



The Kigali 2023 Declaration from the 5th African Organic Conference

ON THE THEME

“STRENGTHENING RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS IN AFRICA THROUGH ORGANIC AGRICULTURE”

"We, the 300 attendees (both in person and virtually), comprising farmers, scientists, policy makers, students and entrepreneurs in the organic business sector from all over Africa as well as those from Europe, Asia, and Oceania, discussed during the 5th African Organic Conference, which took place in Rwanda, on 12 - 15 December, 2023.

AGREE that organic agriculture plays a significant role in creating a resilient and sustainable food system in Africa and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the African Union's Agenda 2063, while preserving systematized traditional knowledge and African-based scientific evidence that supports policies that address issues such as poverty, the impact of climate change, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, market access barriers, unemployment, and gender inequality for a prosperous Africa.

APPRECIATING

- The Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources for having accepted to host the event.
- The African Union Commission (AUC), which has taken the lead in promoting the adoption of the African Heads of State and Government Decision on Organic Farming (Doc. EX.CL/631 (XVIII)).
- The advancements achieved by the African Organic Network (AfrONet) in promoting collaboration and information exchange between the continent's organic agriculture players.
- The Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) that hosted the 5th African Organic Conference.
- Partners of the 5th African Organic Conference such as Agence Française de Développement (AFD), SWISSAID, GIZ, African Union Commission, Biovision Africa Trust/EOA-I Secretariat, Naturland Association for Organic Agriculture, IFOAM Organics International Asia, International Society for Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR) and Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) for having supported the conference both technically and financially.



RECALLING

- The impact of Agenda 2063 of the African Union on the growth of agriculture in Africa, which organic agriculture aligns with.
- The enormous unrealized potential for the sustainable growth of organic agriculture in Africa, which is predicated on the continent's diverse and supportive agro-ecosystems.
- Organic agriculture production and business development levels in Africa are still far from achieving the desired level of impact on the decision of the African Heads of State and Government on Organic Farming (Doc. EX.CL/631 (XVIII)).
- Numerous stakeholders in organic agriculture in Africa continue to face numerous obstacles that are impeding their progress.
- The new Ecological Organic Agriculture/Agroecology (EOA/AE) indicators under CAADP represent an opportunity for contribution of the organic stakeholders to the achievements of targets at country level.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a great opportunity for boosting the business of the organic products on the continent.

WE RECOMMEND

- Appropriate national, regional, and continental policies should encourage the growth of organic agriculture in Africa, including boosting availability, access and promotion of the use of organic inputs (seeds, organic fertilizers, soil amendments, and bio-pesticides).
- At all governmental levels in Africa, appropriate measures should be implemented to prevent Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) from contaminating the production of organic agriculture and contributing to the loss of indigenous seeds.
- In order to promote the availability of organic products for local and regional markets in Africa, there should be a greater focus on building capacity of different value chain actors (farmers, processors, traders/retailers and experts about organic farming and implementing the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) to ensure that organic agricultural products are of high quality and comply with the certification requirements.
- Appropriate networking of African researchers engaged in ecological organic agriculture/agroecology for synergy, as well as greater emphasis on participatory action research in organic and agroecological agriculture as opposed to traditional disciplinary research.
- Establishment of a database for scientific publications and mapping of institutions working on ecological organic agriculture/agroecology in Africa and incentives/awards for excellent presentations by research-presenters during the future African Organic Conferences.
- The Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA) to regularly organize research dialogues and present research findings on ecological organic agriculture/agroecology in the conferences/meetings to provide evidence to policy-makers at national, regional and continental levels. This will serve as a tool for the development of the organic sector in Africa through homegrown science.



- Developing organic agriculture at the national level through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) will ensure the sustainable development of organic sector in Africa.
- Conducting farmer-led research in order to provide an informative guidance to smallholder farmers, as well as a close collaboration involving Farmers' based organizations, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Governmental Institutions, and service providers is necessary.
- To allocate more funds (grants, affordable loans, subsidies):
 - to the develop adequate infrastructure and technology that enable the development of the value chains of organic produces;
 - to boost production and last-mile distribution of organic agricultural inputs and extension services, in order to avail affordable organic inputs to producers in Africa.
 - to promote an enabling environment for facilitating regional and continental market integration.
- Realizing that customers make up the final component of the organic equation, coordinated efforts are required to raise consumer knowledge of organic products and increase the market opportunities available to organic producers throughout the continent by taking advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement.
- Offering options that would make it easier for financial institutions to get involved in enhancing the availability of financing for businesses engaged in organic agriculture.
- The inclusion of organic agriculture into the national investment programmes in Africa.
- The AU Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative should review its current Strategic Plan (2015–2025) and develop its next Strategic Plan (2025–2035) based on the insights and recommendations from the Declaration of the 5th AOC. Additionally, it should be aligned with the Post Malabo recommendations and actions.
- Governments allocate research funds for promoting organic research, data collection and management procedure, information, and knowledge sharing including data pertinent to the African Heads of State and Government on Organic Farming.
- Creating creative and inclusive strategies to draw and keep young people and women involved in organic and agroecological farming operations.

WE CALL UPON

- To support and collaborate with the continental umbrella organization (AfrONet) by providing it the necessary financial support to enable it to fully execute its mission of spurring a unique and vibrant Organic Agriculture and Agroecological sector in Africa that transforms communities into socio-cultural, affordable, productive, efficient and competitive farming systems that guarantee food and nutritional security, sovereignty, income growth and equity for a healthy living, sustainable livelihoods and environmental safety.



- To strengthen and support National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs), their members and networks at countries' levels by providing the necessary financial resources to them for enabling them to fully execute their missions.
- A variety of continental, regional, and national players in African organic agriculture to work on domesticating the Participatory Guarantees System (PGS) as a means of improving output, streamlining market access, fostering rural development, and resolving issues raised by organic regulations in intended domestic and export markets.
- The establishment of suitable criteria for quality control in the organic production systems by the African Union, national governments, and regional economic communities in Africa.
- National governments in Africa to integrate organic farming within their departments of agriculture, trade, environment, and other pertinent fields.
- African National Governments to integrate the organic farming practices in their agricultural extension programmes.
- Long-term organic and agroecology research/studies/experiments in Africa to be funded by the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities in Africa, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), national governments and other pertinent organisations.
- The establishment of national, regional, and/or thematic mentorship programmes in organic and agroecological agriculture research by the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA).
- The establishment of academic/research centres of excellence on organic and agroecology for indigenous research/studies to be established by national, regional, and continental educational and agricultural research authorities.
- African governments should devote funds of their national agrarian budgets to organic agriculture including organic inputs, infrastructures, market development, organic research, information exchange, data collection and management procedures, and sharing of knowledge, including data pertinent to the Heads of state and Government of Africa's choice on organic farming.
- African governments working with the African Union to promote the growth of domestic and international markets, get rid of regulations and other obstacles that organic farmers face, and increase the exposure of organic goods on the market.
- The African Union Commission and the Secretariat of the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative to review the current Strategic Plan (2015–2025) and develop the next Strategic Plan (2025–2035) based on the suggestions and understandings from the 5th AOC Declaration.
- African governments should create creative interventions to draw and maintain youth and women's participation in organic and agroecological farming and businesses, as well as incentives to increase the production, accessibility, and availability of organic inputs.
- Regional Economic Communities should take a unified stance on hazardous agricultural inputs (chemicals) that are prohibited worldwide and detrimental to organic farming, and should not be imported into any of their member states.

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Declaration of the 5th African Organic Conference, 12 - 15 December, 2023, Kigali, Rwanda



WE express our gratitude to the following core partners of the 5th African Organic Conference: The African Organic Network as the convenor of the 5th African Organic Conference, the Government of Republic of Rwanda for the permit and logistical facilitation of the conference including providing the Guest of Honour, the Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) as the local host organization of the 5th African Organic Conference, the Inter-continental Network of Organic Farmers Organization (INOFO) which was overseeing the Farmers' and Seeds Track, the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA) which was overseeing the Research Track and chaired the Continental Planning Committee, the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) which was in charge of the Trade/Exhibition (Afro Organic Fair) Track and the African Union Commission's Continental Secretariat of the Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative which was overseeing the Policy Track; partners who supported the conference financially such as Agence Française de Développement (AFD) through the IIABA project, Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Naturland Association for Organic Agriculture, and SWISSAID, GIZ, IFOAM Organics International Asia, International Society for Organic Agriculture Research (ISO FAR), as well as all other continental, regional and National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs) in Africa which sent their representatives to take part in the conference.

WE AGREE that Zambia is a candidate to host the 6th African Organic Conference in 2026 after submitting a duly filled application file to the AfrONet Board for final decision.

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President
African Organic Network (AfrONet).