

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CROP DEVELOPMENT,
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY, DR. N.P. SICILIMA;
AT THE SECOND NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING FOR ORGANIC
AGRICULTURE IN TANZANIA HELD AT UNICEF CONFERENCE HALL IN
DAR-ES-SALAAM 17TH JAN. 2003**

The Chairperson

Dear Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Chairperson, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity to officiate this important workshop. This clearly demonstrates that you as important stakeholders are cognizant of the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) is one of the key partners. I say thank you very much.

2. Chairperson, I have been informed that this workshop constitutes stakeholders from various fields of work on organic agriculture development such as farmers, processors, traders, exporters, NGOs, CBOs, to mention a few. I have also been informed that this meeting is a follow up to the one that laid a foundation for starting the process of formulating standards and a certification body that are important prerequisites for profitable organic products trading. To initiate the process a taskforce was created there after and is ready to present the progress made so far, today. I thank the task force for the work well done and professionalism in conducting the exercise.

3. Chairperson, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) in collaboration NGOs, CBOs, traders, exporters and other development partners is promoting the development of organic agriculture in the country. MAFS has taken this challenge seriously by including it in the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy (ASDS) and the Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDP). At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the effort made by the Participatory Extension and Land Use Management (PELUM) for initiating the process of developing national standards and certification, this step will help stakeholders use services from within the country. As you might be aware of, engaging the service of external certification and inspection costs between 250-450 US \$ per day. Therefore, local certification will cut down certification costs and afford producers and traders higher profitability. I thank PELUM for being innovative and initiating the process.

4. Chairperson, the attention paid to organic agriculture development in the country is highly appreciated despite of the fact that it is still at an embryonic stage. However, it should be noted that, organic farming is not new in the context of our farmers, since they have been practicing it by default. This practice has many advantages to our producers; the use of farm inputs has many hidden cost including reducing producers gross margins to endangering the health of the environment. Also, we are all aware of the challenges brought about by what is called " Europe Gap" that impose strict adherence to minimum residues levels (MRLs) we have to meet in order to penetrate the European market.

Therefore, the development of organic agriculture provides us with a renewed hope and enable us to confidently address the challenge of competing with other producers and traders in overseas markets.

5. Chairperson, we are aware of the deleterious effects of over use of agro-chemicals in intensive agriculture. Mis-management of agrochemicals may result into a situation in which farmers are compelled to use more inputs at increased production cost. It is high time that sustainable methods of land use aimed at conserving environment for sustainable agriculture development are advocated and widely disseminated.

6. Chairperson, the idea to convert to organic agriculture has been accepted by many countries in an effort of conserving nature for sustainable environment. Some countries have been very successful in this endeavor; for example Australia has 7,700, 000 Ha of land under organic production followed by Argentina that has 3,000,000 Ha and Italy has 1,002,000 Ha. It is estimated that organic agriculture in the developing countries is at a tune of 20,000,000 Ha. I believe that organic agriculture is an affordable alternative for poor farmers; it is more relevant and less risky than many other technologies. The advantages of organic agriculture cannot be overemphasized. The advantages are many, to mention a few, - the health and safety for producers and consumers particularly babies, environmental and biodiversity conservation and increased farm profitability. All these are of paramount importance.

6. Chairperson, there is high potential for export of organic products and demand is growing particularly for food crops e.g. coffee, cashewnuts, tea, spices, etc. In this case large growers and exporters can contract farmers in the production process, which will ensure market for smallholder producers. We all understand the cry of our farmers about lack of reliable market for their crops.

7. Chairperson, MAFS will highly be involved in the capacity building of the extension workers and farmers, of course in collaboration with NGOs and organizations involved in the development of organic agriculture. The research of alternative pesticides (natural pesticides) and appropriate organic fertilizers is inevitable for increased production and productivity of crops. The use of the crop by products should be promoted to increase crop yield and minimize environment pollution. The question of promotion of the use of organic product within the country will also be given due emphasis to expand the domestic market of organically produced crops for better health of consumers.

8. Chairperson, you will agree with me that most of the crops in this country are used fresh or with very minimum processing, and those exported are sold as raw materials this does not assure us of food security to our people. I would like to see that processing of crops at small and medium scales is done to minimize unnecessary loses, add value to our produce, increase employment opportunities and ensure sustainable supply . This measure should be coupled with sensitization of our people to utilize processed organic foods.

9. Chairperson, I appreciate the effort made by The Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) for enhancing the process of local standards formulation and certification. This step is very important particularly to our small-scale farmers many of whom cannot afford the certification and related costs I mentioned earlier on. I have also learnt that most organic agriculture in the South is not certified and not oriented to nice or premium markets this will be a step towards attaining those benefits. I urge the taskforce appointed to carry out this important task to work diligently and subsequently produce a document which will be a basis of the development of organic agriculture in the country. Thus assist our country attain sustainable food security and improved family incomes in the near future.

10. Chairperson, in closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of Sweden for facilitating this process. I promise that MAFS will provide any possible support to promote organic agriculture in the country.

After these few remarks I declare this meeting officially open.

THANK YOU