

## Development of the East African Organic Products Standards:

*Unfolding trading opportunities within and out side the region*

By: Musa.K. Muwanga  
Geoffrey Kirenga

## Importance of Organic Agriculture to East Africa

- East Africa Currently comprise of 5 countries, namely: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi
- Organic agriculture is among the fasted growing sectors in the region, because of:
  - Suitability and compatibility to smallholder farming systems (Relatively low risk and low entry barriers for African farmers compared to conventional fruits and vegetable exports
  - Increasing global demand for organic products and associated premium prices, contributing to improved household incomes in the rural communities
  - Besides providing healthy and safe food products to the population

## Importance contd.....

- By end of 2006, East Africa represented more than 50% of the total organic certified land on the African continent (over 250,000 ha in Uganda, 187,000 ha in Tanzania, and 180,000 ha in Kenya)
- In Uganda, organic exports have been growing at an average of 60% per annum and the local market at an average of 50% per annum, integrating thousands of smallholder farmers into the marketing chains.

## Importance contd....

- Challenges identified before development of the EAOPS included:
  - Export demand higher than supply
  - Each country was developing its own standard(5 public or private standards at the beginning of 2005), and this was seen as an obstacle to regional trade
  - Limited consumer awareness about organic across the region hence hindering national and regional market development
  - Limited cooperation among organic traders in the region, regarding taking advantage of trade opportunities.

## Background to Process of development of the EAOPS

- Born as a public –private partnership under the joint UNEP/UNCTAD CBTF project on the promotion of production and trading opportunities for organic products in East Africa, and collaboration with IFOAM
- Purpose was to:
  - Produce a Harmonized standard facilitate regional Organic trade
  - Allow for negotiations with other governments for equivalence/recognition to facilitate exports
  - Facilitate coordination of input into international standards for example - Codex Alimentarius and IFOAM.
  - Allow for better resource use: devpt, revision and implementation

## Background contd.....

- Process involved establishment of a Regional Standard Technical Working Group (RSTWG) Composed of a cross - section of stakeholders from the public and private sectors;
  - 5 representatives from NBSs Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda Rwanda and Burundi.
  - 3 from certification bodies,
  - 3 from the National Organic Agricultural Movements (NOAMs )
  - 1 from the East African Business Council
  - Facilitators from IFOAM and the CBTF (UNCTAD/UNEP)
- Intensive consultation process across the region

## Background contd....

- The standard was approved and published by the EAC council in April 2007 (EAS 456:2007,EAOPS), after earlier approval in February 2007 by the technical Committee responsible for standards in the East African Community (EASTSC- East African Standards Sub Committee)

## EAOPS to facilitate trade within and outside the region

- Provided standardization of organic agricultural practices across the region
- EAOPS to provide basis for compliance to Export market requirements
- Consumer awareness raising within the EA region
- EA market development
  - Has initiated Cross border trade in organic products
  - Supermarkets and catering businesses have reacted positively after the launch of the standard and the mark
  - EA organic mark linked to the EAOPS has been taken up by the industry
- Policy dialogue has been intensified, also linked to the Integrated Assessment of the Organic sector in the region initiated by CBTF
- Increase respectability of organic
- Cooperation within the sector in general among the public and private sector has been greatly boosted
- Extension, education and research has also been stimulated

*Thank you*

## Contacts:

Musa.K. Muwanga  
National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda  
(NOGAMU)  
[mkmuwanga@nogamu.org.ug](mailto:mkmuwanga@nogamu.org.ug)

Geoffrey Kirenga  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives  
United Republic of Tanzania  
[geoffreykirenga@gmail.com](mailto:geoffreykirenga@gmail.com)