Tanzanians' interest in and access to organic food

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ABSTRACT

Organic agriculture not only brings a number of benefits to humans and the environment, but also is a good form of guarantee to consumers' on food safety. Tanzanian consumers deserve access to safe and high quality food which the organic production system can offer, with no risk of pesticide residues and other harmful effects. They deserve a reliable way to identify such food, and to be guaranteed that "organic" products are really organic.

Basing on the survey that involved 130 individuals (55% men and 45% women) from Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro regions, about one-third of the Tanzanian consumers interviewed were not able to define organic agriculture precisely in line with the IFOAM principles. Despite difficulties in defining and identifying organic products because of a lack of certification labels and inadequate knowledge on organic agriculture, more than half of the consumers reported that they consume organic food, and have done so for more than ten years. Consumers claimed to identify organic products by taste, freshness, naturalness and appearance. Without any certified organic products in the Tanzanian markets and many consumers still claiming they consume organic food, these results indicate that many people may not really be consuming organic food even though they believe they are. This is especially true for the people interviewed in Dar es Salaam, where consumers are stuck with a market situation in which food production that is organic "by default" is mixed up with other farming practices and is difficult to trace the origin of the products.

To promote organic production and easy identification, an emphasis on increasing affordable organic certification is essential, and it is very fortunate that TanCert (the certification body) is already established to make the certification process more desirable and economically viable to small scale farmers. An increased emphasis on certification will increase the amount and quality of organic farming in Tanzania, and farmers will thereby become more skilled in understanding ecosystems and agronomy. They also will be able to get premium prices for their products, and consumers will have access to more healthful food.

The potential for increased organic production is high, because people are concerned about their health and the environment. Although schools already teach environmentally friendly farming practices, more information about organic agriculture in schools and through extension services is essential, since the current curriculum is not close enough to the organic concept. Hence, we suggest that initiatives be taken for further development of certification of organic agriculture in both urban and rural areas, in particular to serve the local markets with certified organic products, but also for export fuelling the economic commerce locally.

Keywords: Consumers, food safety, local markets and organic agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Tanzania is an African country endowed with a range of natural resources and a favourable climate that allows various crops to be grown, such as maize, coffee, cotton, tea, cashew nuts, wheat, sugarcane, and various horticultural crops. Agriculture is the leading economic sector, and accounts for about 50% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 75% of merchandise exports. Farming is the source of food and provides employment for about 80% of Tanzanians (UNIDO, 2004). The agricultural systems are diverse, with site-specific farming methods that vary, for example, according to the farmer's skills and cultural, ecological, and economic conditions. Most farming in Tanzania is still for subsistence, although during the past 30 years the use of synthetic agrochemicals has spread, facilitated by the introduction of Green Revolution agriculture (Sicilima, 2003).

Kilemapofo farmers group in Kilimanjaro in discussion with Envirocare staff (photo: Øystein Sogn)

While the important contribution of agrochemicals to increasing crop yields and reducing pests and diseases has generally been appreciated, their negative impacts on health and environment have become more and more evident during recent decades. Many farmers became poorer because they had to buy more fertilisers and pesticides every year to deal with dying soil and to overcome disease and pest resistance in the crops (Envirocare, 1998). Hence, many farmers returned to or continued farming practices that included natural fertilisers and natural pesticides that were cheaper than the industrial agrochemicals. Hence, there are agricultural products in Tanzania that can be categorised as organic "by default".

In Tanzania, organic agriculture is an important counterforce to the negative effects of Green Revolution agricultural practices. By the term "organic agriculture" we refer to the principles defined by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and to the concept defining organic on the basis of certain formalised regulations, e.g., the European Union (EU) Regulations 2092/91 and 1804/999. According to the IFOAM principles, organic agriculture aims at producing sufficient quantities of varied and high quality food (IFOAM, 2005). It strives for a well-balanced and continuous agro-ecosystem with the greatest possible use of locally renewable resources, taking into account animal and human welfare and the socio-economic aspects of the food production system. Organic agriculture is therefore more than just not using synthetic agrochemicals.

Right: Aloe vera plant, used as bio-pesticides for animals and plants (photo: Lars Kåre Grimsby). Right: Neem tree plants, used for bio-pesticides, and medicine for animals and humans (photo: Øystein

Currently, about 45,000 hectares of agricultural land in Tanzania is certified organic, where about 750 farmers are involved in Bio-Re, a project aimed at producing organic cotton (Mwasha and Leijdens, 2004; Parrott and Elzakker, 2003). Certified organic crops have been

produced in Tanzania for more than ten years. Still, certified organic land is less than 1% of the total agricultural land and the certified organic products are mainly exported to developed countries, similar to the situation in the other 90 or so developing countries that produce organic products (Westermayer and Beier, 2003). The most important certified organic products from Tanzania are cotton, dried herbs, spices, coffee, black tea, ginger, vegetable oils, honey, cashew nuts, citrus, papaya, guava, mango, banana, onion, and garlic (Mwasha and Leijdens, 2004; Parrott and Elzakker, 2003).

Whereas a conversion to organic agriculture in developed countries is commonly followed by reduced yield levels (Scialabba and Hattam, 2002), there are many examples from developing countries where implementing organic principles - especially in marginalised areas in which subsistence farming is predominant – may result in significant increases in yields and income (Scialabba and Hattam, 2002; Eyhorn et al., 2002). The higher income is due to the higher prices received for organic products, increased yields, and savings from reduced purchases of external inputs. Also, besides allowing better nutrition for the farmers and their families, a higher income gives them money to invest in seeds, production equipment, housing, school fees, etc. A survey of 208 farms in 52 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America demonstrated that sustainable agriculture – in which organic agriculture is embedded, also results in better soil fertility, environment, and health, and promotes social learning processes (Pretty et al., 2001). There are also promising examples of local and regional commerce and market development from the introduction of organic agriculture, to the benefit of farmers, processors and consumers (Scialabba and Hattam, 2002; IFOAM, 2004; IFAD, 2005).

Since the organic products from Tanzania are mainly exported, the local consumers do not benefit from their extra quality. Tanzanians have fewer choices between organic products and products from other modes of production than people in most developed countries. However, there are a few examples of special quality food shops in Dar es Salaam, such as "Mum's Kitchen" and "Natural Food Shop", which indicates that there is a demand for organic products. These shops are considered as quite reliable places to obtain non-certified organic products. Much food produced by environmentally friendly farming practices that do not include use of agrochemicals is also available in the local markets. However, without any certification and appropriate labelling, these products are mixed up with other products that may be heavily treated with poisonous pesticides.

From Mum's Kitchen in Dar es Salaam (photo: Øystein Sogn)

In Tanzania, governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the Tanzanian Bureau of Standards (TBS), and the Tanzanian Food and Drugs Authority (TFDA) are responsible for food quality and safety. Tanzania has ratified international standards such as the Codex Alimentarius (Standards), and has its own national regulations executed by MAFS. We have no data on the public offices' effectiveness in carrying out food control. However, we know that the financial resources are limited compared with the big task of controlling food safety effectively in a large country with a widely scattered population, low income, and low education.

There are neither any governmental regulations nor any governmental development program for the organic sector in Tanzania such as in many Asian countries, for example (IFOAM, 2004). However, in co-operation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which sponsors the program "Export Promotion of Organic Produce from Africa (EPOPA)", the Tanzanian government has been involved in establishing the local organic certification body, TanCert, in Tanzania (Forss and Lundstrøm, 2004). TanCert has started to certify organic products in Tanzania according to two standards, with a guaranty sign (Figure 1). One standard is for the local market and the other is for export. Both are a brief version of the IFOAM principles and basic standards (IFOAM, 2005), and take into account the specific conditions for organic production in Tanzania and the current stage of its development in the country. Foreign certification is expensive and not affordable for ordinary Tanzanian farmers. Certification for the local market through TanCert is more affordable and is continuing to attract many individuals to join the organic sector. Certification for export has a higher fee, but with group certification the fee for this certification type also is affordable for the individual farmer. TanCert will also promote the use of the Hai-logo on products for export – in addition to any foreign organic logo.

"Hai" in Kiswahili means life. ("Kilimo" means agriculture.)

Figure 1: TanCert's Organic Certification Brand for the local market

The Hai-logo has the potential to be an important symbol for Tanzanian organic agriculture and to contribute to creating awareness among the actors in the production chain from field to table. It can be a trustworthy brand that shows the way to organic products in the market. Schools and extension officers are common sources of information. Currently, the primary schools do not teach organic agriculture explicitly, but most of their teaching is related to environmentally friendly agricultural practises. This is a good foundation for organic farming that could be developed further by the influence of TanCert.

Our aim in this paper is to present Tanzanians' interest in organic produce and discuss how this interest is related to their concern about food safety. Based on this, we will suggest actions to be taken to develop the local organic food market.

Interview with a consumer (photo: Øystein Sogn)

METHODOLOGY

A total of 130 people were interviewed, 103 in Dar es Salaam, and 27 in the Kilimanjaro region. In Dar es Salaam, 25 people were interviewed at the University (both students and staff members), 26 students at Makongo secondary school, and 52 people in suburban areas (Mwenge and Sinza). In Kilimanjaro we interviewed 27 people in the Sadala local market.

We selected these places because consumers' attitudes towards food in general, and in particular with regard to organic food, might depend on where they live. Dar es Salaam is a big and business active city whereas the

Kilimanjaro is a region that is dominated by farming activities. All individuals were randomly selected; 55% were men and 45% women. All were above 16 years, 59% were between 25 and 49, and only 4% were above 50 years. 23% had at most a primary school education, and only 9% were without income (unemployed or housewives).

The interviews were conducted partly in English and partly in Kiswahili, and covered organic products, general knowledge about food, and demographic characteristics of the respondents. We used structured questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions mean that the respondent had to choose one of several alternatives. Four questions (5, 6, 9 and 12) were asked openly, and thereafter categorised (Table 1 and 4). Some of the answers in the closed-ended questions were merged to reduce the number of categories.

We did the interview as a conversation, and even explained organic agriculture to guide the person to understand the meaning behind the word 'organic', as many people still are not well informed about organic products. In doing this, the terms 'Kilimo Hai' in Swahili (Fig. 1) and 'Organic' in English both were used.

In the presentation of results, we differentiate between all consumers (N=130) and a subgroup of those claiming to consume organic food (N=76). The subgroup is called "organic consumers".

In the results and discussion sections, we compare our findings with those of an earlier study conducted in Norway and France, to identify different perceptions that people have regarding the concept of organic farming.

RESULTS

Table 1: Questions and answers related to organic products

No.	Questions	Answers	N
1.	What do you understand by organic food?	36% don't know 34% natural products 15% mode of production 15% healthy products	130
2.	Do you consume organic food?	59% yes 41% no	130
3.	How long have you been consuming organic products?	76% more than 10 years 16% less than 10 years 8% don't know	76
4.	How much of your consumption is organic?	55% more than 50% 41% less than 50% 4% not sure	76
5.*	What guarantees you that the food is organic?	70% taste, freshness, natural, appearance 16% difficult to know 14% brand, ask producer, safe area	76
6.*	Why do you consume organic products?	67% good for health 21% natural and safe 12% other reasons (convenience)	76
7.	Where can you get organic food?	59% direct from a farm or a garden (often own) 33% local markets 8% supermarkets	76
8.	Is organic agriculture less industrial than conventional agriculture?	84% yes 16% no	76
9.*	How and where did you get to know about organic products?	62% schools, extension services and seminars 21% family and neighbours 17% other ways (television, newspapers, etc.)	76

* Open-ended question.

Whereas 36% of the respondents did not know what organic products are, a majority were able to define them, either as natural products (34%), as a certain mode of production (15%), or as healthful products (15%) (Table 1). In a similar survey of Norwegian and French consumers, the great majority were able to recognise the term "organic agriculture". While 57% of the Norwegians and 46% of the French explained organic agriculture as natural products, 35% of the Norwegians and 17% of the French defined it as a mode of production and 5% of the Norwegians and 17% of the French as healthful products (Sogn et al., 2001). A result in common for all three countries is that the main reason to consume organic products is for good health. In Tanzania, this reason was the most important for as many as 67% of the respondents, whereas in Norway it was 50% and in France 47%.

Although certified organic products are hardly available in the Tanzanian market, as many as 59% of respondents nevertheless claimed that they consume organic food. All these respondents are among the 64% of the total group that could define organic food. Among the organic consumers, 76% had consumed organic products for more than ten years, and 55% reported more than half of their food consumption as organic. The highest proportion of organic consumers was in Kilimanjaro (78%), (Table 2), but more than half of the respondents in Dar es Salaam (52% - 58%) also claimed that they consume organic.

Table 2: Organic consumption distributed by place of interview

Place of interview	Do you consume organic food?		
	Yes	No	Total (%)
University of DSM*	52	48	100
Pupils Sec. School DSM	58	42	100
People in DSM	52	48	100
People in Kilimanjaro	78	22	100

* Dar es Salaam

70% of the organic consumers identify organic products by their taste, freshness, naturalness, or appearance (Table 1). Altogether, only 15% identify organic products by a label, producer guarantee and / or "safe area". By safe area, consumers mean their own farms, neighbouring farms, and other producers whom they know and trust.

59% of the organic consumers get their organic food from a farm or garden, often their own. However, convenience was also an important reason for some consumers (12%). None in the Norwegian-French study claimed to consume organic for lack of alternatives. All the respondents in Kilimanjaro got their organic food from a farm or a garden, whereas a large proportion of the respondents in Dar es Salaam got it from the market (Table 3). 36% of the respondents in Dar es Salaam have access to organic food from a farm or a garden.

Table 3: Place of interview crossed with where to get organic food

Place of interview	Where can you get organic food?			
	Direct from farm/garden	The market	Supermarket	Total (%)
University DSM*	31	54	15	100
Pupils Sec. School DSM	33	60	7	100
People in DSM	56	33	11	100
People in Kilimanjaro	100	0	0	100

* Dar es Salaam

62% of the respondents received information about organic farming in schools, from extension services and / or in seminars. Information and knowledge about organic farming is important to understand the concept of organic agriculture.

For a clear majority of 78%, health is the most important factor concerning food consumption (Table 4), whereas only 15% claimed that food consumption is mainly for satisfying hunger. Further, 25% of the consumers claimed that some food in the market may be dangerous to consume, and as many as 62% take some kind of precautions before consuming food, e. g. looking for the TBS logo and being sure about the environment in which the food was produced.

Table 4: Questions and answers related to food safety

No.	Questions	Answers	N
10.	What is important for your food consumption?	78% that the food is healthy 15% to satisfy hunger, good taste 7% to support environmentally friendly agriculture	130
11.	How healthy is Tanzanian produced food?	46% it is always healthy to eat 29% it is on average not dangerous to eat 25% some of it is dangerous to eat	130
12.*	How do you know the food you eat is safe?	62% I take precautions (TBS**, environment, unexpired) 14 % I am not sure 10% I just trust it (never get sick) 14% other (learn from parents, schools. etc.)	130
13.	Were do you get your food from?	59% local markets 35% direct from farm or garden 6% supermarkets	130
14.	Who should be responsible for the food control in Tanzania?	65% the Public authorities 28% co-operation between several actors 7% Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	130

* Open-ended question.
** Tanzanian Bureau of Standards

While getting food directly from the farm or garden constituted the main source for organic food (Table 1), local markets were the main source for food in general (Table 4). Local markets and small retail shops are filled with a range of products, mainly from within the country. Most of these are easily accessible and affordable for people from all income levels. Most of the products are unpackaged and are judged by freshness, appearance, and price. Supermarkets offer products from both within and outside the country, however, only 6% of the respondents purchase their foods from supermarkets.

As many as 65% of the consumers believe that the Tanzanian public authorities should be responsible for the food control in Tanzania. This means that the governmental bodies, TBS, MAFS and TDFA (see introduction) have a great legitimacy among the consumers.

Table 5: Place of interview and opinion on food safety

Place of interview	How do you know that the food is safe?				
	Precautions	Trust	Not sure	Other	Total (%)
University DSM*	40	24	16	20	100
Pupils Sec. School DSM	81	0	11	8	100
People in DSM	54	11	21	14	100
People in Kilimanjaro	81	4	0	15	100
Total (%)	62	10	14	14	

* Dar es Salaam

From Table 5 we see that the respondents from secondary schools in DSM (81%) and from Kilimanjaro (81%) take more precautions. This means that they are conscious about safe food to a great extent and have the means to get it. From the same table, we also see that 16% of the

respondents at the University of Dar es Salaam and 21% of the respondents in Dar es Salaam are not sure about the food's safety. We also see that 24% of those interviewed at the University trust Tanzanian food.

DISCUSSION

Tanzanians' interest in organic produce

Through the study, Tanzanians' revealed a clear interest in organic food, although the means of identification for the majority of people were different than in other studies, e.g. Sogn et al. (2001). More than half of the consumers interviewed said they consume organic products, which they identify by taste and appearance, and many obtain organic products directly from a farm or garden. Since the products are not certified, it is difficult to understand whether this food was produced in environmentally friendly areas or was organic "by default", and would qualify to be certified according to the TanCert standards. In spite of the significant interest, certified organic production in Tanzania like in any other country is characterised by strictly inspection and certification procedures that are too costfull for many small scale farmers to afford and hence makes the products hardly available in Tanzanian markets.

Who knows if these delicious-looking products are organic? From one of the markets in Dar es Salaam (photo: Øystein Sogn)

Organically produced products from Kilimanjaro (photo: Fredrick Silayo)

Identifying organic products by taste and freshness may be difficult, and is hardly a trustworthy way of identifying By comparing where the respondents get organic food (Table 1) and ordinary food (Table 4), it is quite clear that organic food mainly comes from a farm or garden, while the ordinary food is bought in the market. Products that come "direct from farm/garden" functions like a guaranty sign for the consumers. Therefore, the Tanzanians who claimed to find organic products at the markets either must believe that the food they choose is organic, or buy from contacts that they trust. While the farmers and consumers in Kilimanjaro are close to each others in distance, and the inputs used in the production is known, the distance between consumers in Dar es Salaam and farmers is often long. It is often difficult to control the products' history. Therefore the consumer in Dar es Salaam might find "organic by default" products without knowing about it for sure. The consumers risk consuming harmful products while he thinks it's organic.

In the comparative study, 68% of the Norwegians and 85% of the French said they identified organic products from the certification label or other package information (Sogn et al., 2001), while in Tanzania, only 14% mentioned asking the producer, or labels. Certification and labelling of organic products is a trustworthy way of offering consumers guaranteed organic products. The regulations set requirements on the inputs used in production at

the farm level and on subsequent treatment of the products (processing, packaging, transport and storage) in order to designate products that can be labelled as organic and to eliminate fraud. However, even though there is no taste guarantee in the formal definition of organic agriculture, we should not ignore the possibility that organic products can be identified by taste. Many studies show that consumers claim that organic products taste better than conventional products (e.g. Torjusen et al., 1999; 2004). However, the consumers in those studies made this statement about food that they knew was organically produced.

The definition that many Tanzanians have of organic agriculture is not well founded on what organic agriculture actually means as a concept. For this case we cannot be sure that they are really consuming organic products in the sense of products that would qualify for a TanCert certification as often as they think they are.

Tanzanians' concern about food safety

Concern about food safety is clearly expressed by some of the Tanzanians that we interviewed. Many consumers claim that some food at the market is dangerous to consume. This is understandable because food in the local markets and in retail shops from within the region or from nearby regions is promoted without further information on quality and / or shelf-life. Also, imported food is labelled in foreign languages, and some people are unable to read even their own language.

Government authorities have an important role in protecting Tanzanian consumers. This study does not reveal to what extent the government performs this role. However, we should not ignore that 7% of the consumers indicated that other organisations that are not governmental should be involved in the food control processes. This underlines the consumers' awareness of safe food.

Consumers selecting products in one of the Dar es Salaam markets (photo: Øystein Sogn)

The Tanzanians' concern over food safety makes us call for initiatives for further development of organic agriculture in both urban and rural areas, to improve nutrition, support the promotion and sale of organic products in local markets. Since organic agriculture brings a number of benefits to human and environmental health, Tanzanian consumers deserve access to organic food of higher quality and with less risk of pesticide residues. They deserve a reliable way to identify such food, and to be guaranteed that "organic" products are really organic. Organic agriculture and having certified organic products available are therefore another form of guarantee to consumers' on food safety. This farming method may spearhead the way forward to a more environmental and healthful agricultural sector as a whole.

Since health is an important motivating force behind consuming food in general, it is therefore important to consider promoting organic agriculture, since it excludes the use of synthetic agrochemical, and organic foods would therefore not be affected by astringent maximum residue levels (Twarog, 2006).

Along with pilot projects, appropriate information should be developed for different target groups. TanCert's approach of collaborating with government institutions, researchers, exporters, civil society organisations, international organisations, and other organic agriculture key actors seems to be a good step in promoting organic agriculture and its standards in Tanzania. Similar certification

organisations have been established in Kenya (AfriCert) and Uganda (UgoCert). All three organisations have started negotiations towards a common certification standard for East Africa. Schools and extension services are also important arenas for people to learn about organic agriculture.

CONCLUSIONS

About one-third of the Tanzanian consumers we interviewed were not able to define organic agriculture precisely in line with the IFOAM principles. Still, a majority define organic food as healthful or natural, and more than half claim to consume organic food. Nearly half of the organic consumers claimed they consumed organic for more than ten years, with more than half of their consumption as organic. Without any certified organic products in the Tanzanian markets and many consumers still claiming they consume organic food, these results indicate that many people may not really be consuming organic food even though they believe they are. This is especially true for the people interviewed in Dar es Salaam, who get their food mainly from the markets.

The interviewed Tanzanians are well aware of food safety and health issues, and many are worried about food safety. The government has a high level of legitimacy, but could do more to reassure the consumers. Since health is an important motivating force behind consuming food in general, organic agriculture, in which synthetic agrochemicals are excluded, it would not be affected by astringent maximum residue levels.

More certified organic agriculture may be an answer to Tanzanian consumers' worries, uncertainty and call for high level of food safety. Tanzanians have a serious interest in products from organic agriculture, and they deserve to be informed about what organic food is, as well as having access to such food. To promote organic agriculture and easy identification of its products, an emphasis on increasing affordable organic certification is essential. It is therefore very fortunate that the certification body TanCert is established to certify organic products for the Tanzanian market.

More information about organic agriculture in schools and through extension services is essential. Tanzanian schools already teach environmentally friendly farming practices, but often not close enough to the organic concept. Hence, we suggest that initiatives be taken for further development of certification of organic agriculture in both urban and rural areas, in particular to serve the local markets with certified organic products, but also for export. An increased emphasis on certification will increase the amount and quality of organic farming in Tanzania, and farmers will thereby become more skilled in understanding ecosystems and agronomy. They also will be able to get premium prices for their products, and consumers will have access to more healthful food and be better informed about what they consume.

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