



Markus Arbenz, Organics4Development and FiBL, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, Switzerland

COOPERATION

Organics in international development cooperation

The holistic concept of organic presents solutions for many current challenges and contributes to the SDGs. That makes it interesting for international development cooperation. A quick review of recent history and the present priorities showcased in the Africa Pavilion, (e.g. at the KOAN booth), follows.

Nice but crazy

In 2011, a small break-out session of the Organic World Congress (OWC) in South Korea positions organic as an innovative development concept for poverty alleviation, resilience building, and sustainable development. “Nice but crazy since no funding will follow”, was the then feedback of experts. Critics said that organic is for advanced farmers that can access sophisticated certification services, and that have wealthy clients; pre-conditions, which are not available in low-income countries. In the meantime, millions of Euros flow to development projects around the globe.



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Development projects on the rise

Early projects concentrated on certification and trade. Later, broad view sector development, system performance measurement and nutrition projects were in the foreground. In 2014, the African Union launched the continental “Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative” (EOA-I) with the aim of mainstreaming or-

ganic in Africa, which is supported by the Swiss and Swedish governments in 9 countries. Germany follows in 2019 with the “Knowledge Center for Organic Agriculture” in Africa with 5 regional hubs. The Dutch government furthers organic trade in West Africa and the French Government invests in West African policy setting and in AfrONet, the African organic umbrella to support national sectors.

Success demands reform of approach

A recent FiBL evaluation of the Swiss EOA-I support, implemented by Biovision Africa Trust in Kenya, attests impact and organic sector growth in Africa. New governmental organic policies and strategies in Africa, considering organic in continental agriculture policies, are recent successes. Africa now seeks support to respond to new import regulations for group certification (e.g. EU), to climate change, to increasing demands in local markets, and it requires experts that work together with its specialists. A special challenge is the sustainability of sector organizations. For instance, Organic Egypt supported by Sequa or the Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) working with FiBL are spearheading own sustainable business plan development. KOAN presents its engagement with Kenyan exporters at BIOFACH 2023 on its booth in the Africa Pavilion and in the conference. ■

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