff barriers such as national and regional standards.

The initiative was designed to support the Governments of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda capitalize on the environmental, social, economic and trade benefits of OA, and to develop a common East African Organic Standard to facilitate trade in OA within and outside the region.



The East African Organic Products Standard (EAOPS) was officially launched by the Honourable Edward N. Lowassa, Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, on 29 May 2007 at the East African Organic Conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The standard was developed with the technical and financial support of the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF and International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). It is now the second regional organic standard in the world and the first to have been developed through a public-private-NGO

partnership. The standard will help East African organic farmers gain access to export markets and support organic trade and market development within the region and with external export markets.



The three national integrated assessment country reports on the organic agriculture sectors of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been finalised. These assessments were carried out by national institutions under the leadership of government agencies and with the technical support of UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF. The reports cover the current state of the sector, identification of major stakeholders, reviews of relevant current policies, development of policy options, assessments of potential environmental, economic and social impacts of proposed policy options, and assessment of future capacity-building requirements.

The development process of these national integrated assessments and background studies has already been able to influence national policymaking in favour of organic agriculture. In Kenya, a clear focal point for organic agriculture has been established in the Ministry of Agriculture, and the national food and nutrition policy is currently under review to include a section on organics. In Tanzania, organic agriculture has been

incorporated into the national agriculture policy. In Uganda, an organic agriculture policy is being developed in line with the recommendations made in the national assessment commissioned by the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF.

To complement these country projects, three thematic background studies were also commissioned and completed. The first study is an “Overview of the Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and the Opportunities for Regional Harmonisation,” which provides information about organic sector stakeholders, production, domestic markets, exports, standards, and certification policies in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The second study on “Best Practices for Organic Policy: What Developing Country Governments Can Do to Promote the Organic Sector” presents 29 specific recommendations in the areas of general policy, standards and regulation, markets, production, training, education and research. The final background study on “Organic Agriculture and Food Security in East Africa” includes an analysis of several case studies and explores the potential for organic agriculture to enhance food security in the region.

On 3 October 2007, the Capacity Building Task Force organised a symposium on “Environmental Requirements and Market Access: Turning Challenges into Opportunities” in Geneva, Switzerland. The symposium offered a platform for dialogue on concrete methods to help developing countries to seize market opportunities that arise from environmental issues and standards. Over 80 representatives from government, international organisations, private enterprises, and civil society organisations participated in discussions to address the challenges and constraints facing developing countries’ access to organic agriculture and consumer electronics markets. Market opportunities created by environmental and technical standards and requirements were also identified. The symposium served as the beginning of a consultative process for the Capacity Building Task Force’s next phase of activities, which is slated to begin in early 2008.

Future Plans

The final national integrated assessments from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda will be consolidated into a synthesis report of the project, which will capture the key features of the project, its implementation, lessons learned, and recommendations for replication of the project in other countries. This report will then serve as a reference manual for future implementation of the project in other countries without the involvement of UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF. The report will be widely disseminated and will also be made available online free of cost.

Substantive points and recommendations raised during the 3 October 2007 symposium will be used as input and guidance for further preparations and implementation for the next phase of the UNEP-UNCTAD. Experts and institutions present at the symposium will also be consulted on a regular basis to ensure that relevant issues are addressed in important negotiating forums as they arise.

The UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF, in partnership with IFOAM and other organisations, will organise an “International Symposium on Organic Agriculture and Africa: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future” to be held on 23 February 2008 as a side event of the BioFach Fair in Nuremberg, Germany – the world’s largest organic trade fair. The symposium aims to generate discussion on topics highlighting the status of organics in Africa, including the potential of OA to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

To raise the profile of the initiative and to disseminate its findings, a side event will also be organised at the UNCTAD XII to be held in Ghana in April 2008.

As these activities are being undertaken through extra-budgetary resources, UNEP and UNCTAD are submitting a joint funding proposal to the EC which will allow continuity of activities in East Africa, as well as expansion to other countries, such as Rwanda and Burundi, and to other regions.

Reports and Publications

Thematic Background Studies

- Overview of the Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and the Opportunities for Regional Harmonization
- Best Practices for Organic Policy: What Developing Country Governments Can Do to Promote the Organic Sector

-
- Organic Agriculture and Food Security in East Africa

National Integrated Assessment Country Projects

- Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) for Organic Agriculture in Kenya.
- Integrated Assessment of Organic Agriculture in Tanzania.
More information: <http://www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf/>
- Integrated Assessment of Uganda's Organic Agriculture Sub-Sector: Economic Opportunities and Policy Options to Mitigate Negative Socio-economic and Environmental Impacts. More information: <http://www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf/>

East African Standard

- East African Organic Products Standard (EAOPS).

**This initiative is being funding by
European Union (EU) and the United States of America (USA)**