



COMMUNIQUE

FOR THE ANNUAL NATIONAL ORGANIC WEEK (NOW) 2020

Kampala, Uganda

Background

Organic agriculture is a holistic production management system, which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity and biological cycles (FAO). The 2030 Agenda calls for the use of sustainable management practices that ensures resilience to climate change, safeguards ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation crucial for food security, poverty alleviation through reduction of debt burdens, strengthen communities and improve human capacity. Thus, Organic Agriculture has a great potential to achieve food and nutrition security without forcing producers into dependence on inorganic additives.

Today, the majority of small-scale farmers are by default of their farming practices subconsciously engaged in organic farming and need only a little scale-up and formalization for a quick transition to organic farming. **There is very minimal use of external inputs like inorganic fertilizers and pesticides.** The use of chemical fertilizers is among the lowest in the world while the use of plant protection chemical is highly regulated. This situation presents a huge potential to promote Organic Agriculture, both for increased and sustainable food production to safeguard food security as well as for enhanced income for the farmers.

Furthermore, Uganda was able to pass the National Organic Agriculture Policy 2018 that embraces and seeks to support organic small-scale farmers however it still lacks domestication within farming communities and consumers, further still the market does not fully appreciate organic products hence attracting the same price as the inorganic products. This has therefore pushed many organic small-scale farmers to only grow organic products for home consumption and the inorganic products for the market.

We, the small-scale farmers, policy makers, religious leaders and students (members of the Agroecology Clubs) from Gulu, Jinja, Mubende, Mityana, Mukono, Masaka, Apac, Mbale, Kisoro, Kabale, Mayuge, Adjumani, Amuru, Amuria, Kumi and Kasese district participated in the Annual National Organic Week 2020 that was launched on 12th October 2020 to increase consumer demand, confidence and appreciation for organically grown produce and goods and raise the general public's awareness of the vital connection between organic farming methods and genuine global environmental sustainability. Different events including the radio talk shows, rural women meetings, community sensitization meetings, school engagements and annual organic conference were held from 12th to 16th of October 2020 to depict the contribution of small-scale farmers especially women to making sustainable and healthy diets affordable and available to all and achieving Zero Hunger amidst COVID-19 through Organic farming.

We have noted that;

Organic production systems can ensure and sustain local food security and sovereignty, ecosystem services for rural welfare and biodiversity conservation. Small-scale farmers in Uganda produce over 85% of the food consumed. Through following organic principles and practices, small-scale farmers in Uganda can produce adequate food that can be exported to feed the continent sustainably, provided they have secure access to land, water, seeds/breeds and other natural resources.

Organic agriculture offers an approach for sustainability because the organic practices are less harmful to the environment fosters social well-being and leads to economic resilience. Organic food is safer and healthier than conventionally produced food as well as better for a healthy environment, climate protection and animal welfare.

The National Organic Agriculture Policy and Implementation plan was launched on 29th September 2020, this aims at harnessing Uganda's Organic agricultural potential by ensuring a well-regulated and coordinated sub-sector that contributes to National Development.

COVID-19 has greatly affected women small-scale farmers as they cannot easily access markets due to the restrictions put in place. Some districts such as Mayuge, Adjumani and Kasese were hit with floods that washed away many of the gardens.

Agroecology clubs in schools have shown great interest in promoting Organic agriculture as the organic gardens that were set up were flourishing even with the schools closed due to COVID-19.

Based on the Week-Long Deliberations, we called upon Government to;

- 1). Fund and operationalize the recently passed National Organic Agriculture Policy (NOAP) 2018 in order to position organic agriculture to achieve food sovereignty and contribute to ending hunger.
- 2). Equip extension service providers with vast knowledge on organic certification.
- 3). Domesticate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.
- 4). Work towards development of a robust research agenda for agroecology and strongly incorporate agroecology in their institutional research agendas to better inform decisions, policies and practices for scaling up agroecology in Uganda.
- 5). Support innovations such as the KilimoMart Application in order to promote market for organic small-scale farmers' products and consumption of healthy products across the country.
- 6). Recognize that women small scale farmers are the key agents of up scaling organic agriculture hence should be empowered and considered while making policies related to organic agriculture

In conclusion, we agreed to;

- 1). Task local leaders and policy makers to fast track the implementation of the National Organic Agriculture Policy.
- 2). Be model farmers in order to entice and lure other small-scale farmers into organic farming.
- 3). Reconsider the use of indigenous seeds that can withstand climate change and doesn't require inorganic inputs.
- 4). Be the agents of change through teaching and encouraging other small-scale farmers to practice organic farming.
- 5). Do collective marketing and certification of organically grown foods as these lowers on the cost of the certification process.
- 6). Encourage more students to join agroecology clubs in schools to ensure sustainability of the clubs.

Furthermore, we take this opportunity to appreciate our friends and partners who supported the NOW 2020 including; PCFS, Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA), Oxfam, IIDEA and GIZ.

For and on behalf of participants:

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