



OWC 2020 Paper Submission - Science Forum

Topic 3 - Transition towards organic and sustainable food systems

OWC2020-SCI-870

DRIVERS OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE'S INSTITUTIONALIZATION. A COMPARISON BETWEEN UGANDA AND BENIN

Pauline Bendjebbar*

**Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, INRAE, LISIS, Paris, France*

Abstract: Since its first appearance in the late 1980s, organic agriculture on the African continent has become a dynamic sector. How did organic agriculture developed? Literature about organic institutionalization in Africa often emphasizes the important role played by development aid actors. In this paper, we compare Benin and Uganda and we use a conceptual framework inspired by the French school of public policy theory to explain organic agriculture pathways. We argue that a variety of drivers explain those trajectories. Three main explaining dimensions are studied: configuration of the national agricultural sector, aid development programs, and social movement mobilization. In Benin, the socialist regime that ensured widespread use of pesticides across the agriculture sector, scattered organic initiatives, compounded by the low level of development aid all contributed to a lesser institutionalization of organic agriculture than that seen in Uganda.

Introduction: Organic agriculture emerged on the African continent near the end of the 1980s. How did organic agriculture developed on the African continent? What are the main dimensions of this dynamic? So far, literature insisted on the role played by aid agency programs as well as the role of the EU market demand for tropical organic products. If those dimensions are relevant, this paper argues that the development of organic agriculture is a more complex dynamic. Using a comparison between Benin and Uganda, we analyze organic sectors' development through three main dimensions: agricultural sector configuration, aid development programs, the existence and a stabilized social movement supporting organics. This analysis offers insights into public policy development for organic sectors in Africa.

Material and methods:

Analytical framework:

We define institutionalization as the stabilization of organic agriculture into specific rules, a set of core techniques, and structured networks that persist over time, which all contribute to the emergence of a sub-sector (Jobert, Muller, 1987). We assume that institutionalization points to three core dimensions. The first is the configuration of the agricultural sector. In order for new institutions, i.e., organic institutions, to gain dominance within a sector existing rules must either be revised or deinstitutionalized (Fuenfschilling and Truffer, 2014). Historic rules organizing the agricultural sector are thus a

key dimension of the organic institutionalization dynamic. The second dimension refers to development aid. In the African context, development aid plays an important role in policy formulation, local actors' capacity building and financing of production. Those actors play a major role in sectoral policies (Lavigne Delville, 2015) and their technical assistance and funds may enhance or refrain the institutionalization of innovations such as organic agriculture. The third dimension relates to social movements. Social movement can be key in the consolidation of an institutional field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) when one or more key actors emerge to centralize information and facilitate actions among actors towards a common institutional goal.

By comparing the socio-historical development of organic agriculture in Uganda and Benin along the three above-mentioned dimensions, this paper will identify core drivers that can explain the observed differences in the two development trajectories.

Methods:

Qualitative data was collected between 2014 and 2016 in Uganda and Benin. Participant observations were facilitated by being hosted by the national organic agriculture movement (Nogamu) in Uganda and the organic promotion organization (Obepab) in Benin over two, six-month periods. In addition to these ethnographic methods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals outside of these networks, but influential in the agricultural sectors, in order to avoid "click and lock" phenomenon. In total, 92 interviews were conducted. These interviews were qualitatively analyzed according to the above developed conceptual framework. Document analysis of grey literature was conducted using the same coding scheme and participant observations were used to triangulate the interview data.

Results: Although Benin and Uganda's first organic initiatives were similar, Ifoam and FiBL data show their national trajectories are now quite different. Indeed, in 2017, certified organic represented 1.8% of land and 210,352 certified producers in Uganda, and 0.5% of land and 4,030 producers in Benin (Willer et Lernoud 2020). The comparison helps us to reveal three dimensions that are crucial to organic agriculture institutionalization path.

(1) A history of pesticide promotion and international integration in structure sector take-off.

Three main historical periods shaped the two countries agricultural sectors (*cf. the table below*).

Table: Agricultural sector main events relevant to organic dynamics in Uganda and Benin

Uganda	Benin
Colonization and post-colonial	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -During colonialization introduction of coffee, cotton, tea and tobacco production and trade. -Political unrest (Idi Amin Dada 71 à 79) and non-efficient regimes => Agricultural sector abandoned: "dormant phase" -Land preserved from chemical contamination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -French introduced cotton and palm oil production and trade -Marxist-leninist regime (1972–1990) -Agriculture modernization, socialist management with state control -Important extension service -Spread of conventional vision of agriculture
Structural Adjustment Plans-Liberalization	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1987 National Resistance Movement: good student of Bretton Woods institutions -Peace and political stability -Return of Ugandan investors, international aid arrival -Economic dependence on agricultural sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1992 difficult adoption (cotton value chain) -Democracy and political shift -Producer organization in charge of former State activities -Low development of private initiatives -Liberalization of inputs supply for production

-No policy on agriculture: NGOs in charge of the extensions service	
SAP critics and agricultural policy renewal?	
-2001: liberalization pursuit -Power elites weakened -Export value chain diversification -First national agricultural extension services programs (Naads): a way to consolidate power -Spread of a modern and commercial vision of agriculture -Private sector is growing	-2011: PSRSA -Modernization of family farming (Beninese green revolution) -Cotton value chain remains State priority (due to political interests)

These three periods created the institutions against which organic initiatives emerged. In Benin, the socialist political economy of a state-interventionist vision of agricultural development based on the “green revolution” promise structured national institutions in this image. This created entrenched obstacles to the development of organic initiatives. In Uganda, post-independence isolation limited the “green revolution” vision of agriculture in the early period and a full liberalization of agricultural and development policy facilitated an NGO-driven push for organic agriculture, as we will describe it in the next sections.

(2) Multiple and contrasting effects of assistance programs.

Two categories of actors have played a central role in the development of organic agriculture: bi- and multilateral aid agencies for cooperation in development and international NGOs.

In Uganda, in the late 1980s, many international NGOs supported the rural population to improve their food security after the war. As the context did not favor intensive agriculture with synthetic chemical inputs, organic farming techniques were offered to farmers. In Benin, in the late 1980s, local NGOs, funded by international aid, first disseminated biological techniques. This way they offered an alternative to conventional techniques.

Later on, in the 1990s, the first development aid programs emerged. In Uganda, those projects aimed to support European food manufacturers in securing the supply of organic raw materials. One of the main programs was the Export promotion of organic products from Africa, Epopa (1997 to 2009). Funded by the Swedish cooperation agency (Sida), it helped export growth of certified organic products, such as coffee, cocoa and cotton. The program’s vision was in line with the government’s agriculture priority, diversification of export. At the same time, in Benin, the SDA programs supported the production and export of certified organic cotton. Conducted by Obepab and funded by the Dutch government under an intergovernmental agreement, the program encouraged sustainable development and trade in developing countries. SDA program activities focused on production rather than marketing, due to the wide spread of conventional practices in cotton cultivation in Benin.

From the 2000s, projects are numerous in Uganda, and few in Benin. In Uganda, Sida financed a second phase (2002 to 2008) to stabilize the growing sector. They helped the local institutional environment’s creation, with Ugocert’s creation in 2004, a national certification body. In addition, it strengthened Nogamu’s activities and its institutional position within the State apparatus. The success and reputation of the Epopa program attracted other donors. Epopa benefitted from an “organic farming by default” and a liberal context.

In Benin, after the end of SDA program funding, only a few projects and donor programs were devoted to organic farming.

(3) Social movement

Social movement dynamics, and more specifically its historical and socio-economic genesis in the two countries, also contributes to the different trajectories.

In Uganda, the national organic agriculture movement of Uganda, Nogamu emerged in 2001. It marked the beginning of actors' network stabilization at the national level. From the beginning, Nogamu was an "umbrella" organization that brought together the different stakeholders involved in organic agriculture in Uganda. In 2005, Nogamu had 300 individuals and 80 organizations that diversified with local NGOs and producers, private entrepreneurs and researchers. It gained visibility in international organic farming promotion networks by becoming a member of Ifoam before 2004.

Unlike Uganda, Benin does not have an organization such as Nogamu. There are only scattered initiatives that are struggling to agree on a common vision of organic agriculture, or on a path of development. Over the past decade, a few initiatives have attempted to emerge, not without difficulties. The oldest initiative, which tried to federate organic organization in Benin, was Redad, created in 1992. Then, pushed by Obepab, the Pabe was launched in 2014. Through its positioning around organic cotton and its expertise developed through the Sustainable Development of Agriculture program, Obepab has become an important player, if not essential, of certified organic agriculture for export to Benin. Now Obepab joined the continental AfrONet movement and seems to progress towards more stabilization.

Discussion: This paper briefly traces how organic agriculture spread in Benin and Uganda. The two trajectories demonstrate that while international demand for tropical products and aid development organization did play a role, historical political-economy and local actor dynamics and networks matter. Local actor dynamics and the structuration of networks are highly influential in the contemporary period of development. Scattered initiatives in Benin made it difficult to lobby the government beyond the cotton sector, while in Uganda a federated movement of different stakeholders—with good political connections—facilitated lobbying efforts that have resulted in the 2019 approval of a national organic policy. Lessons for future policy support can be derived from this comparative approach as it suggests that there are different entry points for influencing public, private and civic initiatives in organic. Multi-tiered and multi-actor approaches could focus on leverage points present in specific sub-sectors and within current institutions to enable political opportunities to emerge.

References

- DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W. (Eds.). (1991): *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Fuenfschilling L. & Truffer B. (2014): The structuration of socio-technical regimes—Conceptual foundations from institutional theory. *Research Policy* 43-4, 772-791.
- Jobert B. & Muller P. (1987): *L'État en action*. Presses universitaires de France.
- Lavigne Delville P. (2015) : *Aide internationale et sociétés civiles au Niger*. Karthala-APAD-IRD, Paris.
- Willer H. & Lernoud J. (eds.) (2020) : *The world of organic agriculture. Statistics*. Ifoam-Fibl.