



# Food for all? Organic agriculture and the household food security equation in developing countries

# Chapters

1. Context of organics
2. Schools of thought
3. Reasons for food insecurity
4. Mechanism and strategies
5. Food security pathways
6. Challenges
7. Conclusions





# Smallholder context

- Majority of the population is rural (80% and above), majority of poor population lives in rural area
- Agriculture is the mainstay of household and national economies (dependence on single commodities)
- Green revolution (seed-fertiliser-irrigation) packages have not 'diffused' everywhere
- PRSPs of many governments emphasise 'modernised' agricultural development



# Defining organics

A food and fibre production system that is environmentally friendly, economically viable and socially acceptable.

1. Principle of health
2. Principle of ecology
3. Principle of fairness
4. Principle of care

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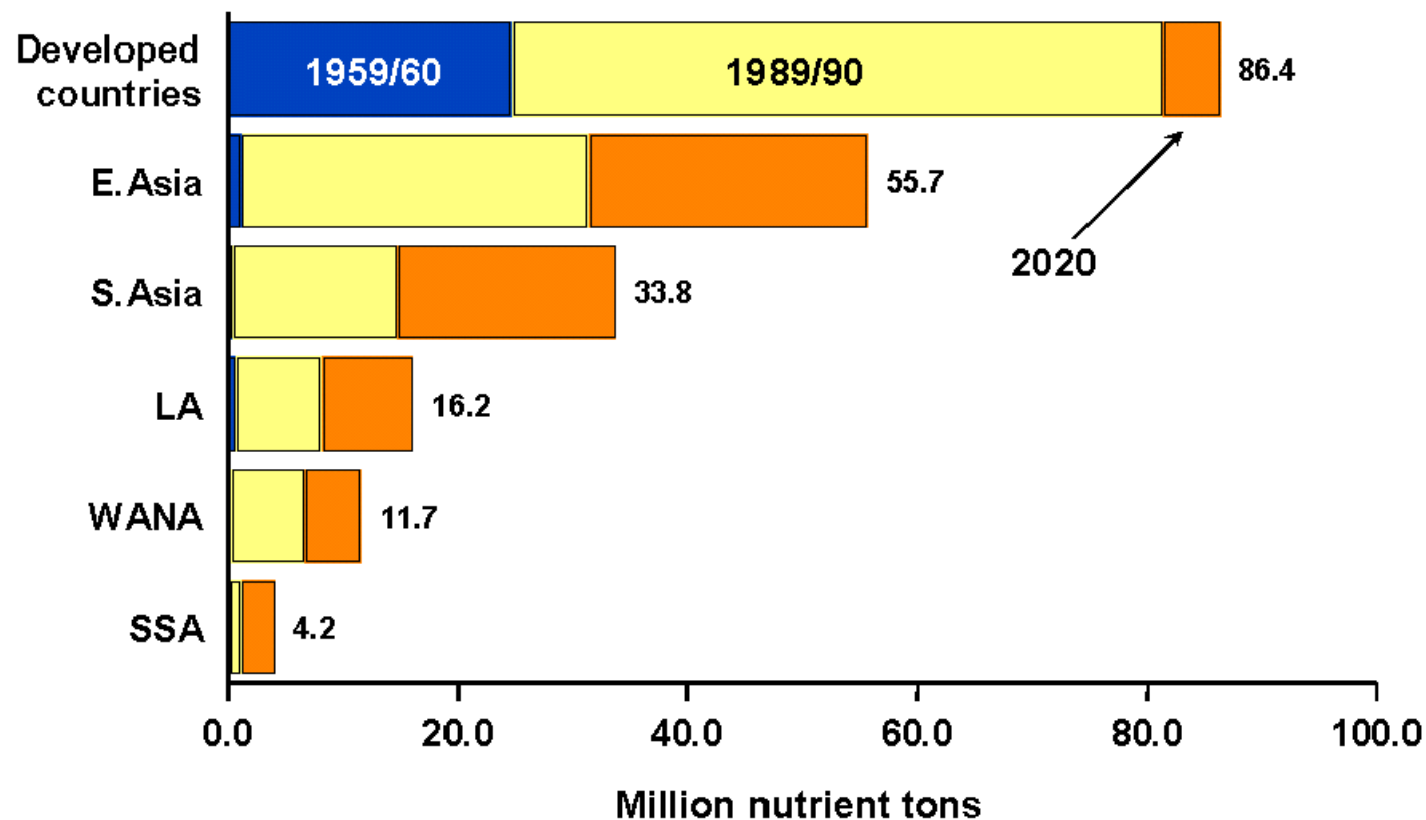
IFOAM

The text "EU 2092/91" is written in white capital letters inside a green oval shape.

EU 2092/91



# Global fertiliser use



Source: IFPRI 1996



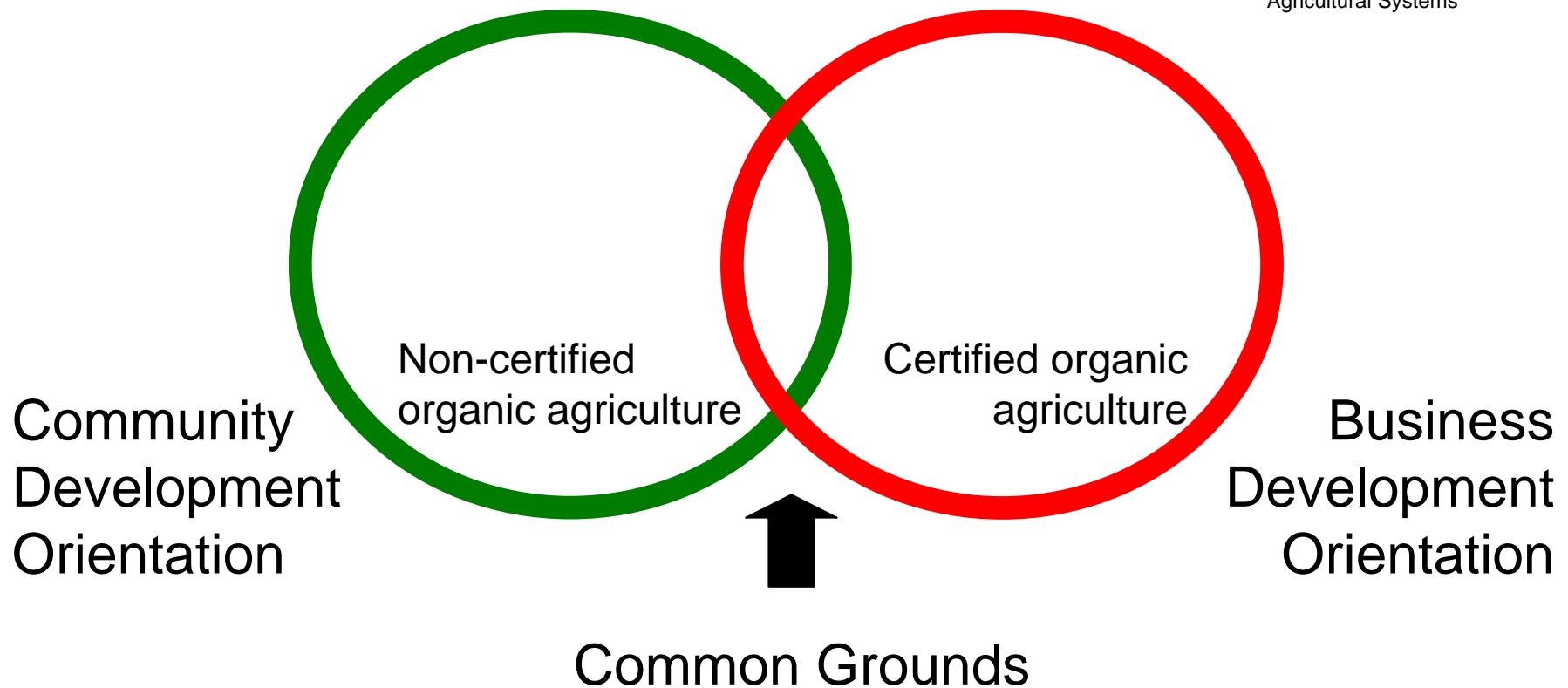








# Organic strands









# Organics expand

- Growing interest in and rapid expansion of organic agriculture in developing countries
- **Push factors** (South): increasing household income, sustainable natural resource management, food supply
- **Pull factors** (North): demand for tropical organic products, green / healthy / ethnic food





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BALE NO. 31  
ORG: COTTON  
PRD: OF UG  
GIN: NO 31  
2001/2002  
LOT: M041029  
150 PDIAR



# Defining food security

*Household food security is a state in which households have year-round access to the amount and quality of safe food that members of that household require to live and active and health life.*

Household food security has three dimension:

1. availability of food
2. access to food
3. utilisation of food

Source: Sen 1981; Sen, 1994; ACC/SCN, 2001)





# Two schools of thought

## *Neo-Malthusian conventionalists*

- Food insecurity is widespread and must be tackled
- Intensifying agricultural production is essential
- Organic agriculture is low input – low output farming
- Adoption of high-external input strategies is the solution

## *Organic agriculture optimists*

- Food insecurity is widespread and must be tackled
- Enabling access to food is essential
- Organic agriculture helps to sustainably improve livelihoods
- Promotion of organic agriculture will solve the issue





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# Unavailability of food

1. Increasing population densities, land fragmentation, limited off-farm employment options
2. traditional NRM unsustainable, natural resource degradation (soil nutrient depletion)
3. Increasing vulnerability to weather (climatic) trends, seasonalities and shocks
4. Declining labour productivity (availability), domestic problems
5. Political instability, disruption of farm calendars, out-migration







# Inaccessibility of food

1. Poor market orientation, access / surplus marketing (production decision trade-offs)
2. Poorly developed marketing infrastructure, market intelligence (e.g. information)
3. Overdependence on single commodities and buyers, unequal power relations on markets
4. Fluctuating / declining farm gate prices (traditional cash crops)
5. Weak farmer organisation (low social capital)

# Coffee eradicates Poverty



Uganda Coffee  
Development Authority





# Improper use of food

1. Trade-offs among investment decisions (food for household vs. school fees)
2. Unequal household decision-making (cropping system choices, who gets what)
3. Diverse preferences (e.g. between different gender)
4. Limited knowledge and skills (e.g. about dietary standards)
5. Limited technical capabilities (e.g. food processing, post-harvest treatments)

# Five mechanism

- 1. Making use of locally available resources:** recycling of organic material, biomass production, etc.
- 2. Promoting resource conserving technologies:** soil and water conservation, rotations, biological control, etc.
- 3. Building on existing knowledge systems:** RPK, innovation and learning systems, 'modern' knowledge
- 4. Tapping new markets:** new market niches, premium prices, long-term arrangements
- 5. Promoting social development:** nutrition and health education, training for self-reliance, etc.















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Date: 27/2/2004  
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AMFRI FARM LTD

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# PAYMENT VOUCHER

FARMERS NAME  
Particulars

275x300

Kerhuta

FARM CODE

Code

Amount

82500

Total

Received by

Ush.







# Food security pathways

HFS dimension	Principle strategy	Certified organics	Non-certified organics
Availability of food	Agricultural intensification	Focus on cash crops, moderate management changes, moderate yield increase	Focus on food crops, pronounced management changes, moderate to high yield increase
Access to food	Economic specialisation	Premium price, increase in household income, possible reinvestment in food	No premium price, moderate / no increase of household income, limited reinvestments into food
Utilisation of food	Social mobilisation	Moderate / no sensitisation about nutrition	Moderate / high sensitization about nutrition



# Five challenges

- 1. Organic markets are niche markets**, rapid expansion needed
- 2. High transaction cost** (ICS based certification, inspection, training)
- 3. Ownership and power relations** between farmers and owners of organic certificate
- 4. Fair nature of organics** is different from fair-trade: double certification / conventionalisation
- 5. Paradigmatic clashes** between schools of thought, political /institutional environment not always favourable

# ORGANIC ↓ PRODUCTS ↓

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Inadequate extension services  
Inadequate research services  
Inadequate input availability

THREATS  
• Post-harvest outbreak  
• Unpredictable weather conditions  
• Price fluctuations  
• Conflict of interest of NGOs

- Mismanagement of crop finance  
- Poor record keeping (transactions)  
- Lack of financial support for finance  
- Contamination of processed products



# Food for all?

- Household food security equation can be positive, but organics is no long term guarantee
- Both non-certified and certified organics have its merits, as well as drawbacks
- Uncritical promotion of organics (by private sector support programmes) may stress single mechanism only
- 'Food for all' strategies must consider all three food security dimensions / balance mechanism



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