

Organic Agriculture Research Agenda in Africa: The Perspective of the Network for Organic Agriculture Research in Africa (NOARA)

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Context

- The current agricultural and food supply systems rely greatly on non renewable external inputs, impact negatively on soils, water and biodiversity and lack resilience against external shocks. Related policies and institutions are inadequate.
- Need for new arrangements to transform agricultural and food supply systems to ensure food and livelihood security in a stable environment.
- Agro-ecologically based production systems are capable of ensuring local food security and sovereignty, ecosystem services for rural welfare and biodiversity conservation.
- Evidence presented by the UN Special Rapporteur reveals that smallholder farmers can double food production within 3-10 years in critical regions when ecological methods are applied.
- More evidence based findings are needed to inform policy making and programme implementation.

Challenges to Organic Agriculture in Africa

- Farming in general viewed as especially among the youth
- Limited awareness and understanding of OA, and differentiation from non-organic is not easy for unlabeled goods on the market.
- Limited access to information and technologies on OA to influence decision making along the value chain – from production up to consumption.
- Limited access to organic certification for organic producers, processors and exporters in Africa - expensive and prohibitive
- Contamination at different levels within the value chain.
- Long transition to convert to organic and sometimes associated with decreases in yields or household income.
- Poor or lack of access to high-end markets for inputs and produce/products in the EU, USA, Japan, etc.
- Limited funding and research on organic farming, marketing etc. in Africa in the past and at present - not given full recognition.
- Poor/non-existent infrastructure for organic production and development of organic value chains.
- Short supply of organic produce to meet demand.

Opportunities to Organic Agriculture in Africa

- Sensitization on OA benefits to stimulate greater local/regional demand for products. Organic trade has experienced an outstanding expansion, driven by consumers' concerns for safe food and environmentally friendly production.
- Boom in Niche market opportunities for raw and processed products.
- Potential for climate change adaptation/mitigation, addressing land and soil degradation.
- Reduced potential for environmental contamination through e.g. reduced use of synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers.
- Addressing some socio- and economic- environmental demands: contributions of OA to household food security, improved nutrition, food safety, and increased incomes.
- Combining traditional and new technologies (including indigenous knowledge and germplasm systems to enhance sustainable agriculture and livelihoods).
- Technology development along the whole chain from production to consumption and dissemination to reach many farmers (pest and disease management, soil fertility management, postharvest handling and management and associated tools/equipment and packaging materials, etc.)
- Reliance on low external inputs can assist farmers to reduce the costs of their production. However, contextual applicability of this needs to be assessed.
- Potential for linking African business community and entrepreneurs to other continents.
- Policy/conventions/protocols demands - African Union Decision on OA.

African Union High Level Decision on Organic Agriculture

Following the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture held in Lilongwe, Malawi on 28-29 October, 2010, and a resolution made in line with the African Sustainable Ecological Agriculture Production Systems the African Union policy organs, the Executive Council at its meeting on 24-28 January, 2011 passed a decision on supporting organic farming which was endorsed by the African Union Heads of States and Government - EX.CL/Dec.621 (XVIII):-

The Executive Council

1. **TAKES NOTE** of the Report of the Conference of Ministers of Agriculture held in Lilongwe, Malawi on October, 28 and 29, 2010 on Organic Farming, and **ENDORSES** the Resolution contained therein;
2. **EXPRESSES** concern over the current practice of exploitation of organic farmers in Africa;
3. **REQUESTS** the Commission and its New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) to:
 - Initiate and provide guidance for an African Union (AU)-led coalition of international partners on the establishment of an African organic farming platform based on best practices; and
 - Provide guidance in support of the development of sustainable organic farming systems and improve seed quality;
4. **CALLS UPON** development partners to provide the necessary technical and financial support for the implementation of this Decision;
5. **REQUESTS** the Commission to report regularly on the implementation of this Decision.

Source: African Union Commission (www.africa-union.org/Decisions)

AU High Level Decision on OA – Cont'd

- It should be pointed out that this decision by the Executive Council of the African Union is the first high-profile political endorsement of organic farming in Africa.
- The prominence that organic farming is enjoying in recent years in Africa can be firmly traced to this decision.
- The decision also emboldened actors and practitioners of organic farming in Africa to seek their rights and increase their active participation in various levels of research, development and markets.

Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA)

- EOA involves production management systems that consider the agro-ecosystem in all its diversity, focusing on biological diversity, healthy use of soils, air and water and relying on renewable resources in locally organized agricultural systems while minimizing the addition of external inputs like agrochemicals and inorganic fertilizers that may have adverse effects on these systems.
- EOA integrates modern science, innovative practices and traditional knowledge.

Action Plan for Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative

- **Overall Goal:** To mainstream EOA into national agricultural production systems, policies, and practices by 2025 in order to improve agricultural productivity, food security, access to markets and sustainable development in Africa.
- **Vision:** Vibrant Ecological Organic Systems for Enhanced Food Security and Sustainable Development in Africa.
- **Mission:** To promote ecologically sound strategies and practices among diverse stakeholders in production, processing, and marketing through strategic actions and policy making to alleviate poverty, guarantee adequate and healthy food security, improve livelihoods and safeguard the environment.

Objectives of the EOA Initiative

The EOA Action Plan pursues four main objectives :

- To increase documentation of information and knowledge on organic agricultural products along the complete value chain and support relevant actors to translate it into practice and wide application.
- To systematically inform producers about the EOA approaches and good practices and motivate their uptake through strengthening access to advisory and support services.
- To substantially increase the share of quality organic products at the local, national and regional markets.
- Strengthen inclusive stakeholder engagement in organic commodities value chain development by establishing national, regional and continental multi-stakeholder platforms to advocate for changes in public policy, plans, programs, and practices.

African Organic Agriculture Action Plan

The Action Plan is anchored on six strategically related pillars:

1. Research, Training and Extension
2. Information and Communication
3. Value Chain and Market Development
4. Networking and partnerships.
5. Programme and Policy Development
6. Institutional Capacity Development

Need for Coordinated Research

- During the 2nd **African Organic Conference** held in Lusaka, Zambia in May 2012 a side event brought together participants from Eastern, Western and Southern Africa and Europe to discuss how to develop organic agriculture research agenda.
- Research was underscored as a critical component of any initiative designed to promote ecologically sustainable development in agriculture in Africa.
- The forum recommended the formation of a multi-stakeholder and multi-level perspective to research development and implementation.

Aim of the Network for Organic Agriculture Research in Africa (NOARA)

NOARA seeks to create a scientifically sound evidence base supported by research in ecologically sound practices in agriculture and environmental protection in order to increase productivity of crop and livestock production, enhance value of system outputs, and sustain resilient farming systems.

Vision of NOARA

Organic farmers (certified, non-certified, male and female) in Africa are more competitive and have increased and stabilized yields; better access to high-end markets; improved food, nutrition and income securities; while contributing to overall poverty reduction, national development and environmental protection in Africa.

Mission of NOARA

Creation and dissemination of scientific evidence and knowledge for holistic organic agriculture development through demand-driven, farmer and user-led research based on participatory approaches guided by organic agriculture principles.

Thematic Areas

- Productivity and sustainability (crops and livestock)
- Biodiversity
- Extension and dissemination
- Processing/Value addition and marketing
- Consumer issues
- Socio-economics
 - Perceptions/criticisms
 - Benefit/impact quantification
- Climate change
- Policy orientations
- Holistic system approaches

Responsibilities of NOARA

- Coordinate research in accordance with the Ecological Organic Agriculture's research pillar priorities.
- Support research which contributes to the social, cultural, environmental and economic prosperity of the smallholder farmers of Africa.
- Establish potential participants and members in the research, training and extension fields.
- Promote communication between researchers, practitioners, farmers and policy makers in EOA;

Responsibilities of NOARA – cont'd

- Promote public awareness of the importance of science, technology and indigenous knowledge in advancing best practices in EOA through documentation and sharing
- Foster a scientific community within Africa which recognizes interdependencies with national, regional and international research partners
- Seek support from potential established and credible research agencies to be co-opted to support research initiative

Mission of TIPI of IFOAM

- Engage and involve all stakeholders that benefit from organic agriculture research;
- Set a global research agenda for organic food and farming;
- Foster international collaboration in organic agriculture research;
- Facilitate exchange of scientific knowledge of organic food and farming systems; and
- Disseminate, apply and implement innovations and scientific knowledge consistent with the principles of organic agriculture

TIPI Provides Opportunities for NOARA

- Linking up with national, regional and global initiatives
- Global organic market outlook and opportunities
- Organic standards , certifications and compliance
- Fair Trade Certification requirements and opportunities
- Technical centres of excellence in organic agriculture
- Global commitment to strengthen food security, improved nutrition and incomes
- Helping farmers to build resilience to climate change and natural disasters
- Balancing of productivity, stability, resilience, and equitability

Added Value of the Global Vision and Strategy

The strategy will help NOARA in comprehensively understanding and operationalizing the three pathways – empowerment of rural areas, eco-functional intensification, and food for health and well-being - from high quality outputs to policy and practice change outcomes and impacts, and what can be learnt from the Organic Agriculture experience around the world.

Regions	Representatives
Eastern Africa	Dr. David Amudavi – Chairman (Kenya) Dr. Mwatima Juma - Secretary (Tanzania) Ferede Addisu (Ethiopia)
Southern Africa	Daniel Kalala – (Zambia) Thierry Alban Revert - (South Africa) Dr. Irene Kadzere (Zimbambwe)
West Africa (Anglophone)	Prof. Victor Togun (Nigeria) Dr. Noah Adamtey – PR & Communications (Nigeria)
West Africa (Francophone)	Laurent C. Glin (Benin) N’Guiro Sidy El’Moctar (Mali)
Central Africa	To be identified
Northern Africa	To be identified

Thank you

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