

ISAN

Southern African Network

*Supporting the growth of food
grower networks in southern
Africa*

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ISSUE NO.3

**YOUTH
LEADERS PUT
FORWARD
AMBITIOUS
AGRICULTURE
POLICY**

Hannah Hopper

**ORGANIC
BEEF
PRODUCTION
IN NAMIBIA**

Mareike Voigts

**AFRICA'S YOUTH
IN AGRICULTURE**

Odette Marunga



ABOUT ISAN

INTERNATIONAL 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, eSwatini, 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 Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations (INOFO) and the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), all of which have chapters in the region.

For more information, contact: chair@isan.ifoam.bio

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Knowledge Hub for Organic
Agriculture in Southern Africa



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

EDITOR'S NOTES

By Fortunate Nyakanda, ISAN chair

Organic greetings to our readers! The world seems abuzz about biodiversity at the moment – and all its benefits. We celebrated the International Day of Biodiversity in May and boosted our calls for the preservation of all living organisms that make up and support ecosystem functioning. This resonates with the organic principle of ecology, which we explore in this edition.

Thank you to all those who contributed to this jam-packed edition that brings news from the Youth7 Summit in Germany and the Convention on Biological Diversity meetings held in Geneva in preparation for the global Congress of the Parties in China later this year to on-the-ground farmer tips from Zambia and guidelines on organic beef production from Namibia.

We take you on a journey to Zimbabwe where government is actively supporting the propagation of indigenous trees by working with communities and into South Africa where the PGS Pollinators are spreading the word about organic agriculture through community markets. Madagascar's transition towards organic agriculture continues and we share best practice policy from other countries presented at their 2021 conference titled Organic Agriculture in Madagascar: a project for society.





In this edition, we present a new section focused on Youth and Innovation, exploring what is needed to attract African youth to agriculture and how social media platforms can support a transition to sustainable food and farming systems.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and that you share it with others. It is only through co-creating and sharing knowledge that we can elevate sustainable farming – and all those that practice it – to their rightful place as the guardians of agrobiodiversity and of the ‘culture’ of agriculture.

Remember to follow us on Facebook and Instagram for frequent updates on organics in southern Africa.

Yours in organics,
Fortunate Nyakanda
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ORGANIC 3.0

Unpacking the Principle of Ecology

Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with and emulate them, and help sustain them. Those who produce, process, trade or consume organic products should protect and benefit the common environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water.

Organic farming should fit the cycles and ecological balances in nature, meaning there should be no disturbance to ecosystems to suit farmers, rather farmers should work according to local conditions. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. Inputs should be reduced by reuse, recycling and efficient management of materials and energy to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources.

Organic agriculture should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of agricultural diversity including use of different varieties for genetic diversity. Different enterprises within the production system give diversity that enhances the ecosystem. In addressing the principle of ecology, it is important to note that farmers are stewards of nature and its creation and in all activities should bear in mind that all forms of life are equally important.



What is organic agriculture?

There are different definitions of organics, but the most widely held is that of IFOAM – Organics International:

Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved.

Source: IFOAM General Assembly, 2008

Principle of Ecology

Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

Principle of Health

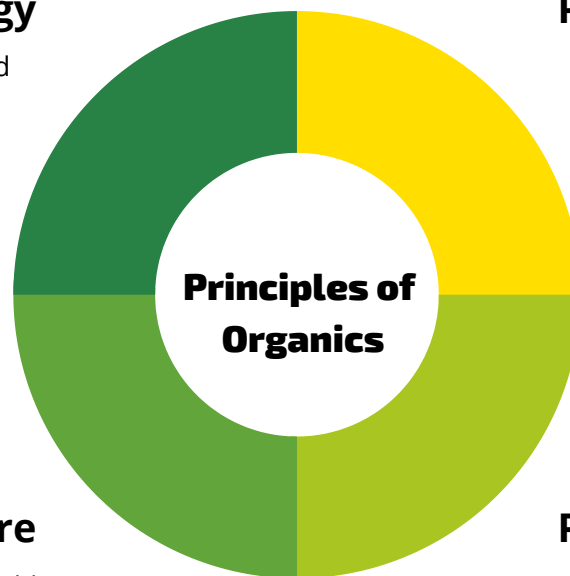
Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

Principle of Care

Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and the environment.

Principle of Fairness

Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.



Statistics and emerging trends 2021

Oceania

35.9 million ha

Europe

16.5 million ha

Latin America

8.3 million ha

Asia

5.9 million ha

Africa

2 million ha

FiBL and IFOAM's latest report on organic statistics and emerging trends 2021 illustrates the growth of organic production in Africa, and elsewhere. Forty-two African countries shared their data for the report, enabling good insights to the state of the sector.

The global organic market continues to grow, with a current value of more than Euro 120 billion. There are now 3.4 million organic producers in the world, up 7.6% from last year. Almost 75 million hectares of land is now under organic production (up 4.1% from last year).

Land use

Africa's certified organic footprint is 0.2% of the continent's agricultural footprint and 2.8% of global lands under organic production. The organic sector has grown by 89.4% between 2010 and 2019, with the numbers of producers growing by 42.45% in the same period. Africa remains the region with the largest area under wild collection and beekeeping categories (16.3 million hectares) making up 47% of global lands under this type of organic production.

For more on the statistics and trends in organics, visit:

www.fibl.org/fileadmin/documents/shop/1150-organic-world-2021.pdf

BUILDING NETWORKS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

INOFO UPDATE

By Janet Gracie



The Inter Continental Network of Organic Farmer Organisations (INOFO) is gaining visibility within Southern Africa. This is illustrated through increased membership, participation at various events, and formal invitations to speak at high-level meetings and forums.

In February 2022, Busisiwe Mgangxela, Convenor of INOFO South Africa, was invited to introduce INOFO to country organisations involved in the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSa) at their regional meeting in Stellenbosch, South Africa. KHSa works in Namibia, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia to identify and fill knowledge gaps related to organic agriculture along the value chain. This opportunity enabled INOFO to present on global development and on the strategy developed by INOFO South Africa.

The development of the South African INOFO chapter can act as a blueprint for others. The process is being recorded and the toolkits will be available to other countries wanting to establish their own country chapters or enhance existing organisational capacity.

INOFO is a key lever to elevating farmers' voices in decision-making circles relevant to agriculture. The organisation of farmers into country and regional chapters gives us greater influence in these circles and serves to support farmers in claiming their space at the heart of the organic sector. Farmers are able to speak with a collective voice representing our own interests.

For more information about INOFO, please contact info@inofo.bio and an INOFO Convenor will contact you.

NOAMS UPDATE

NAMIBIA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION (NOA)

The Namibian Organic Association (NOA) is currently engaging in a strategic planning process to determine its objectives and strategies. It is now being supported by three new board members, Heidi Camarate de Campos, Agnes Tjiramba and Johannes Negongo, who come with a diverse and deep background of different angles related to organic agriculture.

An induction and strategy meeting was held in February to familiarise new board members with NOA's constitution and to discuss new objectives and strategies to support the organic sector in Namibia. Various aspects were discussed, including certification, training, research and the need for market support.

Recently, in collaboration with KHSA, NOA has been appointed as a member of the technical working group of the Namibian Training Authority to be part of the review process of their agricultural curriculum. As a result of this, and with some luck, Namibia will be one of the first African countries with a formal, stand-alone qualification in organic agriculture.



NOA is continuously creating awareness of organic agriculture in Namibia and has recently represented the sector at a local agricultural trade fare in Omaruru, where many interested visitors engaged with the NOA team.

Contact NOA on info@noa.org.na | www.noa.org.na

SOUTH AFRICA ORGANIC SECTOR ORGANISATION (SAOSO) & PGS SA

South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO)

On 12 and 13 April 2022, core team members of SAOSO and PGS SA met with the newly appointed convenors of these organisations' working groups at Goedgedacht Farm in South Africa. These working groups were established to drive forward specific projects that would support the strengthening of the ecological organic agriculture sector in South Africa. The two days were spent on determining how governance of the organic sector would be operationalised through these working groups that bring additional technical capacity to SAOSO and PGS SA and on identifying key intervention areas.



PGS South Africa



PGS | SOUTH AFRICA

The PGS Pollinators Programme is expanding with an extension of funding from the KHSA. The next stage of the programme – titled the Champions Programme – will start this winter with a five-day training session. The aim is to upskill passionate champions that can work with existing Pollinators to help them grow their PGS groups and scale the impact of the programme.

The Pollinators have been busy the past few months holding market days around the country. In Limpopo, Pollinator Rosah Ramaipadi's market day was attended by her PGS members and also local municipal officers and some conventional farmers. Rosah noted that:

"They were so impressed to see how our produce was so healthy looking and could see a huge difference in the colour and texture. The municipality promised to give us space for markets and we then showcased our products at the Marula festival in Phalaborwa in April. We also managed to secure a market supply to the students of Limpopo University who liked our products and will order on a weekly basis."



LtR: Rosah Ramaipadi's stall at the PGS Market Day in Polokwane; Teboho Sepiriti and PGS members, Lesotho

Teboho Sepiriti, who coordinates the newly created PGS for Lesotho held his market day on 20 March 2022, and said the following: "The event went well, the children enjoyed their first dose of a meal with some organic ingredients, and those smiles of hope for a cleaner future were probably the icing on the cake." The PGS group in Lesotho is growing fast and is battling to meet the huge demand for organic produce.

Various PGS groups have held their annual general meeting this year and two groups will hold their AGMs in May – the Cape Flats PGS and the Langeberg PGS (founding meeting). The growth in PGS activity has been supported by the rollout of marketing material, including pop-up banners. PGS SA held a meeting in early May with all established and emerging PGSs in South Africa to connect, discuss recent developments and identify challenges and opportunities to grow and mature PGS in the country.



Sophia Grodes, PGS Pollinator at the Abalimi Farmer Festival

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Contact PGS SA on info@pgssa.org.za | www.pgssa.org.za

FARMER TIPS

By Kanangwa Newlove, Loctaguna Organics, Zambia

I am Kanangwa Newlove, an ecological organic farmer in Zambia and the owner of Loctaguna Organics. Before becoming an organic farmer, I graduated from the University of Zambia with a Bachelor of Arts degree and spent a decade working in business and marketing. I was the operations, sales and marketing manager for Community Markets for Conservation and Seba Foods in Lusaka, among other positions in that time.



I am passionate about sustainable food systems and agriculture and am on a mission to make sustainably grown food available to consumers throughout the value chain. I was selected in 2021 to participate in IFOAM – Organics International’s Ecological Organic Agriculture Leadership Course and am regularly invited as a speaker to workshops on agroecological agriculture. Below are farming tips that I have put into practice on my farm with positive results.



The importance of mulching

Mulching is the process of applying a protective layer of material over the soil in your garden or on your farm. You can mulch large patches of ground, beds or borders, raised beds, or even containers. Mulching helps keep moisture in the field for a much longer time. It also helps to suppress weeds and adds much-needed organic matter to a farmer’s field. You can use straw, leaves or even cardboard to achieve the same results. Try mulching your fields today and you will save time and money.

Easy ways to compost – trench composting

Trench composting is the act of burying your organic waste directly into your garden soil to add nutrients to the soil. It also adds organic matter and feeds the beneficial soil organisms that provide ‘food’ for your crop.

If you don’t have the time or the patience to wait for the traditional compost to be ready, trench composting will do the trick just fine.

All you do is add organic matter green or brown and manure if available, bury it, wait two weeks and plant your favourite crop. Remember to water the patch sparingly as you wait.



Experiment with Azolla

Azolla is a dichotomously branched free-floating aquatic fern, which is naturally available on moist soils and in ditches and marshy ponds. Azolla is rich in protein, amino acids, minerals and vitamins so when it is fed to livestock, it increases the weight of cows, goats and pigs and boosts milk and egg production.

You can grow azolla in a shallow pond using your favourite manure. Livestock farmers will save a lot of money by growing and using azolla, and therefore make more money on sale of livestock.

You can also use azolla as your go-to manure. The water in which the azolla grows can be used to water your garden because it is rich in the nutrients that plants need.





ORGANIC VALUE CHAINS

Is organic beef production a viable alternative for Namibian cattle farmers?

By Mareike Voigts, Namibian Organic Association and Namibian Country Manager for the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa

Free-range cattle farmers in Namibia and other southern African countries work in a challenging environment. Rainfall is unpredictable and water resources can be scarce, which can affect the availability of fodder. This, in turn, affects the quality and quantity of cattle herds. Farmers are looking for ways to maintain and improve productivity under these conditions. Organic beef production may provide them with a solution.

What is organic cattle farming?

Organic beef production is based on the four principles. The principles of Health, Care, Ecology and Fairness developed by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). Organic production uses ecological processes and environmentally friendly practices and products to benefit both human and ecological health. Organic beef production emphasises the principles of respect for animals, their physical and behavioural needs and the provision of superior quality organic feed. The following principles, in particular, apply to beef production:

- *Animal welfare:* The 'five freedoms' of animals are upheld in organic production. These are freedom from hunger and thirst; discomfort; pain, injury and disease; and fear and distress; as well as the freedom to express their normal behaviour. This has implications for how and what animals are fed, taken care of and how they are managed in the landscape. Mutilations, for example, are strictly regulated. Practices like castration or dehorning may only be carried out in a way that causes minimal pain and stress to the animal. Depending on the certification standard, there are regulations on the maximum age of a calf for these practices and whether the mutilation is performed under anaesthesia or analgesia.

- *Sustainable grazing practices:* Holistic rangeland management is used to build masses of veld that is of high nutritional quality. The use of chemicals in the landscape is prohibited because of its detrimental impact on animal health and on groundwater and soils.
- *Prevention rather than cure:* Treatment of a sick animal is allowed with certain conditions related to withdrawal periods and the nature of the vaccine, antibiotics and parasiticides, but organic principles stress that prevention is always better than cure. The focus is on building the robustness of the herd to enable them to thrive in the natural environment without need of external, often expensive, inputs.

Organic producers mostly farm with adapted cattle breeds that can make use of the available resources without the need for added supplementation. These adapted breeds have fewer challenges with diseases and parasites as compared to many imported, large-framed breeds.

Case study: Farm Krumhuk

Farm Krumhuk on the outskirts of Windhoek, Namibia, produces organic beef, certified through the Namibian Organic Association's participatory guarantee system (PGS). The farm has been managed according to organic principles for more than 25 years. Krumhuk's herd comprises locally adapted Nguni cattle (with some Bonsmara genetics), which are herded by three to four herders and guarded by an Anatolian livestock guarding dog.

The farm benefits from holistic management of its rangelands. Cattle are moved over the landscape in patterns that mimic the natural behaviour of large herds of wild herbivores, for example, by herding them into dense groups. As the herd grazes, they trample remaining plants, creating mulch (which mitigates erosion) and their hoof action improves water and air infiltration into the soil. Their manure and urine act as fertilisers. The choice of locally adapted Nguni cattle is advantageous because they do not need supplements or regular veterinary treatments. Cattle are not dehorned but the farm is not affected by lower market prices for horned animals because it slaughters and processes meat on farm. The farm has experimented with not castrating male calves to reduce stress on the animals and leaving it to the main breeding bulls to stop young bulls from serving cows.

There have been some issues with fighting and unrest in the herd, and the farm might revert to castration of very young calves.

Research undertaken at Farm Krumhuk indicates that the adoption and use of organic management principles has improved the quality of rangeland, increased organic matter content in the soil and is economically viable.

How does conventional cattle farming differ from organic production?

In Namibia, most cattle roam free over expansive areas and consume grass in natural landscapes. To a degree, this aligns with organic production principles. There are, however, certain practices used in 'common' cattle management that exclude these farms from being considered organic.

- *Provision of licks with urea and phosphates:* Urea is prohibited in organic production as it is a chemically produced substance. Certain phosphate licks are allowed, depending on contents and production processes.
- *Bush control using chemical substances:* Using chemicals to control bush encroachment is prohibited because these chemicals leach into groundwater and have known negative effects on environmental, and often human, health. Organic farmers use mechanical measures instead.
- *Use of parasiticides as a preventative measure:* Under organic principles, parasiticides can be used to control infestations, but only during outbreaks and not as a preventative measure. Farmers prevent outbreaks by breaking the lifecycle of parasites.

Is organic beef production viable for free-range cattle farmers?

Organic systems are resilient, profitable and productive. They require less agricultural inputs than many other livestock systems. There is also increasing consumer demand for meat products produced with environmentally sound practices and ethical treatment of animals. The slight disadvantage of organic production is that while it supports more stable productivity it is not necessarily the most productive. This is overcome by the price premium that organic cattle farmers can attain for their certified organic product, which enables them access to quality markets.

For more information on organic production standards and certification in Namibia contact the Namibian Organic Association noa@nnf.org.na.

YOUTH & INNOVATION

Africa's youth in agriculture: challenges and opportunities

By Odette Mavunga, ISAN communications officer

Africa has the youngest population in the world. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), 9 of the top 10 'youngest' countries by population in the world are African with average ages ranging from 17.6 years in Zambia to 15.2 in Niger. The Forum notes that nearly 50% of the world's youth live in sub-Saharan Africa. This presents both challenges and opportunities. In 2019, the Government of Rwanda and the African Union Commission held a [regional workshop](#) in 2019 on youth in agriculture. They found that youth are reluctant to enter the agricultural sector because they don't think of it as a lucrative occupation or one that is respected in society. Farming is regarded as 'uncool' and an occupation for older people, according to [YALI Voices](#). It is also seen by youth as too much hard work for too little compensation.

How do we change the way that youth view agriculture?

To change how youth view agriculture, we need to position it as the lucrative market that it is. The World Bank's report [Growing Africa: Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness](#) notes that there could be a trillion-dollar food market in African by 2030 if farmers were better supported in accessing technologies, electricity and irrigation, as well as finance.

How we envision this food market – one driven by the global industrial food regime or one driven by agroecological principles that stress inclusivity, access and availability, nutrition, ecologically sound production and fairness – will determine our food futures. The growing number of movements in Africa focused on ecological organic farming and food systems note that

transitioning to sustainable food systems also combats challenges around climate change, biodiversity loss and unemployment. So, there is money to be made in farming, throughout the agricultural value chain from primary production through processing to distribution and markets. But how do we tackle the notion that farming is 'uncool'?

Farming is physical work, but it is also spiritual and intellectual work. It takes intelligence to build up knowledge of agricultural ecosystems and all the plants and animals that live within them, and to then apply that knowledge at the farm level. It takes keen observation skills to notice changes in plant behaviour over time. And it takes innovative thinking to understand the links between weather, productivity and pest and disease patterns and make considered decisions as to what and when to plant.

Social media can play a role in shifting the perception of farming from 'uncool' to very sexy! According to Youth Rise for Agriculture, the rise of social media and its attraction among young people with access to the appropriate technologies could be a route into agriculture if the two could be linked in some way. Mobile phone use in Africa is growing rapidly and people are now much more connected to sources of information and to each other. Using these channels to promote agriculture and educate young people could go a long way in engaging new groups of people with the sector. Growing numbers of youth are tech savvy as access to mobile technology grows. This provides opportunities to engage and train youth online and to link existing young farmers and those that want to be farmers with each other, as well as with global youth food and farming movements.

The Farming First Organisation notes that there are many young farmers working all around the world and that it is vital that they are given a voice, and heard in decision-making circles. There is also a need for innovative financing options to support youth in entering the agricultural value chain – direct grants, micro-franchising and soft loans are some options.

We need young farmers – those that are passionate, smart, compassionate, driven, dreamers and leaders – to build the food system that will deliver us, them and their children with nutritious, safe, affordable and appropriate food. It is youth in food and farming systems that will shape our futures.

Never waste a good crisis: How a Facebook group is reshaping our understanding of food

By Hannah Hopper, KHSa Assistant Communication Officer

The High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition notes in a 2019 report that a large-scale transition towards sustainable food and farming systems relies on the co-production and sharing of knowledge among communities and networks, among other enablers. The Cape Town Together (CTT) Food Growers Initiative based in South Africa is an outstanding example of this principle in action. I interviewed founder of CCT Erica



Erica Inches, CCT Food Growers Initiative

Inches to find out more about the platform and role it plays in supporting the attainment of food security and a transition to a more sustainable agri-food system.

Erica's deepened interest and involvement with food and farming systems started when she founded the Somerset West Community Action Network (CAN) during the first Covid-19 lockdown in early 2020. It was one of many CAN groups that formed in response to the crises that confronted many individuals and communities. The CANs aim to support under-resourced partners in responding to crises and to build long-term resilience that will also help to alleviate the effects of structural inequality in South Africa. Erica quickly realised that the capacity of the CANs to make a difference was dependent on donations and thus unsustainable as a long-term developmental mechanism. She thought that co-learning and collaboration might be the answer to how to bring about systemic change.

In May 2020, she opened a WhatsApp Group to act as a broad and inclusive co-learning and collaboration platform focused on food production. This was the start of the CCT Food Growers Initiative. Members shared their knowledge on growing food, were able to ask questions and share seeds and seedlings, among other things.

As WhatsApp only allows for 257 participants in its group, the demand quickly outstripped platform capacity. In just one month, one group had multiplied into 13, and demand for access to the groups continued to grow as word spread of the usefulness of the information shared and the sense of collaboration within the groups. In response, Erica opened a Facebook group, which currently has 2 700 members.

People from varying backgrounds, professions and demographics have joined this group. Erica notes that, “This is the first time that I have seen people having complex discussions about land, water and food in a constructive and compassionate way”.

The Facebook group has inspired the emergence of replica groups in other parts of the country. Soon after it was established, similar groups were formed in the Northern Cape, East London, the East Coast, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Erica notes that these types of platforms are also surfacing in the United States and Europe.

When asked why she thought that CCT Food Growers Initiative had attracted such keen interest, Erica noted the timing of its launch, in response to the crises brought on by Covid-19.

“The Covid-19 pandemic put the world as we knew it on pause. This is Mother Nature’s way of sending us to our rooms to think.”

– Erica Inches, CCT Food Growers Initiative

The past few years have been a time of deep reflection and acknowledgement of the brokenness of many systems, particularly the food system. Erica notes that the platform has never asked for money, it does not market itself and it never uses ‘poverty porn’ – the use of images of poor people, particularly children, to evoke an emotional response.

Erica believes that people have joined the group purely because they want to learn, share and collaborate. The CCT Food Growers Initiative also does not have a leader, it is open source and encourages collaboration rather than competition. According to Erica, the saying in the network is that people are “joining the dots with the speed of trust”.

The CTT Food Growers Initiative highlights the power in connection. Due to our colonial history and the architecture of apartheid, in many ways we live in silos, isolated even from our neighbors. This platform emerged at the right time and created a safe space for co-learning and collaboration between a diversity of people living in Cape Town. The impact of this group has been significant despite the simplicity of the model, which is possibly its biggest strength. Emphasising collaboration over competition, being open source and not undertaking marketing or soliciting donations goes against the grain of commercial mainstream thinking, perhaps showing us an alternative way of thinking about collective organisation.

I left this interview inspired and hoping to see other social movements take up this template to tackle other systemic challenges in South Africa, and also hoping that the commitment to transforming our food system grows, overcoming the inertia that inevitably settles in when life returns to a post-Covid normality. Let us not waste this crisis.

Follow the CTT Food Growers Initiative on [Facebook](#) or [Youtube](#).



RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Seed saving & swapping: on a mission to promote indigenous trees in Zimbabwe

By Gaudencia T. Kujeke – Department of Plant Production Sciences and Technologies, University of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is blessed with rich levels of biodiversity, including vast forest resources. Zambezi Teak and Combretum trees, Acacia and Miombo woodlands and the Afromontane floristic belts, among other forest species, provide habitats for wildlife and numerous benefits for people. They are also important carbon sinks, which we will need to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This rich forest biodiversity is under threat from forest fires, human resettlement and the demand for wood for fire. Deforestation is occurring rapidly.

Waking up to the value of indigenous trees

Various communities are slowly awakening to the fact that indigenous trees are not simply a gift from God, but that they can be purposefully planted. Communities in the Chivi district were conscientized about the consequences of overexploitation of local tree species, which are used for timber, firewood, fibre, fodder, food and medicine (fruits and bark), and the carving of utensils and sculptures. Villagers in this district took part in seed tests and planting with a research team monitoring their activities and the results over a 26-month period. The main objectives of the project were to plant trees to provide shade and serve as windbreaks and to boost agency in gaining control over dwindling natural resources, with the aim of conserving them, in particular the Pod Mahogany tree. This project was successful and proved the value of purposefully reintroducing indigenous tree species into local habitats. This practice aligns with the organic principle of ecology, related to the establishment of natural habitats and the maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity.

Government and NGO efforts

The Forestry Commission is doing its part in promoting the production of indigenous trees in Zimbabwe. It operates nurseries that raise tree seedlings to be sold to the general public. In addition, the Commission manages a Tree Growing and Tree-Care programme targeting schoolchildren. National government has launched an annual tree-planting day to raise awareness of the importance of forests and to motivate citizens to plant and conserve trees. This will help to enhance biodiversity and improve household food security levels. The Global Environment Facility is supporting Zimbabwe's reforestation and land rehabilitation efforts in three provinces (Manicaland, Masvingo and Midlands) through a dedicated US\$71 million facility. The focus is shifting towards the planting of indigenous trees that are more adapted to local climatic conditions. Some NGOs are actively engaged in distributing seeds for these varieties through seed fairs and by handing out seed packs. A local NGO, Environmental Buddies, aims to scale up the planting of indigenous trees throughout the country by 2050.

Harnessing the power of social media

Social media gives us the ability to connect and share information with anyone on Earth and with many people simultaneously. This power is being harnessed in Zimbabwe to support the protection and planting of trees. Seed Savers, a WhatsApp group, was formed in 2019. The group is an offshoot of another group Trees for Harare, in which participants had expressed interest in collecting and planting tree seeds, particularly indigenous species.

Seed Savers grew quickly attracting participants from across the country – both individuals and organisations – to join the platform. Members of the group are keen tree growers.



Seed Swapping

They share tips on collecting, storing and germinating seeds as well as on sustainable planting using natural resources. Members are also keen to grow indigenous fruit trees like sugar fruit or wild loquat fruit (known as mazhanje or mahobohobo in the local languages), sour plum, jujube and many others in their backyards. Most of these fruits bring back wonderful childhood memories, especially for those who collected these fruits from the wild in their rural homes. Both swapping and sale of seeds takes place on the platform.

Seed swapping events

As members continued accumulating seeds from habitats in their vicinity and producing tree seedlings, an idea was birthed to swap these seeds. This generated a lot of interest leading to the first seed swap event being organised and held at Pomona Farmers Market in Harare in February 2020. Members were asked to pack small seed packs, which were labelled with the name (common, scientific or both) and date collected. Although the seed swap event included various plant seed species (vegetables, herbs, spices fruits, field crops, ornamentals, etc.), the seeds for indigenous trees generated the most interest. Members even went a step further by swapping tree seedlings from the seeds they had been germinating.

The Seed Savers WhatsApp group is still growing strong and has since held four more successful seed swap events in Harare. The fourth one coincided with the 2021 Good Food Festival that promotes traditional and organic foods. There has been so much interest that two more Seed Saver groups were formed in the Matabeleland region – one in Bulawayo and one in Victoria Falls. Seed swapping events are being planned for these areas.

This social media community has effectively created dispersed seed banks that provide reservoirs of plant genetic resources. We will need these to combat the effects of climate change, and new pest and disease vectors that will emerge as a result. The efforts undertaken by these informal seed banks must be supported so that they can scale in size and educate more people on the need to conserve our precious forestry resources in a sustainable way.

BEYOND OUR REGION

Youth7 Summit: Youth leaders put forward ambitious agriculture policy

By Hannah Hopper, Head delegate, Sustainable and Green Planet delegation and Youth, Peace and Security delegation



The Y7 delegates outside the German parliament building in Berlin

The Youth7 (Y7) Summit took place between 16 and 20 May in Berlin, Germany. This summit provides youth leaders from around the world with a platform to share their unique perspectives with the heads of state from Group of Seven (G7) countries. I was fortunate enough to attend representing South Africa's youth.

The G7 is an intergovernmental organisation of countries with the world's largest and most advanced economies – France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. The group was previously known as the G8, but Russia was expelled in 2014 for its annexation of part of the Ukraine. According to the International Energy Agency, these seven countries accounted for almost 40% of the global economy, 36% of global power generation capacity, 30% of global energy demand, and 25% of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions in 2021.

The G7 Summit is a high-profile event in which global concerns are discussed and resolutions made, particularly as regards trade, security, economics and climate change.

There were five key themes at this year's Y7 Summit: 1. Sustainability and Green Planet, 2. Economic Transformation for Shared Progress; 3. Resilience of Democracies, 4. Global Health and Solidarity, and 5. Youth, Peace and Security. A key different to previous summits is that countries from the Global South (Indonesia, Senegal, South Africa and Ukraine for this summit) were invited to attend as partner countries, and not merely as observers.

The Sustainability and Green Planet delegation, of which I was the head delegate, presented several policy recommendations to heads of state. One of which focused on protecting biodiversity by transitioning to regenerative agricultural practices. The policy proposal called for:

- The banning of chemical agricultural inputs that have been proven harmful to the health of organisms and the environment by 2030.
- The supporting of seed sovereignty.
- The restoration of damaged agricultural lands.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of promoting more sustainable diets. This includes the need to reduce meat consumption. The proposal also noted the need to implement ambitious standards related to animal welfare, particularly for livestock farming.

The proposal was handed to Germany Chancellor Olaf Scholz on the last day of the summit. This policy recommendation along with those from the other delegations can be found in the [Y7 Communiqué 2022](#). It is our hope that the heads of state of the G7 countries consider our policy recommendations at the upcoming G7 Summit, and that they set a precedent for other countries.

International best practice policy for organic agriculture

By Fortunate Nyakanda (ISAN chair) & Laurent LIAGRE, Technical adviser for the Malagasy Syndicate of Organic Agriculture (SYMABIO) and Integrated Expert CIM/ GIZ

The 'Organic Agriculture in Madagascar: a project for society' forum took place in Antananarivo, Madagascar in December 2021. It was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Malagasy Union for Organic Agriculture, IFOAM – Organics International and the Tranoben'ny Tantsaha Mpamokatra (House of farmers). The International Food Policy Forum for Change, which aims to build international networks of exchange between policymakers on constructing policies linking agroecological transformation with market development, supported this event. Policymakers from Tunisia, India, Italy and Bhutan presented on support provided to organic agriculture in their countries. Below is an excerpt of these best practice examples.

The organic state of Sikkim, India

Sikkim is a declared organic state in India. The state actively supports biodiversity conservation and recognizes both participatory guarantee systems (PGS) and third-party organic certification systems under the Indian National Programme for Organic Production. The state supports farmers working in these systems, as well as those undertaking uncertified organic production. It does this by helping to develop value chains, including linking smallholder farmers to local and consumer markets and for export. Four priority value chains (buckwheat, large cardamom, ginger and turmeric) have been identified and an approach developed for each based on how these industries are structured. A logo has been designed for use along each value chain. Benefits accrued to date include increased disposable income among farmers, a boost in tourist visits to the state, and the recognition garnered through winning two awards. These awards were the One World Award and the Future World Award. The state continues to work on supporting specialised organic value chains and on creating structures to manage post-harvest loss.

Sustainable farming in Bhutan

The government of Bhutan supports organic production to keep its status as a carbon neutral country. While there is no official organic law or policy, the government has developed a strategy to make its entire agricultural sector organic by encouraging producers to adopt this approach, providing subsidies in support of organic production, and linking producers to financing options. There is a national Bhutan Organic Standard that is used for participatory guarantee system (PGS) in the country and third-party certification is recognised for export purposes. The government has also supported farmers in dealing with challenges around pests and diseases through farmer-led participatory research programmes on management of soil fertility and pest and disease controls. It also encourages farmers to work collectively, including through cooperatives, to produce the volume of produce necessary to meet consumer demand in the country. Bhutan's organic 'journey' illustrates the need for consumer buy-in and good planning at the national level to ensure success.

Tunisia's bioregions and organic zones

Tunisia is home to Africa's biggest organic market – in terms of surface area planted to organic crops and the economic gains realised through their production and sale. The organic sector produces mainly for the European market, with which it obtained organic equivalence in 2009. It has, to date, exported produce to the value of US\$250 million to this market. Tunisia is the first country in the world to produce certified organic olive oil; it also exports organic dates, cereals, citrus fruits, harissa, vegetables, and aromatic and medicinal herbs (rosemary, thyme and myrtle, for example). The trend in the country has been to promote bioregions, these are designated organic zones that aim to conserve biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Tunisia also aims to use these zones to create livelihood opportunities within the organic agriculture sector and encourage an organic-influenced lifestyle among its citizens. There is ongoing exploration of how to boost tourism using each bioregion as an attraction by showcasing its history, unique attributes and the products of its skilled craft workforce. The bioregions, each with its own action plan, are included in Tunisia's national plans and strategies.

Bio Districts in Italy

The concept of Bio Districts emerged in 2004 through collaboration between civil society, farmers, local leadership and the districts for development of organic territories. There are 23 Bio Districts in Italy to date. Bio Districts aim to scale the adoption of sustainable farming beyond the farm level to extend into territories encompassing communities. Farmers are the primary actors in this model, but the public sector has a critical role to play in providing regulatory and other support.

Examples include banning the use of herbicides in public areas, providing financial support for related festivals, seminars and workshops, advocating for canteens to serve organic food, and providing office space in municipal buildings, as examples. Core characteristics of successful Bio Districts include simplified certification processes, solid and inclusive value chains and an emphasis on conserving and enhancing biodiversity, as well as on supporting the wellbeing of local communities. To date, five Bio Districts have developed relevant legislation and the Italian Ministry of Agriculture can include these districts in its funding streams.

Lessons learned through this approach include the need for the districts to be formed through bottom-up processes, for them to have a defined and realistic strategy to achieve total conversion to organic production, and for governance to be robust and transparent. Their long-term success depends on financial support, cooperation with municipalities and commitment from the private sector.

Global biodiversity discussions: the forgotten elder sister

By Frances Davies, [Zambian Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity](#) and [KHSA](#) Regional Strategy Advisor

The United Nations Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its annual Conference of Parties (COP) is now a commonly recognised public term, and we are well aware of the growing climate crisis. However, the UNFCCC has a neglected 'elder sister' that is of equal, if not more, concern for those of us working in food and farming, but which receives little attention. This elder sister is the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD).

The CBD is dedicated to promoting sustainable development in support of global recognition of our interdependent relationship with the natural world, and the foundational role that biodiversity plays in the pyramid of sustainability. The CBD was signed at the same time as the UNFCCC, together with the United Nations' Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Country parties to these Conventions are obliged to follow these agreements. This offers us a point of entry through which to engage our governments.

The CBD is particularly important for us. It provides regulatory standards and frameworks on key agricultural issues. These include harmful pesticides, genetically engineering technologies, ecosystem pollution and invasive species. The CBD provides guidance on the use of wild species and agreements on equitable access and benefit sharing of genetic resources and indigenous knowledge. This is a critical issue for African farmers, and, currently, a highly contested one.

Representing a CBD Civil Society Alliance, I attended the resumed technical meetings of the CBD in Geneva in March 2022 for the preparatory meetings for the global COP15 scheduled for 11-15 October 2022 in Kunming, China. These meetings were disappointing and our concluding statement on behalf of the Alliance reflected our concern regarding the significant presence of private sector interests in the negotiation, the watering down of targets and

the emphasis on false solutions. These include a skewed understanding of nature-based solutions and net approaches.

The CBD Alliance is calling on Parties to declare a biodiversity crisis and ensure that the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will halt and reverse biodiversity loss as a matter of planetary urgency.

There was too little emphasis on stopping the drivers of biodiversity loss – industrial agriculture, for example. The globalised industrial food system is a primary driver of biodiversity loss and of climate change. We will need healthy levels of biodiversity to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. The path with the greatest potential to deliver us from looming catastrophe and ecological collapse is an inclusive transition towards ecological organic agriculture and food systems. This will help us to not only conserve biodiversity but also to enhance it to the levels we need to survive climate change. It will also help us to combat other challenges, such as the growing levels of malnutrition in African countries. It needs all of us to push for this change and to make the crisis and its likely outcomes front page news.

Parties will attend the CBD COP in October 2022 to agree on the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The results of these discussions will affect national policies as governments will be required to domesticate the agreements at the national level. We need to mobilise from the grassroots up – including farmers and consumers – through wide stakeholder engagements across countries to demand support for a transition to an inclusive and just food and farming system. Such a system will not use harmful agrochemicals or endorse untested technology, such as genetically engineered products.

Innovation in Madagascar's organic sector

By Fortunate Nyakanda (ISAN chair) & Laurent LIAGRE, Technical adviser for the Malagasy Syndicate of Organic Agriculture (SYMABIO) and Integrated Expert CIM/ GIZ

Madagascar has made tremendous strides in the past few years to provide the enabling conditions for an organic agriculture sector (see snapshot). SYMABIO continues to work to support the emergence of a strong sector, inclusive of smallholder farmers. Their work in the sector focuses on enabling participatory guarantee systems (PGS) and organic agriculture territories.

PGS in Madagascar

PGS in Madagascar is still a relatively new concept carried by a few actors of the agroecology movement. The first agroecological PGS for a market garden on the outskirts of Antananarivo was established by Agrisud (a NGO) in partnership with the ABCie company. And farmer organisation FIFATA and French NGO Fert are leading an ambitious PGS initiative that brings together 100 producers in the Analamanga region. There are prospects to expand this PGS to the area around Antananarivo and into the Vakinankaratra region.

Stakeholders are working on a national organic standard and accreditation processes for organic PGS groups. Agroecological PGS groups are not governed by organic regulations. The evolution of these two PGS 'families' will depend on producers' decisions and urban demand for certified organic and agroecological products.



SNAPSHOT

Organics in Madagascar

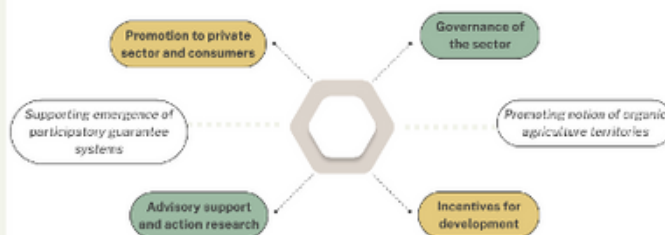
Madagascar's organic sector is growing fast. The snapshot below provides an overview of that growth to date.

DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE FOR ORGANIC SECTOR

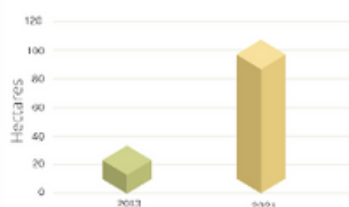


NATIONAL ORGANIC POLICY, 2020

4 axes of Madagascar's National Organic Policy



GROWTH IN HECTARES UNDER CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCTION

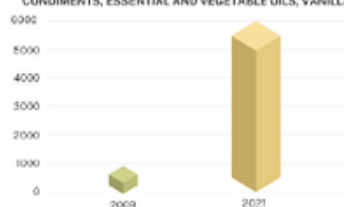


2022



GROWTH IN ORGANIC PRODUCT EXPORTS (TONS)

COCOA, VEGETABLES, TROPICAL FRUITS, SPICES AND CONDIMENTS, ESSENTIAL AND VEGETABLE OILS, VANILLA



Madagascar is the world's leading exporter of vanilla, cloves, ylang ylang, and certified organic shrimps.

The local market is small, but it is growing. Third-party certified local products (juices, jams, condiments, essential oils and honey) are starting to appear in supermarkets. Some farmer organisations and companies are selling self-claim organic and agroecological produce in markets.

Organic agriculture territories

The concept of Organic Territories proposed in the law was viewed as a tool to drive export operators to regulate contamination sources in production areas. Subsequently, discussions among stakeholders has led to an understanding of the tool as a means of scaling up organic agriculture using a territorial approach. The Organic Territory approach falls within a framework of collective 'territorial projects'. In development of the organic territories, stakeholders (farmers, agri-businesses, advisory and research service providers, communities, government services) would need to agree on the best way to implement the project – including geographical location, crops and their volumes, number of farmers and production methods within any given territory. Some pilot territorial projects were initiated in 2022. The guidelines associated with this approach aim to expedite implementation of sustainable food production principles.

Organic Agriculture in Madagascar: a project for society

A national forum titled Organic Agriculture in Madagascar: a project for society was held in Antananarivo in December 2021. The forum, supported by the Food Policy Forum for Change, was jointly organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Malagasy Union for Organic Agriculture (SYMABIO), IFOAM - Organics International and the Tranoben'ny Tantsaha Mpamokatra. The forum brought together more than 100 participants, representing the government ministries, producers' organizations, organic agriculture enterprises, local authorities, NGOs, researchers, consumers and technical and financial partners.



The event aimed to build the capacity of Malagasy stakeholders to engage with the policy and legal framework for the development of organic agriculture in Madagascar and to provide space for collective reflection on what concrete priority actions were needed in this regard. A series of workshops were held to discuss the various aspects, including a session dedicated to the policy examples from other countries in support of the organic agriculture sector (see [Beyond our region](#)). In summary, these presentations made by policymakers from Bhutan, India, Italy and Tunisia highlighted the need for patience in building the sector and for taking a step-by-step approach supported by research, technical advice and support services for value chain development. The policy and contexts presented were diverse, yet with some similarities in approach.



India and Bhutan chose to drive organic agriculture at a national scale because they have enabling environmental contexts that are conducive to organic production. Both countries have high levels of biodiversity and fertile soils rich in organic matter. In both, government was involved by undertaking research, providing technical advice and supporting the emergence of value chains, including through certification of products.

Tunisia and Italy both used territorial approaches – embedded in national policy frameworks – to support the scaling of the organic sector. Tunisia promotes a bio territories approach through public policies in which the interdependencies between organic agriculture, economic activities, culture and tourism are supported and synergized for a better economic development. The bio districts in Italy are examples of bottom-up processes of an associative nature, based on organic principles and practices of production and consumption (short supply chain, buying groups, organic public canteens).

Lessons learned for Madagascar

Participants at the forum noted that organic agriculture and agroecology in Madagascar are treated separately. Organic agriculture is perceived by some as being led by the private sector and highly technical with strict control systems imposed by export markets for wealthy consumers. Agroecology is perceived as an approach for family farms and a response to household and community-level food security. Participants noted that the occasional use of synthetic inputs to combat pests and diseases was the distinguishing difference between the organic and agroecological approaches.

There are several points of convergence and possible synergy between organic agriculture and agroecology both in terms of marketing (PGS) or the organic territorial approach. PGS can be used as a communication and guarantee system towards consumers and, as such, a tool to increase the value of produce from family farms. In that sense, PGS may encourage small farmers to evolve from agroecology to organic farming. Organic agriculture territories may combine both organic and agroecology systems at the farm and watershed levels and, through that, attain a sustainable agriculture territories label that can progress to organic certification.



What is needed to develop a strong organic sector in Madagascar?

- Drafting a clear and not overly ambitious conversion strategy, that includes technical support for producers and capacity building to enable them to wean their production off chemical inputs.
- Supporting value chain development through a multi-stakeholder coalition that includes farmers, public and private sector stakeholders, and consumers.
- Linking organic agriculture with attainment of other national objectives related to climate change, biodiversity, health and nutritional outcomes, social wellbeing and conservation of heritage and culture. There are many gains, beyond financial, to be made from adopting an organic framework for agriculture.
- Taking a holistic approach to encourage voluntary adoption of organic agriculture, including working through public-private partnerships that have a shared vision. The inclusion of the private sector is critical to ensure an effective response to market demand.
- Raising consumer awareness through a communication strategy of the benefits of organics to create a growing demand for organic products and supporting the establishment of local markets to both drive and meet demand.
- Gaining dedicated government support for a territorial approach, in collaboration with private actors, including funding of research and development, enabling opportunities for industry, and enhancing the knowledge of extension officers.

For more information, please contact [SYMABIO](#) or watch these [SYMABIO](#) video clips.

KNOWLEDGE HUB SOUTHERN AFRICA (KHSA)

About KHSA

KHSA is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA), 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 across Africa. The KCOA aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa.

The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports project implementation in southern Africa. Activities are focused in Zambia, led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia; in Namibia led by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association (NOA); and in South Africa led by the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO). The project extended to Malawi in 2022 working with Kusamala and Soils, Food and Healthy Communities. The other hubs are implemented by GIZ in North, West and Eastern and Central Africa.

KHSA uses two approaches to supporting the uptake of organic agriculture in the region. The first is a sector-wide approach in which it works with groups of stakeholders - farmer organisations, policymakers, media and other groups to identify knowledge gaps. It also works through multiplier support programmes in each country working with lead farmers over a longer period of time to support them in identifying what knowledge is needed, in what form (videos, printed, etc.) and languages.

KHSA will host its first networking event in Malawi on 14 and 15 June 2022 bringing together stakeholders along the organic and permaculture value chain to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by the sector.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. World Food Systems Centre

Food Security strategies for a changing world: Successful transformation of food systems requires the combination of accelerated technological change with a range of policy, institutional and cultural innovations
Join the World Food System centre for discussion of this topic.

Date: 8 June 2022
18:00-19:15 CEST

Register here to attend:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScxxyjrfBrrKi0IAfIFal4w6NtoIFi0IE8P2PWl549NasGk9w/viewform>

2. Biofach 2022

Date: 26 -29 July 2022
This year it is taking place both physically and digitally.

For more information and registration visit;
<https://www.expobeds.com/event/biofach>

3. 2022 IFOAM-GOESAN International organic expo

Date: 30th September – 10th October 2022
Where: Goesan Republic of South Korea

The opening ceremony of the Expo will include the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of IFOAM - Organics International and will be one of the largest gatherings of organic leaders in the world in 2022.

For more information visit:
<https://www.ifoam-organicevents.com/>

4. IFOAM_OI 50 years celebration

Date: 30 September- 3rd October 2022
Goesan South Korea

Watch the journey-
<https://www.ifoam.bio/50-years-ifoam-organics-international>

Watch this space for more...

5. Organic & Natural Products Expo Africa

Date: 21-23 October 2022
Johannesburg, South Africa

Designed as a hybrid event that caters to trade buyers, while at the same time allowing retail sales directly to consumers, the expo is set to showcase local and international manufacturers, suppliers, importers and exporters.

6. Africa Organic Conference (AOC) 2022

Date: 5 – 8 December 2022
Kigali Rwanda

Watch this space for more...

7. Organic World Conference (OWC) -2024

Africa Hosting Organic World Conference after 40 years.

Plan to participate
https://fb.watch/bEoeyP_hl5/

Watch this space for more...





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