



Aid Through Organic Trade

## EPOPA Programme in Uganda

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### Certified Organic Products for Export

Since the early 1960s there has been a growing market in Europe, Japan and the USA for products grown in a sustainable manner and without the use of agro chemicals. The ITC estimates that this market will develop from US\$ 13 billion in 1998 to US\$ 40 billion by the year 2005. This has come about due to increasing environmental concerns by the consumers in developed countries, who are willing to pay a premium price for certified organic products. The EPOPA (Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa) programme seeks to exploit that opportunity and works with exporters in Africa to assist their farmers and to meet the requirements for the international organic market. It works with already existing exporters of conventional produce from Uganda. It assists them to gain organic certification and to develop their capacity to meet the international markets.

## The EPOPA Programme

The programme provides the following support:

- Technical agricultural support to the exporter's extension staff to directly assist the farmers in developing sustainable agriculture.
- Marketing assistance to the exporters to gain contacts in the organic markets
- Technical assistance to the projects to meet the ever-changing organic standards in all the main markets.

The programme started in 1994 with assistance to Lango Co-operative Union to develop a market for organic cotton in Europe. The Union is still on-going in 2002, but without the support of EPOPA.

## Export Projects

### ***Kawacom Organic Coffees Project***

The EPOPA programme is working with Kawacom (U) Ltd; based in the three Districts of Nebbi, Kapchorwa and Bushenyi. Kawacom have employed 25 field workers to both monitor organic compliance and to improve sustainable agricultural practices. The project works with 11,000 small holder farmers and blends two different Arabica coffees with one Robusta coffee. The average farmer has between 200 to 350 coffee trees and owns an average of 2 to 3 acres of land. The project started in March 1998 and has slowly developed in size and markets. Currently the project exports over 1,000 tons of organic coffee annually; mainly to markets in Europe. Currently the project is developing markets into USA, and is in the process of gaining organic certification to the US Department of Agriculture Standards.

### ***Outspan Organic Cotton & Sesame Project***

The project is based in the districts of Kaberamaido and Apac, and works with Outspan Enterprises Ltd. The project started in Kaberamaido in 1998 and developed into Apac in 1999. The project works with 5,200 farmers and exports organic sesame to markets in Europe. Outspan employs eight field staff to implement the project. The farmers grow the sesame in rotation with cotton and other crops, while developing organic cotton. They own, on average, between 4 to 7 acres of land, of which at least one third is normally left fallow. Since the project started, the production of sesame by the farmers has increased dramatically, with the average farmer producing three times more sesame than he did previously.

### ***ESCO Organic Cocoa & Vanilla Project***

The project is in Bundibugyo District in the extreme west of Uganda. It started initially in 1997 but was halted in 1998 due to security problems in the area. It was restarted in September 2001 and the buying of organic cocoa started in May 2002. Currently the project works with 1,800 small holder farmers. It is expected that marketing of organic Vanilla will have started by the end of 2002.

## Projects under Development

Potential projects that are under development are as follows:

*Bark Cloth:* In Masaka/Rakai districts, farmers produce bark cloth; a traditional material in the central region of Uganda. The material is made from the bark of the Ficus tree. Although the trees are regularly harvested, this process does not damage them. Bark cloth provides an alternative material to leather and unlike leather does not include slaughtering of an animal. Currently there are some small exports of non certified bark cloth.

*Shea Butter:* In Northern Uganda, mainly in Lira District, the nuts of the shea tree have been traditionally harvested by the people, and processed into oil for cooking. It is possible to obtain high quality “butter” as a by-product of this process. This is also used by the cosmetic industry as a base material for skin creams.

*Fresh and Dried Fruits:* Uganda has the ability to produce a wide range of exotic fruits. These fruits grow naturally and in abundance. Only a small proportion is harvested and consumed. A project is currently underway, by a German exporter, to gain certification and markets for these fruits in Europe, both, as fresh and dried fruits. The project will be based in central Uganda but may involve different out growers from all over the country.

EPOPA is implemented jointly by Agro Eco, in the Netherlands and Grolink, in Sweden. Currently the programme is operational in Uganda and Tanzania, but it will be extended into other countries if funds are made available for this development.

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