

EPOPA – Uganda

Development through Organic Trade



Lady gatherers and their organic Shea Tree – Wild Harvest Organic Certification

The EPOPA Programme

Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) is a development programme implemented in Uganda and Tanzania. Since the start more than 70,000 smallholder farmers have benefited from the programme. The Ugandan programme started in 1997. During the past 10 years EPOPA has worked with over 19 Ugandan companies as they have entered into organic exports. The produce exported includes fresh and dried tropical fruits, vanilla, Arabica and Robusta coffee, cocoa, essential oils, sesame, Shea Nut Oil and sustainably caught fish.

In all cases the production base is small-holder farmers with an average farm size of 1.5 hectares. The exporter then arranges for the convenient collection of the farmers' products, payment on delivery, grading, further processing and export.

Viable projects

One of the first projects of EPOPA involved Lango Organic Farming Promotion. Cotton is their cash crop and they have formed a long term relation with a good client, Bo Weevil from the Netherlands. When the project started at the end of 1997 there were 5,000 farmers connected to the project. By 2005 the number of farmers had risen to 12,000 and in 2004 a peak production was reached of more than 5,800 bales. EPOPA finished its involvement in the project in 1999, but the company has continued to thrive and grow – offering a very good example of the long term viability within EPOPA projects.

Organic production lead to improved incomes

EPOPA works together with the exporters and their field staff to improve on the organic practices at the farmers' level. This is done through improved soil management, crop diversification, natural pest control, weed management, all of which combine to enhance their food security and improve their income. The farmers benefit through a diverse diet, a secure market for their cash crop, through a contract with the exporter, and a higher price for their certified organic produce — compared to conventional produce.

Institutional Development and Capacity Building

Although the focus of EPOPA is the export, it is very important to strengthen the national awareness and develop a solid organic movement in the country. EPOPA works with the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) in Uganda to strengthen and extend the capacity of the association and its activities. The development of a national organic certification body is also vital, so that inspection and certification services can be obtained locally. UgoCert was established in 2004, with technical support from EPOPA, to perform this function in Uganda. UgoCert is a fully registered Uganda company specialising in organic inspection and certification service.

EPOPA also contributes to the general organic sector development in Uganda by organizing training for Exporters and building the capacity of local organic experts. A high light of such training opportunities is the annual "Organic



Map from: ICPD Africa Remote Sensing Data Bank
<http://informatics.icpd.org/Datagame>

Sector Development training” which is organised in Uganda in conjunction with Uganda Martyrs University and NOGAMU. It is a 10 day residential training held at the university, it has attracted a variety of private sector, government and non-government participants.

EPOPA and Development

The motto for EPOPA is “Development through Trade”. Development doesn’t require long term free hand-outs, but targeted investment of technical and other support in strong companies. This can lead to farmers accessing premium markets for their produce and hence enabling them to have strong, secure and sustainable livelihoods. However, EPOPA is also encouraged by its donor – SIDA – to identify areas where it can emphasise certain development priorities such as HIV/AIDS awareness, gender equality, environmental conservation and anti corruption approaches. EPOPA has responded to this request by adding in training on these cross cutting development issues in its general training programmes.

Assistance in practice

Assistance to farmers goes through the Exporters, in practice EPOPA helps with:

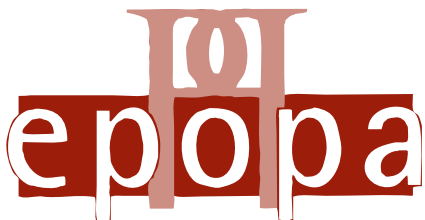
- Management assistance
- Staff training
- Training in organic agriculture and extension practises
- Development of extension structure and demonstration plots
- Farmers mobilisation techniques and inputs
- Product quality management
- Market Surveys
- Buyers contact
- Participation in organic trade shows
- Project presentation, brochures and corporate profile
- Support with certification issues and share in certification costs
- Development of Internal control systems
- Link up with financial institutions and other important organisations for the organic sector

EPOPA also has put in place a HIV/AIDS policy for its office and staff in Kampala, and is developing handouts on the development of kitchen and medicinal gardens for improved family nutrition and natural health care.

Future projects

EPOPA in Uganda is due to finish at the end of 2008. All project funds have now been allocated and hence the Tamteco project, that focuses on the export of organic fragrant herbs, such as lemon grass, is the last full scale project to start. EPOPA will continue to offer support to the organic sector in Uganda and is always ready to receive queries and enquiries from interested producers and exporters.

“Specific Support to Exporters” (SSE) has been the alternative EPOPA option for more focused initiatives with export companies. Currently such projects include:- export of organic essential oils and factory based dried fruit production.



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Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) is a programme created by the Swedish international Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in 1997. The programme has ongoing projects in Uganda and Tanzania.

The EPOPA programme aims to give African smallholder farmers improved standards of living through developing the exports of organic products from Africa. The rural communities, thus the farmers, get a premium price for their crop, they get better prices, closer relationships with the buyers and cash in hand.

Participating countries are given the opportunity to increase and diversify their exports, while at the same time the agricultural sector is exposed to innovative and environmentally sound organic farming techniques.

Since the start in 1997, the programme has proven to be a valid instrument

for African exporters to improve their business and for thousands of farmers to improve their livelihood.

The operation of the EPOPA programme is subcontracted to a consortium of two consultancies, Agro Eco from the Netherlands and Grolink from Sweden, both with great experience of working with organic production issues globally. You can find more information on the consultants at their web sites: www.agroeco.nl and www.grolink.se

More information

Sida web site: www.sida.se

EPOPA – Uganda

Manager: Alastair Taylor

PO Box 71982

Kampala, Uganda

Email: taylor@agroeco.ug

Mobile: +256 (0)77 248 52 06

Web site: www.epopa.info