



ISAN IN ACTION

SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF
SUSTAINABLE FOOD NETWORKS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

ISSUE 01 • OCTOBER 2021

ABOUT ISAN

INTERNATIOANAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC
MOVEMENTS (IFOAM) SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK

ISAN is a regional network of organisations and individuals actively supporting the development of a sustainable, ecological organic agricultural sector in southern Africa. Its values align with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) - Organics International principles of Health, Fairness, Ecology and Care.

ISAN was formed during the second Africa Organic Conference held in Zambia in 2012 to represent Southern Africa Development Community countries - Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. To date, the following countries are active in ISAN; Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

ISAN aims to develop and coordinate programmes and networks of common interest at the regional level working through National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMS), the Interncontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations (INOFO) and the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), all of which have chapters in the region.

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**3 LESOTHO: RISE, A
CHANGE IS COMING**

**5 TIPS FROM ORGANIC
FARMERS**

**7 MALAWI:
TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES WITH
BIOFERTILISERS**

**9 MADAGASCAR: A
LEGAL FRAMEWORK
FOR ORGANICS**

**12 SOUTH AFRICA:
SCALING ORGANICS**

**14 RESEARCH UPDATE:
ORGANIC GRAIN
STORAGE**

**17 ORGANIC
LEADERSHIP: BEING A
CHANGE AGENT?**

**20 KNOWLEDGE HUB FOR
ORGANIC AGRICULTURE**



This publication is a collaboration between
ISAN and the Knowledge Hub for Organic
Agriculture in Southern Africa

WELCOME

There has never been a more important time for all of us to actively call for and work towards a transition to a sustainable food system. One that produces nutritious food for all without harming the Earth.

We hope that this newsletter, ISAN's first, is a step towards encouraging the cross-learning and collaboration necessary to support this transition in the southern African region. We produce this publication with support from the Knowledge Hub for Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSA).

We urge you all (farmers, manufacturers, distributors, researchers, organic organisations and consumers) to share your experiences with others by contributing to this newsletter, no contribution is too small! It is through sharing and learning from these stories, innovations and research that together we can build a healthy, prosperous and fair food future in southern Africa.

Organically Yours
Fortunate Nyakanda

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LESOTHO RISE: A CHANGE IS COMING

BY TEBOHO SEPIRITI

Global warming, low life expectancy, malnutrition, poor health, lack of clean water, agro and economic decline and COVID-19; this and many other signs indicate the need to shift to sustainable agriculture.

The story of three aspiring teenage farmers – Thabo Maleke, Refiloe Mahabane and Teboho Sepiriti – shows how it is done. The three teenagers aimed for thriving agricultural production, but didn't have the money to buy pesticides and fertilisers. They had to find innovative ways to build their soils and manage pests and diseases to realise their dream.

They tried, failed and experimented some more until they uncovered key practices that are the foundation of their current success.

These are organic practices that use both scientific information and traditional knowledge to work with the Earth to produce nutritious food.



Initially, they thought they would have a small market for their harvests that they sold online through www.organicfarmfreshshop.com. But soon orders were flowing in and they ran out of produce. They went on to establish a national umbrella body in Lesotho that could advocate for organic practices and the values of fairness, care, ecology and health.

They continue to actively engage with stakeholders to grow the organic sector in Lesotho with support from the South African Organic Sector Organisation and Participatory Guarantee Scheme South Africa.

**"Marema tlou a ntsoe
le leng" "let'soel le
beta poho"
means
'together we can'...
build a better farming
system
and a better
continent."**

Teboho
Sepiriti



1st World Organic Youth Summit

October 20th - 22nd, 2021

Live on Zoom, Facebook and Youtube

Goesan County, South Korea

1700 - 2000 Korean Standard Time

[CLICK TO REGISTER NOW!](#)

**1st Session
2nd Session
3rd Session
4th Session
5th Session**

**"Organic youth from the 5 Corners of the World"
"Wise Words to Inspire"
"Building a Global Organic Youth Movement"
"A Sustainable Future - Organic Youth Working for a Better World"
"Dialogue with the Pioneers"**

TIPS FROM ORGANIC FARMERS



**"You can't believe it.
These were once
poor sandy loamy
soils which has been
improved through
the continuous use
of organic matter."**



**"Making bokashi (a
Japanese word for
fermented organic
matter) is a super soil
fertiliser."**

"Liquid manure is a good source of nitrogen especially if we use manure from small livestock."



"Earthworms do amazing work in our soils. Farmers should introduce them to their soils and reap the huge benefits..."



"Organic chilli has improved the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Gokwe South district in Zimbabwe's Midlands province."



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH BIOFERTILISER

BY KONDWANI KONJE

Bokashi composting uses micro-organisms to 'ferment' food waste and create compost that helps build fertile soils.

The Foundation for Building Resilient Communities (FOBRECO) has been facilitating training in biofertilizer technology in Zombwe Extension Planning Area in Mzimba North, Malawi. The training, with support from The Pollination, was focused on vegetable and banana farmers in the area.

Successes to date

Thirty lead farmers in Mzimba, which encompasses the Zombwe Extension Planning Area, were trained in the 2019/2020 growing season. In turn, these lead farmers have trained 600 farmers – 67% of the target group of 900 farmers. There has been a significant increase in yields and farmer incomes.

On average MK100,000 revenue was realised compared to MK12,000.00 from the previous season on vegetable sales per farmer.

30 lead farmers have trained 600 farmers in bokashi making. There has been a significant increase in yields and farmer incomes in the project area.

Households in the project impact area have reported that with the surplus income they are able to buy supplementary foods, clothes and pay school fees.



FOBRECO is collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture's research and extension departments. It has trained two government staff who are now disseminating the technology beyond the project impact areas. The extension officers have also been key in facilitating community trainings across Mzimba district leading to an increased uptake of the technology by farmers. Demonstrations, field days and exchange visits have contributed to dissemination of the biofertilizer technology in Malawi.

Challenges and solutions

The technology is labour intensive from collection of the raw materials to the making of the biofertiliser. Some common challenges around ingredients include the cost of sugar and yeast in some instances and in others competition for resources, such as maize bran in pig farming areas. The quality of the animal manure is important, which can be challenging for farmers that do not own livestock. Bokashi needs to be stored properly. If it is exposed to sunlight or not well covered, it will lose nutrients prior to application.

The project has organized farmers into groups to encourage sharing of labour and resources (such as animal dung, maize bran and ash). It also encourages crop diversification, which then provides farmers with diverse sources of income to buy sugar and yeast.



FOBRECO will work with interested farmers to develop a bokashi value chain. This will provide an alternative income source for those involved in bokashi production and sales.

The project has organized farmers into groups to encourage sharing of labour and resources (such as animal dung, maize bran and ash). It also encourages crop diversification, which then provides farmers with diverse sources of income to buy sugar and yeast.

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A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANICS

By Luarent Liagre

Constructing a policy and regulatory framework for the promotion of organic agriculture in Madagascar has been a long process.

Madagascar is a small player in the global organic agriculture market, but it ranks first in the export of certified organic products such as vanilla, cloves, shrimps and lychees. In addition, Madagascar offers a wide range of certified products such as cocoa, spices, fruits and vegetables, honey, essential oils, vegetable oils, aromatic and medicinal plants.

The sector is growing steadily, with organic certification figures growing from 14 000 hectares to about 70 000 hectares between 2009 and 2020. The number of organic farmers has grown from 4 000 to 70 000 farmers, and exports have increased from 1 000 tons of exported products to nearly 6 000 tons today. The sector represents about 350 certified economic operators. Until now, organic farming has been mainly for export. Only a few companies offer products on the national market. These are certified according to the certification systems of major international markets.

Small operators offer different types of products on the local market, such as market garden products, honey, essential oils, medicinal plants and sometimes dairy products. But these products are mostly presented as "natural", agroecological, or organic generally without any form of certification. The consumer has no way of knowing what s/he is really buying. Buyers often represent a wealthy clientele with some basic knowledge of what is meant by the term organic.

Conducive policy and legal frameworks

For several years, in the wake of this dynamic, Madagascar has been resolutely engaged in constructing a political and legal framework to promote the sector. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Malagasy Organic Agriculture Union initiated the process during the 2017 1st National Conferences, and the first law on organic agriculture was promulgated in July 2020.

The 1st National Strategy for Organic Agriculture should be adopted soon. Madagascar's ambition is to have supportive policy for the export and domestic markets.

Benefits include as a source of income for producers, human health (farmers and consumers), source of foreign currency, preservation of the environment, agricultural practices adapted to climate change and structuring of the rural world (farmer organisations, contract farming, organic territories structuring). Public authorities and economic operators have acquired the conviction that the national organic market can and must develop in synergy with exports.

The challenges and the synergies of responses are numerous and strategic, such as advisory support systems, joint research and development programmes, territorial approaches, professionalisation of actors, and so on. From this perspective, the strategy is to promote the development of the national market and to guarantee the organic nature of products without hindering the growth of the sector.

Four main pillars have been proposed:

- Institutional governance
- Support measures for farmers and downstream operators
- Development of research and technical advisory services

- Raising awareness among consumers and economic actors.

Specifics of the political/legal framework

Two specificities of this political and legal framework should be highlighted. First, Law No. 2020-003 announces the coming conception of a national organic standard that will be adapted to local context, taking into consideration local agriculture knowledge and knowhow and farmers livelihood constraints.

Policy aims to democratise access to organic products and to scale up positive impacts of sustainable production.

First, Law No. 2020-003 announces the coming conception of a national organic standard that will be adapted to local context, taking into consideration local agriculture knowledge and knowhow and farmers livelihood constraints.

The law recognizes two certification systems to guarantee the organic nature of products sold on the national market, namely the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and third-party certification.

Although only two agroecological PGSs are being implemented in the peri-urban areas of the capital Antananarivo, the possibility for them to be agreed as organic aligns with government's ambition to promote the national organic market. It will do so by providing a regulatory framework that allows small farmers to participate and by guaranteeing to consumers the organic character of products sold on local markets.

Second, the concept of Territory with Organic Agriculture Vocation (TVAB) is introduced as a tool to develop organic agriculture. These territories can constitute an agricultural and economic space in which farmers, companies, communities and public authorities agree to develop organic agriculture with quantitative objectives to be reached over time.

These recent policy and regulatory changes must now be put into practice through the design of support tools, the launch of pilot projects, studies, and so on. One can already see that the proposed tools, such as PGS and TVAB, are meeting with strong interest. The creation of the new Monitoring and Coordination Unit for Organic Agriculture and the establishment of the National Commission on Organic Agriculture for the approval of certification systems, provide a reference framework to guide the actions of several interested donors.

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SCALING ORGANICS IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Colleen Anderson

Raising awareness is not enough, we must also build the capacity on the ground to support organic farmers.

PGS Pollinator Programme

With funding from the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa, the PGS Pollinator programme has trained 20 people in various aspects of organic production and marketing, as well as showing them how to establish PGS groups. The second training module - Introduction to Organic Agriculture, Sowing Seeds of Change - took place at Goedgedacht Farm from 6-9 September 2021.

The organic farming component covered subjects such as soil health, pest management, microorganisms, composting, animal husbandry, permaculture land design, water management, seed sovereignty, indigenous food, and the threats to our pollinator species. This knowledge was backed up with hands-on practicals and a PGS farm assessment of the Goedgedacht Farm that showed the trainees how to map the land, make organic inputs, and create compost. Importantly, the pollinators learnt how to conduct farm assessments and how to assess a farmer's adherence to organic production standards.

Pollinators further learnt about the SAOSO organic standards, the South African certification landscape and PGS's role in it, how to engage with government at a municipal level for support, and how to set up and consolidate their PGS groups.

"We really got a sense, having all these people buzzing with excitement and ideas about how to advance the organic agenda, that we had in front of us the new pioneers of the organic movement in their respective provinces."

PGS SA project manager,
Sasha Mentz-Lagrange

The four days were a total success, highlighting the power of passionate individuals coming together, sharing knowledge and working with nature towards a healthier planet and people.

PGS SA Annual General Meeting

The PGS SA AGM took place on 10 September 2021. Robust conversations were had about PGS's function in South Africa related to organic certification, critical issues around access to organic seed for instance, and how the Pollinators will be driving PGS and organic production forward in every province.

Matthew Purkis was voted in as the new Chairperson of PGS SA and Butshabelo Mabunda was elected the new Vice-Chairperson. Matt is an environmental activist and entrepreneur in the green sector. Butshabelo is a smallholder farmer in Limpopo passionate about using agroecology to feed the nation with nutritious and healthy food.

World Organic Day celebrations

World Organic Day was celebrated on the equinox on Wednesday 22 September and many of the PGS Pollinators hosted festivities celebrating their PGS's and their certified organic produce. The intention was to hero organic food and farming, connecting communities to their farmers and their food.

Alongside the regional markets, there was also a forum held at Goedgedacht on the day called 'Food System for a Kinder Humanity'.

This forum focused on finding solutions to the failing food system in South Africa and outlined how transitioning to a kinder food system can grow and develop a country from a grass roots level.



RESEARCH UPDATE: ORGANIC GRAIN STORAGE

BY MACDONALD MUBAYIWA & BRIGHTON M. MVUMI
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Increased use of synthetic pesticides to combat grain pests has negative impacts on the environment and on human health.

Storage insect pests account for significant losses of dry grain. For example in southern Africa postharvest losses of maize grain range from 15 to 18%. Farmers usually respond by applying synthetic pesticides, to which storage insect pests continually develop resistance. As a result, farmers resort to over-application of these chemicals or use synthetic products that are not registered for use on stored grain.

Consumers are also increasingly health conscious about food safety . Consequently, there is increasing demand for pesticide-free foods. Concerns are also growing about the side-effects of synthetic pesticide use, such as pollution of the environment and killing of non-target organisms.

There is therefore a clear need for food preservation techniques to go 'green' to minimise or eliminate altogether the exposure of workers and consumers to pesticides, to reduce environmental impact and to retard the development of resistance to grain protectants.

Organic storage is achieved through the use of natural, chemical-free methods, including modifying the gaseous composition within the storage environment. In this article, we highlight strategies for achieving organic storage of grain (and seed) of all types.

Storage insect pests account for significant losses of dry grains.



Hermetic storage

This involves the use of airtight containers to prevent gaseous exchange between the inside and outside environments. These containers can be in the form of glass or plastic bottles, gourds, clay pots, metal silos, hermetic bags, drums (plastic and metal), jerry cans, cocoons etc. Untreated grain is loaded into the containers and a tight seal is ensured. Respiration by insects and microflora that could have entered within the grain, and by the grain itself, will lead to depletion of oxygen and build-up of carbon dioxide within a few hours of storage. In some instances, an oxygen-depleting agent is enclosed in the containers to accelerate the process of oxygen depletion. The high carbon dioxide and low oxygen mixture will result in the death of the storage insects through suffocation.

This technology can protect the grains for as long as they remain airtight. For this to work, grain moisture should not exceed 12.5% and the containers must be stored under shed to prevent temperature fluctuation that might result in the grain sweating, causing rotting and discoloration.

Temperature control

Many species require temperatures above 18 degrees Celsius to reach damaging populations; while their mean developmental temperature ranges between 25 and 32 degrees. Storing grain under cold environments (at most 4 degrees) will stop insect development and result in death of all stages within two weeks. Exposure to high temperatures (50-70 degrees) for 30 minutes results in insect death as well.

Grains can crack, harden, and become brittle if heating is introduced too quickly or if excessive temperatures occur. This method may also kill the seed.

Diatomaceous earths (DEs)

These are made from fossilised aquatic organisms, particularly phytoplankton diatoms. Their skeletons are made of silica and are inert. Diatomaceous earths are ground into a dust and their sharp edges damage insect cuticles by abrasion and adsorption of the waxy layer on the cuticle resulting in their dehydration and death by desiccation. The inert dusts are admixed with grain. DEs work best on dry grain ($\leq 12.5\%$) and under low relative humidity. In addition, the grain must be freshly harvested as the dust cannot penetrate to kill the immature stages within the kernel.

Botanical pesticides

Botanical pesticides such as the broad-spectrum pyrethrum (contact pesticide) and azadirachtin (insect growth regulator and repellent) can be used. They are non-persistent and degrade rapidly upon exposure to sunlight. Pesticidal plants such as *Lippia javanica* (Zumbani) and *Eucalyptus* (gum tree) leaves can be also used. However, there is need to constantly monitor insect infestation as they degrade faster.

Plant resistance

Plant resistance to pest attack can reduce or eliminate the use of synthetic pesticides.

Choosing resistant crop varieties can significantly reduce attacks by storage insects. In maize, resistant varieties have flint-shaped grains, and their husks completely close the entire cob when the crop is still standing in the field. Some of the seeds are generally hard and, as a result, are less susceptible to attack by storage insects. In legumes, kernel surface morphology (smooth or wrinkled) can help confer resistance against weevils. Biochemical properties such as nutritional and anti-nutritional factors are also known to be responsible for conferring resistance or susceptibility of legume grain to storage insect pests. While resistant crop varieties provide the first line of defence, there is no one variety that is entirely resistant to storage insect pest attack.

Preventative measures

Preventative measures such as good store hygiene, timely harvesting, fast and proper drying of the grains and timely application of control methods are very helpful in preventing grain infestation. If hermetic or cocoons are used, extra care must be taken to prevent rodent damage because once punctured, the bags lose efficacy as oxygen enters and can support life, including insects that may then enter. Cats and dogs and/or trapping can play an important part in rodent control. Some plants are also known to be repel or deter rodents.

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ORGANIC LEADERSHIP: BEING A CHANGE AGENT

By John Vincent Espinado

A report on the The Leadership Forum Session 'What it implies to be an Agent of Change' at the 2021 Organic World Congress.

The Organic World Congress (OWC) 2021 was a unique global event, as for the first time all forum sessions were accessible digitally for registered participants. Plenary sessions of the OWC2021 were complemented by six individual conference forums, each with its objectives.

The Leadership Forum Session 9, aimed at discussing and shaping the future of the organic movement focused on 'What it implies to be an Agent of Change?' The panel session was held virtually with about 70 people attending from around the world.

It was moderated by Fortunate Nyakanda (World Board Member, IFOAM – Organics International) and facilitated by Ashish Gupta (Global Organic Academy Manager, IFOAM – Organics International) and John Vincent Espinado (Project assistant, IFOAM – Organics International). This poignant question brought together five honorary speakers from across the globe.

They shared experiences, knowledge initiatives, new ideas, and concepts that have helped propel agriculture and organic to the next level of sustainability. The session provided a significant opportunity to bring together expertise and experiences, and it encouraged live digital interaction between moderators, panel presenters and participants using the Klaxoon board.

It became an avenue that hopes to develop a shared approach towards impacting change in the organic community and discuss what we could do together better as an agent of change in defining the future directions of the community we are continuously mobilising.



Arvind Narula (Urmatt Group) talked about innovation and the circular economy concept, which has changed the organic industry in Thailand and in other places where he has been involved. He mentioned that the information supporting the Hill Tribe move from narcotics to organic agriculture as an inspiring example, and many more such stories like these are needed today.

Likewise, he explained that the key to success with the farmers is to ensure that all operations are viable and profitable. This is in addition to what is needed for the circular economy approach in operations. Hence, farmers can grow organic firstly to have safe food for their families and then surplus for the market.

Brendan Hoare (Buy Pure, New Zealand) shared his experiences and the attributes needed as an agent of change to push his vision and dreams in the organic movement. He exemplified that visioning and dreaming about something great is about more than just that, but also about doing it forward. In other words, to walk the talk for organics was what is needed to be an agent of change. It is also essential that one must enjoy the work and get the right people in the right rhythm. One must be ready to let go and hand over by giving responsibility to the next generation – youth and strong women. Brenden correspondingly shared the tools he used as an agent of change. He summarised these as: sales tools – never let anyone say 'no' and let them have an experience (food/music).

Design, plan, and act – give things space and time. Lastly, do not let 'ego' get in the way.

Markus Arbenz (Easy-Cert Group AG, Switzerland; Organics4Development Consultancy), former Executive Director of IFOAM–Organics International, spoke about how he sees leadership at different levels (individual, institutional and general), picking Organic 3.0 to further the development, how can leadership make use of objectives and principles of organic agriculture to bring about inclusivity as enshrined in Organic 3.0, and how can leadership be used to effect change and push the organic agriculture movement to the next level. Firstly, he recognised that organics is many things and that Organic 3.0 is the way forward. As a leader, he knew there was no need to strive for perfection, but rather constantly just taking the next step. In practical terms, keep it simple and feasible. Furthermore, he noted the need to implement accurate cost accounting and set the principle; thus, those who damage agriculture practicing genetically modified organisms and pesticides must be held liable. He further expressed that the enemy was not inside, but outside and so we have to create a shared narrative and direction with all like-minded movements – as part of Organic 3.0, focused on innovation with integrity.

Participatory Governance System or PGS is one such innovation that caters to the need to be more diversified in approach.

André Leu (Regeneration International), former President of IFOAM–Organics International, discussed how change could be brought about while connecting regenerative agriculture and organic agriculture in the sustainable food narrative. He noted that vision and leadership get people together and excited. The Organic 3.0 has six pathways, including 'organic as a lighthouse' for leadership and regenerative as complementary to organic. He also shared his viewpoints on authentic leadership and the lessons as an agent of change for him. Significantly, authentic leadership means not being deterred by doing the impossible, and it requires planning. There are scars to cultivating authentic leadership, and one should wear these with pride. Best decisions are made when boards of leadership are flat and inclusive. In his closing statement, he proposed three lessons as an agent of change: keep it simple, start at the beginning, and just start. In the longest journeys we begin with a single step. Do not be frightened of failures.

Stela Lutalo (PELUM Uganda), shared the most significant barriers to women's leadership and the changes that need to happen at various levels to realize strong leadership capacity in ecological organic agriculture (EOA).

The biggest challenge for women remains gender stereotypes, and yet, this has not stopped women from actively leading for change. She recommends that we must complement each other to facilitate EOA development on the African continent, with greater networks to be built to champion organic agriculture and demonstrate financial benefits, to attract everyone.

Furthermore, she illustrated that validated knowledge products, such as those produced by the Knowledge Hubs, support change. Institutions must also emphasise women leaders in all aspects of EOA. In her concluding remarks, she identified the benefits of building the capacity of local leaders as agents of change to drive organic agriculture forward.

Stella also complimented the unique training programme EOA Leadership Course, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with IFOAM–Organics International on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Our fellow conventional farmers are victims of the system... organic is their way to freedom.

KNOWLEDGE HUB FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices in the Southern African region over a four-year period.

The Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSa) is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA) project. The KCOA project is a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and non-governmental organisations.

The project aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices in the southern African region over a four-year period. It focuses project activities in Zambia, led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia; in Namibia, led by the Namibia Nature Foundation in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association; and in South Africa, led by the South African Organic Sector Organisation.

The South African-based Sustainability Institute provides support for project implementation in the region. GIZ is also implementing this project in north, east, west and central Africa.

To date, the KHSa has:

- Held stakeholder meetings in Namibia and Zambia
- Supported Participatory Guarantee System South Africa's Pollinator Programme
- Facilitated training of lead farmers/multipliers in South Africa and Namibia
- Provided support to the Zambia Traditional Seed and Food Festival
- Produced factsheets on organic agriculture, including for the Namibian meat sector
- Hosted IFOAM Organics International training sessions.

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Knowledge Hub for Organic
Agriculture in Southern Africa



KHSA
Knowledge Hub for
Organic Agriculture
in Southern Africa

PROMOTING ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

by gathering and
sharing knowledge

BUILDING STRONG NETWORKS

for organic agriculture
in southern Africa

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY

and skills of organic trainers



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