ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA

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Introduction:
Agriculture remains the backbone of the economies of most African Countries. In Uganda 85% of the population is engaged in Agricultural production which contributes 42% of the national gross domestic product, 80% of the export earnings and employs 90% of the labour force.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) Development Strategy and Investment Plan 2005/2008, the main Agriculture sub-sectors include crops contributing about 80% livestock contributing 13% and fisheries contributing about 6%. Over 95% of the farmers are smallholders with landholdings ranging from 0.5 to 10 acres. Majority of these smallholder farmers have rich indigenous knowledge that has sustained their livelihoods, food security as well as land productivity for hundreds of years with very little or no use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides and veterinary drugs. However they have limited capital.

Uganda is among the least users of artificial fertilizers and other Agro-chemicals in Africa with less than 14% or 1 kg of fertilizer per hectare compared to sub-sahara average of 9kg/ha or less than 3% of that used in east Africa. It is therefore with the highest comparative advantage for Organic Agriculture Production in Africa.

The developments of Organic Agriculture Sub-sector in Uganda has been spear headed by the private sector, under the coordination of the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU). NOGAMU was founded by OA stakeholders in 2001 and in turn NOGAMU has kept the stakeholders together. NOGAMU has promoted stakeholders activities, trained producers and exporters and has linked them to markets. NOGAMU has provided institutional base for stakeholders. Under NOGAMU leadership and coordination the stakeholders were able to develop Uganda organic standards, register and launch a Ugandan certification company (Ugocert) in 2004.

Developments in the Organic Agriculture sub-sector have been driven by developments in international markets and trade. The world market for organic products is now estimated to be above 30 billion US dollars. Average global growth in demand and market of organic products is currently estimated to be 25% per year (Grolink 2004). The growing consumer interest triggered off rapid growth in international trade in organic products. We are aware that the trading environment is witnessing changes due to;

- ✓ Increased consumer concerns for the health and safety.
- ✓ Increased consumer consciousness regarding the environment and social issues of production and marketing.

In Uganda informal organic production has been going on for centuries. The formal (certified) organic Agriculture started in 1993 as a response to the unfolding market opportunities in Europe. By 2003 Uganda was already in the 13th position world wide and in the 1st position in Africa in terms of size of land under Organic Agriculture production as shown in Table 1. BY 2004 it is estimated that Uganda had 185,000 hectares of land under Organic Agriculture covering 2% of Agriculture land, with 45,000 certified farmers.

Table 1: Percentage share of organic certified land in Africa

Country	Share of Organic certified Area in Africa
Uganda	38%
Tanzania	17%
South Africa	14%
Zambia	6.5%
Ghana	6%
Tunisia	6%
Egypt	5%
Morocco	4%
Cameroon, Mozambique, Madagascar	3%

Total certified land = 321,000ha.

UGANDA SHARE IN THE ORGANIC MARKET

Uganda is now recognized as one of the key players in the international trade of organic products and among countries with highest potential to take a key position in the market. Marketing of Organic Products in Uganda has been mainly through exports. The first exports were made in 1993 by AMF farms, followed by lango organic farming promotion. Since that time the number of projects, export companies and volumes, types and value of products exported has been growing.

Between 2001 and 2003 the number of Organic export projects grew from 5 to 15 while the value of the exports increased from US$ 4,600,000 to US$ 7,700,000 (NOGAMU 2003). This growth in value of Organic exports is about 67%.

The leading exports by value in 2003 – 2004 ranked in order of importance were cotton, fresh and dried fruits and vegetables, vanilla and coffee. In 2004 – 2005 the leading products again ranked in order of importance were coffee, cotton, fresh and dried fruits and vegetables and sesame. It can be noted that there were big increases in 2004-2005 in coffee, sesame and cotton.

The demand for Uganda Organic products in the international markets is growing, unfortunately is not yet marched by the supply. This is demonstrated by the number of business contracts being received by NOGAMU and the government.

While most of the products are being exported in their raw form, cotton exports have now gone to a higher level. Almost all the organic cotton being produced in Uganda will be used to produce organic textiles for export to the Agoa market.

Local market:

Efforts to develop local markets for organic products have been made by NOGAMU. NOGAMU started an organic shop in 2002 , initiated a box delivery scheme and linkages with local supermarkets. Sales in the shop have been growing at average rate of 50% per month. Even Ugandans have started appreciating the organic products in the shop, the number of local buyers has overtaken that of expatriates who were the main consumers in 2002.

The Role of Government:
The Government provided conducive policy environment under which organic Agriculture has developed. It put in place a number of policies that permit the development such as privatization, liberation, decentralization and the environment management policy.

The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) formulated in 1997, revised in 2000 and 2004 focuses on transformation of the rural economy as a key economic growth and poverty eradication. This is to be achieved under Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA).

The PMA which was formulated in 2001, identifies interventions in the areas of Research and Technology Development, Agricultural Advisory Services, Rural Finance, Agro-processing and Marketing, Agricultural Education, Sustainable use of natural resources and Physical infrastructure.

The rural development strategy which emphasizes expansion of agricultural output concurrently with the development of agro-processing to absorb the increase in national agricultural output. The strategy is based on four interlinked actions which include, increasing farm productivity and outputs of selected commodities produced by farm households adding value especially to agricultural products and ensuring a stable market for agricultural products.

All those policies and programmes, favour Organic Agricultural development while Organic Agriculture provides mechanisms for the achievement of objectives of the programmes. The government realizing the potential of Organic Agriculture sub-sector has supported the private sector initiatives under the coordination of NOGAMU. The Government supported the development of the Uganda Organic Standards in 2003 and establishment of Ugandan certification company (Ugocert) in 2004. Now the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries is spearheading the development of a policy that will explicitly guide the developments in the Organic Agriculture sub-sector.

Challenges

The Agriculture sector in general faces some challenges broadly categorized as lack of capital, low production and productivity, poor marketing system, human resource constraints and reliance on unpredictable weather conditions. The Ugandan farmer is further constrained by increase in migration to urban settlements and HIV/AIDs.

However, the specific challenges in the Organic Sub-sector are:-

- Low investment in organic agriculture production leading to failure in fulfilling existing market opportunities/orders
- Limited research in organic agriculture.
- Limited extension services delivery in organic agriculture.
- High costs of international inspection and certification.
- Lack of internationally recognized local organic certification body.
- Inadequate documentation on organic agriculture.
- Demand outpaces supply
- Lack of organized smallholders groups to consistently raise volumes to meet market orders.
- Absence of an explicit policy on Organic Agriculture.

The Way forward on Policy

The need for the policy to be finalized is growing, due to the increasing number of players interested in investing in the sub-sector in Uganda. The ministry is looking into its budgets to finalize the organic policy and increase awareness in Organic Agriculture..