



CBTF

UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force
on Trade Environment and Development



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE MOVEMENTS

CBTF-IFOAM Initiative on Organic Agriculture Standards for East Africa

The development process for the East African Organic Standard

The purpose of this document is to inform the East African Community, the public and stakeholders about the development process for the East African Organic Standard, to explain the reasons for making the standard, and all the steps leading to the final draft of the standard, which now is presented to the East African Community for adoption as a regional standard.

Summary

East Africa currently leads the continent in production and exports of certified organic products. Domestic markets are also growing rapidly, in part through the efforts of the Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN), the Tanzanian Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) and the National Organic Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU). Organic agriculture offers a range of economic, environmental, health, social and cultural benefits .

At the beginning of 2005, there were at least five public or private standards for organic agricultural production in East Africa. Stakeholders were concerned that this multitude of standards could eventually become a technical barrier to trade within the region and place unneeded restrictions on regional collaboration. There was general consensus that the time was ripe for the development of a common East African Organic Standard.

The EAOS has been developed through an intensive, inclusive and transparent regional consultation process. Feedback from national consultations, field testing and technical comparisons with international organic standards were fed into the work of the Regional Standard Technical Working Group (RSTWG), the body tasked with writing the standard's text. The RSTWG is a unique regional public-private sector partnership, whose members comprise representatives of the National Standards Bodies, national organic movements and organic certifying bodies of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, and the East African Business Council. The RSTWG completed its work in four meetings between October 2005 and December 2006.

The RSTWG is convened under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through their joint Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF), and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). The European Commission and the Swedish International Agency for Development Cooperation provided financial support.

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The EAOS will become the second regional organic standard in the world after the European Union's and the first ever to have been developed in cooperation between the organic movements and the National Standards Bodies. The EAOS is expected to boost organic trade and market development in the region, raise awareness about organic agriculture among farmers and consumers, and create a unified negotiating position that should help East African organic farmers win access to export markets and influence international organic standard setting processes.

Organic Agriculture in East Africa

Organic Agriculture is a sustainable and environmentally friendly production method, which has particular advantages for small-scale farmers in Africa. It also provides interesting marketing opportunities. Practical experiences as well as a number of reports demonstrate the appropriateness of Organic Agriculture for small farmers in developing countries. This includes reports by the FAO, IFAD, IFOAM, UNCTAD and the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF¹.

- Organic production has the potential to produce sufficient food of a high quality.
- Organic agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation and food security by a combination of many features, most notably by:
 - Increasing yields in low-input areas
 - Conserving bio-diversity and nature resources on the farm and in the surrounding area.
 - Increasing income and/or reducing costs
 - Producing safe and varied food
 - Being sustainable in the long term

Organic agriculture is relevant both as a certified production aiming at a separate marketing, as well as non-certified production for consumption by the farmers themselves and the local communities. Certified organic production uses the market and the trade as a tool for poverty alleviation. Recent evaluation of the EPOPA² programme as well as the evaluations by IFAD shows that the income of participating farmers can increase substantially. Certified production gives access to a premium market, or simply just better market access. Most of the certified production is intended for the export market, but local and regional markets are expanding rapidly in many developing countries.

In East Africa, organic agriculture has been practiced in a conscious way for several decades. More than 100,000 farmers are involved in organic production, and half of them are also marketing their products as organic. The export market for organic products from East Africa is estimated to be more than US\$ 12 million per year and rapidly growing. The internal marketing of organic products is still in its infancy, but increasingly shops and supermarkets are stocking organic products. Open markets, restaurants and hotels are other outlets³. A recent survey on East Africa showed that 49 percent of 600 respondents in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have consumed organic food and that consumers appreciate the safety, health and taste of organic products.

¹ See for example Organic Agriculture, Environment and Food Security, FAO 2002; the IFAD evaluations of organic agriculture in Latin America and Asia; the UNCTAD Trade and Environment Review 2006; the CBTF overview of organic agriculture in East Africa, 2007; Organic and Food Security, IFOAM 2006.

² Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa, www.epopa.info

³ For more information, please see CBTF study Overview of Current State of Organic Agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and the Opportunities for Regional Harmonization.

East African organic standard harmonization process: historical evolution

Harmonization of standards and regulations is a keystone of the East African Community integration process. In the area of organic agriculture, the move towards harmonization began at the start of the new millennium.

In response to growing interest expressed by stakeholders in the region, a survey for the feasibility of the development of regional organic certification and standards in southern and eastern Africa was commissioned in 2002 by Sida.⁴ The report recommended the initiation of *"a regional development programme, which is open for any of the countries in the selected area. The regional programme should have as its objective to build capacity and provide information both to the private sector and to the governments. The possibility to develop regional standards should be promoted"*

There are many advantages of regional cooperation around standards and conformity assessment (inspection and certification):

1. More efficient resource use
2. Foster cooperation between countries – this leads to better understanding, less conflicts and a better business climate.
3. Possibilities for regional trade – one common standard and similar or identical conformity assessment procedures limit the problems with technical barriers for trade.
4. Negotiations with other governments for equivalence/recognition. It is easier for a group of countries to join forces in negotiating with e.g. the EU than if each one does it by themselves.
5. Coordinating input into international forums, such as Codex Alimentarius and IFOAM. Similar to the point above, a group of countries is more likely to be successful in influencing international standard-setting processes than a single country operating on its own.
6. On the basis of a common standard, also conformity assessment procedures can be streamlined and resources used more efficiently.
7. Finally, a joint standard creates a joint vision of what organic agriculture is in East Africa and can pave the way also for other cooperative efforts in the area of policy, training, extension, education and research.

Within the Sida funded EPOPA Programme cooperation between organic bodies in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania was supported in 2003 - 2005. At a regional seminar in Arusha December 2003, more than 80 participants agreed to pursue the development of a regional organic standard. A working group was established and held three meetings. However the funds from EPOPA were limited and the work could not start in earnest.

In 2005 there were at least five public or private organic standards in East Africa:

- one private sector standard by UgoCert and NOGAMU in Uganda
- one private sector standard by KOAN in Kenya
- one draft Kenyan standards by KEBS (which later was adopted and gazetted)
- one working draft from the TBS
- one private sector standard by TanCert in Tanzania

⁴ Feasibility study for the establishment of certification bodies for organic agriculture in Eastern and Southern Africa, Grolink 2002

Within the context of the UNEP/UNCTAD CBTF project *Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa* initiated mid 2005 there was a component⁵ to facilitate the development of an East African Organic Agriculture Standard (EAOS). Building on the agreements already made by the organic stakeholders and including the National Standards Bodies, the project convened the **Regional Standards Technical Working Group (RSTWG)**, for its first meeting in Kampala 25 October 2005.

Soon thereafter, IFOAM got approval from Sida for a project to support the development of an East African Organic Standard, the OSEA project. CBTF and IFOAM decided to join forces to most effectively support the development of the EAOS. Thus the CBTF-IFOAM Initiative on Organic Agriculture Standards for East Africa was born.

The two projects complement each other well: The UNEP/UNCTAD Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF) project had initiated this work and established an appropriate regional structure. The OSEA project brought additional resources to also conduct national consultations, field-testing of the standard, and the development of joint inspection protocol and consumer education once the standard is approved.

The Regional Standards Technical Working Group (RSTWG)

The RSTWG is a regional public-private sector working group charged with drafting the East African Organic Standard (EAOS). RSTWG members comprise representatives of the national bureaus of standards, national organic movements and organic certifying bodies of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, and the East African Business Council.

Members	Organization	Country
David Eboku	Uganda National Bureau of Standards	Uganda
Moses Kiggundu Muwanga	National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda	Uganda
Charles Walaga	UgoCert	Uganda
Obadiah N.M.Msaki	Tanzania Bureau of Standards	Tanzania
Jordan Gama	Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement	Tanzania
Leonard Mtama	Tancert	Tanzania
Immaculate Odwori/Carol Tom	Kenya Bureau of Standards	Kenya
Eustace Kiarii	Kenya Organic Agriculture Movement	Kenya
Francis Akivaga	Africert	Kenya
Charles Rutagyengwa	Rwanda Bureau of Standards	Rwanda
Eric Ruracenyeka	Burundi Bureau of Standards	Burundi
Moses Ogwal	East African Business Council	

The RSTWG is co-chaired by Gunnar Rundgren (IFOAM) and Sophia Twarog (UNCTAD/CBTF). Eva Mattsson (IFOAM) is secretary of the committee. Anne Boor (IFOAM) and Asad Naqvi (UNEP/CBTF) participate as OSEA/CBTF observers and Diane Bowen (IFOAM) and Peter Lustig (Grolink) as technical experts. Patricia Wangongu (IFOAM) assists in organizing the meetings.

⁵ The CBTF project's focus is the development of increased awareness and appropriate policies for organic agriculture through the process of national integrated assessments in the three countries as well as background studies and regional workshops and cooperation.

Characteristics of the standard development process

The development of the standard has been based on:

- the already existing private sector and public standards in East Africa
- the Codex Alimentarius Guidelines for Organic Production, CAC/GL 32
- the IFOAM Basic Standards
- intensive consultations in the countries
- field testing of the standard

A consultant, Eva Mattsson, has facilitated the work of the RSTWG, other experts have contributed as well.

The process has been open transparent and has actively engaged a wide variety of stakeholders, in particular in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. As Rwanda and Burundi were not EAC member at the time of the start of the activities and the organic sector in those countries are also not so well developed, it has not been possible to have as intensive consultation in the two countries. However their representatives in the RSTWG have consulted within their own networks.

Key steps in the development of the EAOS: September 2005 - January 2007

The RSTWG met four times between October 2005 and December 2006. A lot of work was also carried out before and after RSTWG meetings. The table below highlights the key activities from the time when technical work on the EAOS began in September 2005 to when it was completed in January 2007.

Key activities September 2005 - January 2007

Activity	Time & place	Comment
Comparison of existing national standards	Sep-Oct 2005	Done by Eva Mattsson
First meeting of the RSTWG	25 Oct 2005 in Kampala	Discussion about the general approach; presentation of the comparison between the national standards; clarification of the need for a regional standard, scope etc
Production of background materials for RSTWG 2	Nov 2005-Feb 2006	Done by Eva Mattsson
RSTWG 2	6 March 2006 in Arusha	Agreement on the framework for the standard, scope and a number of key technical issues
Production of DRAFT 1	March, early April	Eva Mattsson based on comparison, input from RSTWG 1 and 2
1st national consultations		The first national meetings focussed the general framework of the standards, the need, ownership etc
1st national consultation Tanzania	10 May	44 participants
1st national consultation Kenya	11 May	20 Participants
RSTWG 3	25-26 May in Nairobi	Agreement to ask the EAC to adopt the standard Technical discussion on Draft 1

Meeting with EAC secretariat	31 May in Arusha	A mission by Sophia Twarog, UNCTAD/CBTF and Gunnar Rundgren, IFOAM to inform the EAC secretariat about the plans, and to better understand the modus operandi of the EAC
1st national consultation Uganda	20 July	> 50 participants
Production of DRAFT 2	June-July	Eva Mattsson, based on the input from RSTWG 3
Mailing out Draft 2 stakeholders	17 July	Was sent by email directly from project office to 800 stakeholders. Was further distributed by National Organic Movements and others
Promotion Mission Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania	20-25 July	A visit to the Ministries of Agriculture, the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and other public and private sector stakeholders in all three countries. Met with all three heads of the NSBs, the PS for agriculture in Kenya and Uganda, and the Minister of Trade of Uganda.
Request to KEBS to sponsor adoption of EAOS as an EAC standard	10 August	An official request was sent to KEBS to move the EAOS for adoption as an EAC standards
2 nd national consultations		The second round of national consultations focused on the content of the draft 2 out for consultation.
2nd national consultation Kenya	16 October	19 participants, organised by KOAN
2nd national consultation Uganda	5 October	59 participants, co-organised by UNBS and NOGAMU
2nd national consultation Tanzania	15 September	27 participants, co-organised by TBS and TOAM
Deadline for comments on Draft 2	5 October	18 comments received, including reports from the national meetings
Comparison of EAOS against Codex and IFOAM	November	Made by Diane Bowen, IFOAM
Field Testing of EAOS, Uganda	26 November – 1 December	Made by two consultants and three organic inspectors, visiting 10 different sites to assess how well adapted the EAOS draft was.
Compilation of comments to standards	First week of December	Eva Mattsson
Joint IFOAM SC-RSTWG meeting	13 December	A meeting between the RSTWG and the IFOAM Standards Committee to discuss areas of divergence.
Organic Standards Forum	13 December	80 participants. To inform stakeholders about the process
RSTWG 4	14-15 December	Intensive technical work leading to the draft 3
Production of DRAFT 3 (FINAL)	16 Dec-15 Jan 2007	Eva Mattsson in email contact with the RSTWG compiles the final draft
FINAL DRAFT sent to KEBS	15 Jan 2007	KEBS to do the editing of the draft into prescribed EAC formats and bring it into formal EAC standards harmonization process

Next steps

Now that the technical work on the EAOS is completed, it is envisaged that it will be adopted as an official East African Community voluntary standard, through the East African Community standards harmonization process. This involves the following steps:

- The East African Standards Technical Sub-Committee recommends the approval of the EAOS in their meeting scheduled for 14-16 February
- The East African Standards Committee approves the EAOS in their meeting in March
- The Council of Ministers endorses the standard in April
- The standard is then gazetted as an EAC Standard.

In conjunction with this formal adoption process, the East African organic sector will be taking steps to ensure that the EAOS has a real impact on the ground. This includes the following activities:

- The producers and stakeholders will use the standard as a voluntary market standard in the market place.
- The National Organic Movements are developing an East African Organic Mark to be used on products produced in conformity with the EAOS. The Mark will be a central component in a regional consumer awareness campaign that is under development.
- The certification bodies in East Africa will develop a joint inspection protocol to use for the inspection of producers.
- The National Organic Movements and IFOAM are developing a concept for a simplified conformity assessment mechanism (a so called Participatory Guarantee System) to be used in parallel with third party certification.

More information

More information about the process, the draft standard, the minutes of the RSTWG, the CBTF and OSEA projects is available at:

www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf

<http://www.ifoam.org/partners/projects/osea.html>