

Key statistics on Organic Agriculture in Africa

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships



The benefits of Organic Agriculture in Africa

Organic farming practices deliberately integrate traditional farming practices and make use of locally available resources. As such they are highly relevant to smallholders - the majority of African farmers - producing for themselves and local markets. Organic farming contributes to achieve public good goals at the national and local levels in Africa.

Organic Agriculture:

Contributes substantially to food security in Africa. Organic management systems have doubled yields in arid and degraded soils (e.g. in Tigray, Ethiopia). An internationally acknowledged computer model of global food supply grown organically concluded that a fifty percent conversion to organic farming in sub-Saharan Africa would likely increase food availability and decrease food import dependency.

Offers the most effective way to reverse the currently dramatic desertification processes taking place in Africa - where two thirds of the continent is desert or drylands - through preventing soil erosion and land degradation as well as by helping rehabilitate degraded land.



Establishes sustainable livelihoods for African farm families and their communities by giving access to new market opportunities resulting in premium prices for their products. Moreover, the possibility of receiving a premium for organic produce is not only a major incentive to individual farmers, but also provides greater opportunities for broader communities to become more self-reliant, and to generate new education and economic opportunities.

Improves human health and maximizes environmental services by maintaining biodiversity, improving soils and avoiding chemical inputs that contaminate people and ecosystems.

Reduces costs of external inputs by refraining from using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, genetically modified organisms and pharmaceuticals.

Key statistics

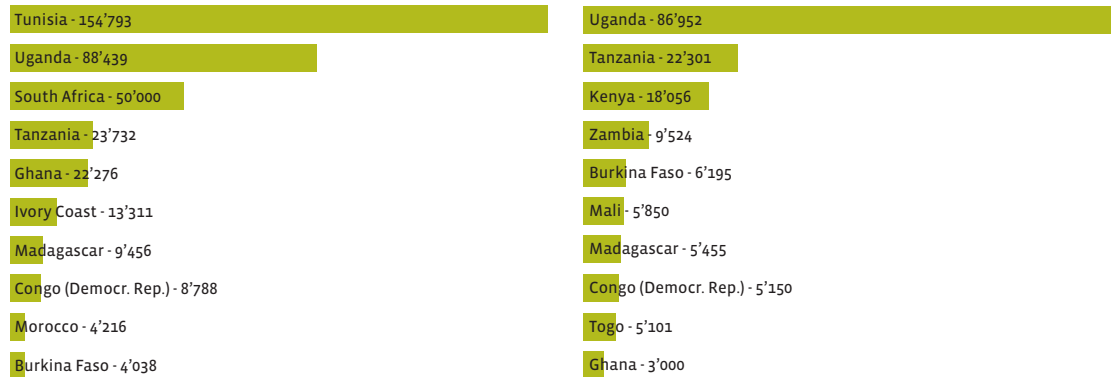
Currently, almost 417,000 hectares are certified organic and managed by at least 175,266 farmers in Africa.

The countries with the greatest organic areas are Tunisia, Uganda, South Africa and Tanzania. Most of this land is used for permanent crops. The main permanent crops are cash crops like olives (North Africa), followed by coffee, oil palm, cotton and cocoa.

The countries with organic standards are Tunisia, Egypt and the East African Countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi). The East African Organic Product standards, the second regional organic standard in the world, and the associated East African Organic Mark have been launched in May 2007 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In addition to the 417,000 hectares of organic agricultural land, 8.2 million hectares are certified as forest and “wild harvested” areas. The largest wild collection areas are in Zambia (7.2 million hectares), Sudan (490,000 hectares), Kenya (186,000 hectares) and Uganda (158,328 hectares).

Much organic production is also taking place in the informal sector and without certification. There are organic farmers for whom certification does not have any advantages: this is true for farmers who practice subsistence farming, basically catering for the food security of their families or their community. There are no official statistics to quote on this type of organic production.



The ten countries with the most organic agricultural land (in hectares)
(IFOAM/FIBL Survey 2008)

The ten countries with the highest number of organic farms
(IFOAM/FIBL Survey 2008)

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