

# Airfreight, organic products and Africa

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# Emergence of 'climate change' standards in agro-food sector

## ➤ UK retailer initiatives to reduce CO2 emissions ('carbon footprint')

- Reduce energy use
- CO2 labelling of products
- Reduce amount of food imported by air
- Label air-freighted foods as 'flown'



## ➤ Initiatives by private organic standard setting bodies in the EU

## ➤ Emerging focus is on CO2 emissions from food transportation - especially air freight

# Private organic standards important for EU market access

- Organic movement influences the EU regulation of organic production and trade
- Private organic standards in excess of EU regulatory requirements often dominate – e.g.
  - UK – Soil Association: 70% of operators
  - Germany – Naturland & Bioland: 45%
  - Sweden – KRAV: 100%
- Private standards *de facto* govern conditions for accessing organic food markets in the EU

# Organic standards and climate change: two main approaches

- 1) **Include specific CC standards within organic standards**
  - Broad standards on CC (Bioland)
  - Focus on a single 'climate killer'
    - Soil Association and Bio-Suisse: air freight
- 2) **Develop independent, additional CC standards**
  - KRAV and Swedish Farmers' Federation: both organic and conventional products

# The UK Soil Association proposal to ban air-freight of organic imports

- Green paper & public consultation in 2007
- Critiques from within UK and developing countr.
  - One-sided focus on air freight as *the CO2 source*
  - Protectionist of UK and other EU farmers
  - Skewed impact on developing countries
- Options for importers in case of a ban?
  - Shift from the SA to the EU standard or stop importing organic products flown by air

# Likely impacts of a ban in developing countries

- 60 exporters worldwide: de-certify or close the business!
  - Specialized organic firms will suffer most
- Minimum 21,500 livelihoods compromised
  - Women, youth and smallholders hardest hit
- Biggest impact felt in the poorest countries
  - Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Zambia, ..., Ghana, ...
  - Account for 79% of all air freighted organic imports
  - Depend relatively more on air freight

# So what did the SA decide?

- Air freight is allowed on condition of additional certification to Fair Trade or Ethical Trade *'to ensure that food is only air freighted if it delivers genuine development benefits'*
- Importers must *'plan for reducing any remaining dependence on air freight'*
- SA will *'consider implementing carbon labeling for all organic goods ...'* when feasible
- Standard in effect from January 2009

# Broader issues (1)

- Private climate change standards can have significant effects on exporters, producers and workers in developing countries
  - Loss of market access
  - Loss of price premia
  - More demanding & more costly compliance

## Broader issues (2)

- Northern NGOs and movements were key actors in developing and promoting the 'air freight' standard'
- Developing countries had little or no influence on standard setting and generally did not raise their voice

# Lessons for developing countries

- Strengthen national industry organizations (KOAN a role model in East Africa)
- Get a voice in the end markets where standard setting takes place
  - Dialogue with EU private standard setters, the IFOAM EU group, EU institutions
  - This requires human and financial resources

# Lessons for developing countries (2)

- Strengthen capacity to follow developments and potential threats in international standards
- 'ORGANIC +' standards often necessary to maintain or maximize the benefits of market access