

UNCTAD, UNEP and IFOAM join forces for regional organic standards in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda)

This project pools together the expertise and experience of a wide range of stakeholders at the national and regional level. In addition, it will bring together the complementary expertise and national networks/counterparts of three international organizations:

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on trade and development issues; main national counterpart is the Ministry of Trade.
- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on environmental issues and integrated impact assessments; main national counterpart is the Ministry of Environment.
- The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) on organic agriculture; main national counterpart is the organic sector (producers, exporters, certifiers, research institutions).

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 is one component¹ to facilitate the Development of an East African Organic Agriculture Standard. It builds on work already carried out in the region, in particular through the Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

A Regional Standard Technical Working Group has been established(see members below). The Working Group had its first meeting 20 October in Kampala, Uganda.

During 2005 a similar project proposal, called OSEA², was developed by IFOAM. This project was approved by Sida in December 2005. It will be implemented by IFOAM, with Grolink³ acting as the leading consultants, and the national organic movement as project partners.

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

Therefore, UNCTAD, UNEP and IFOAM have agreed to merge the regional standards components of their projects into one project, where IFOAM is responsible for facilitating the implementation of this component of the project. The project will be implemented 2006-2007.

Work plan

- The Regional Standard Technical Working Group (RSTWG) will meet approximately five times over the course of two years. Their work will be supported by a team of international consultants. The next meeting will be held 6 March in Arusha Tanzania. A first draft proposal for a regional standard is expected after that meeting.
- National consultations about the draft regional standards will be organised and the input will brought back to the RSTWG.
- Once the draft regional standard has progressed to a certain level, a technical analysis of the compatibility of the proposed standard with the IFOAM, Codex Alimentarius, EU and US regulations will be commissioned. Also, a field-testing of the standards will take place, by certification organisations in the area. The purpose of this is to see that the standards work in reality and are suitably formulated for the conditions.

¹ The CBTF project's main focus is the development of increased awareness and appropriate policies for organic agriculture through the process of national assessments in the three countries as well as background studies and regional workshops and cooperation.

² Regional Organic Standards in East Africa

³ A Swedish based consultancy with long-term experience in East Africa and work with standards and certification.

- By the end of 2006 an international seminar will be organized, with the participation of the IFOAM Standards Committee who will assist in the process with their views, but also learn from and receive input from stakeholders consultations.
- Once the standards are coming closer to a final stage, a joint inspection protocol will be developed to foster cooperation between the certification organisations, facilitate direct cooperation, and build trust in the certification process based on these standards.

The project aims to find a solution for the final 'ownership' and the future revision process for regional standards. A study on the options for the organisational structure to support East African organic standards, in particular within the East African Community, will also be considered. In addition the approval of the adopted standards as an IFOAM regional standard is planned.

The adoption of a regional standard could, if all works out well, take place towards mid 2007.

Finally, a standard has little value if the market place and the consumers are not aware of it. Therefore a consumer education plan will be developed and implemented.

Members of the Regional Technical Standards Working Group

Name	Organization	Country
Leonard Mtama	Tancert	Tanzania
Charles Walaga	UgoCert	Uganda
Francis Akivaga	Africert	Kenya
Eustace Kiarri	KOAN	Kenya
Jordan Gama	TOAM	Tanzania
Moses Muwanga	NOGAMU	Uganda
David Eboku	Uganda National Bureau of Standards	Uganda
Obadiah N.M.Msaki	Tanzania Bureau of Standards	Tanzania
Carol Tom	Kenya Bureau of Standards	Kenya
Moses Ogwal	East African Business Council (EABC)	
Eva Mattsson	Grolink	

The CBTF will maintain its own Regional Steering Committee for the overall coordination of the CBTF project, and IFOAM will in addition to the RSTWG have an overall Advisory Committee for the OSEA project:

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