Part 3

Supporting Organic Farmers
Introduction

The National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) is the umbrella organization that unites producers, processors, exporters and other traders, business support organizations and all other stakeholders who are involved, either directly or indirectly, in the organic value chain in Uganda. NOGAMU is a membership-based organization, registered in Uganda as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. It was founded in January 2001 with the main goal of uniting and leading the organic sector towards development. Over the years, its direct membership has increased from under 50 individuals and 20 corporate organizations at the inception, to 574 individual category members and 363 corporate category member organizations by the end of 2014, indirectly representing 1,221,000 smallholder farmers across the country (NOGAMU, 2015).

Why Was NOGAMU Formed?

Between the years 1994 and 2000, various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) played a leading role in training farmers on sustainable agriculture with a major focus on organic...
principles and practices, to improve the food security situation after the civil war that ravaged the country between 1980 and 1986 (EPOPA, 2008a, b). By the year 2000 most farmers had attained a basic level of food security, using what is sometimes called ‘organic by default’; however, certification and other ways of linking production to the market, were lacking. On the other hand, exporters realized that the demand for organic products on the export market was far higher than what could be supplied, and there was a general lack of coordination between producers and buyers. Stakeholders started exchanging ideas on developing the organic agriculture (OA) sector in Uganda. The first meeting was convened in the year 2000 to discuss forming an umbrella organization with the major role of coordinating and developing OA in Uganda. As a result, NOGAMU was formed and formally launched in 2001 with the following mission, mandate and objectives.

**Mission and values**

NOGAMU’s mission is to coordinate and promote OA development, networking and marketing. NOGAMU operations are guided by the following values: (i) organic; (ii) integrity; (iii) sharing; (iv) transparency; (v) accountability; (vi) fairness and social justice; (vii) gender equity; (viii) environmentally ethical; (ix) unity; and (x) non-discrimination.

**Mandate and scope**

NOGAMU’s mandate is to coordinate and promote OA development in Uganda. In line with the organization’s vision, NOGAMU programmes and activities are oriented towards market access by smallholder farmers and companies. NOGAMU’s role is to work towards increased competitiveness and marketing of organic products from Uganda. This is done by facilitating smallholder farmers and other actors in the organic value chain to attain increased competitiveness and access to markets as a foundation for increasing incomes and improving livelihoods in order to alleviate poverty and contribute to attaining Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2015).

NOGAMU’s five main focus priority clusters are: (i) marketing and value chain development; (ii) standards and certification; (iii) training, research, extension and education; (iv) advocacy and strategic relations; and (v) institutional development.

NOGAMU’s scope is limited to coordinating, facilitating and promoting the entire organic value chain in Uganda by leading, assisting and promoting all actors in the sector, advocating for development of conducive policies and attracting support that would generate momentum required to increase competitiveness of the sector and take advantage of the opportunities presented to Uganda by the rapidly growing global organic sector.

NOGAMU’s target group includes smallholder farmers and farmer organizations, processors, exporters and traders, as well as those providing relevant services to the organic value chain.

NOGAMU has members in all the four regions of Uganda (Northern, Eastern, Western and Central), and has organic producers spread through all the agroecological zones of Uganda.

**Goal**

NOGAMU’s overall goal is to contribute to poverty reduction by scaling up incomes of smallholder farmers through increased production and access to organic and fair trade markets.

**Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of NOGAMU are:

- to promote domestic, regional and export marketing of organic products from Uganda;
- to build capacity and promote training, research, extension and education in OA in Uganda;
- to promote compliance with organic and other complementary standards, and attain certified organic production and improved quality of organic products in Uganda; and
- to advocate for an enabling environment for OA and trade in Uganda.
Membership and Affiliation

NOGAMU is a member of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), and serves as the IFOAM contact point in Uganda.

NOGAMU is also a member of the African Organic Network (AfrOnet) and East African Organic Network. It is the Country Lead Organization for the African Union (AU) Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative, and works closely with the other East African national organic agricultural movements (NOAMs) including: (i) the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network; (ii) Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement; (iii) Rwanda Organic Agricultural Movement; and (iv) Burundi Organic Agriculture Movement. They share information and joint implementation of regional programmes and management of the activities related to the East African Organic Products Standards (EAOPS) and the East African Organic Mark, as well as non-organic organizations including the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda, NGO Forum and Uganda Agribusiness Alliance.

Partners

NOGAMU collaborates, networks and partners with a number of organizations at the grassroots level, as well as at national and international levels in an effort to support and create meaningful impact on target groups. These partners may be implementing, simply collaborating or funding partners.

Implementing partners

These partners participate in undertaking activities along the organic value chain. As NOGAMU is a membership organization, the secretariat facilitates implementation of activities and does not directly carry them out. These activities may be carried out either by grass-roots members of NOGAMU or residents of a target community/region.

Collaborating partners

NOGAMU implements its programmes and projects in collaboration with different member organizations in all the four regions of Uganda. These partner organizations are selected based on their day-to-day activities, technical capacity and geographical coverage. They play a key role in coordination and assist in the implementation of programmes in the respective regions of the country. NOGAMU has four regional partners, one in each of the four geographical regions, to help in coordination and assist in implementation of programmes throughout the country. The regional partners are Lango Organic Farming Promotion for Northern Uganda, Africa 2000 Network Uganda for the Eastern region, Sustainable Agriculture Trainers Network (SATNET) for the Western region and Caritas Kampala for the Central region.

NOGAMU also works with several other member organizations on a case-by-case basis depending on the initiative either started by NOGAMU or the member/partner organization. For example, in 2015 NOGAMU concluded a project with a consortium of seven organic export companies (Biofresh Ltd, Bio Uganda Ltd, Sulma Foods Ltd, Africa 2000 Network, RUCID Ltd, Jali Organic/Be-Organic Ltd and Flona Commodities Ltd), which involved scaling up the production and export of organic dried fruits to regional and international markets through bulking and promotion of a common brand. This project was supported by the Trademark East Africa Challenge Fund.

NOGAMU also partners with other organizations to implement projects that are in line with its mission. In January 2016, for example, NOGAMU signed a contract with PLAN Uganda to implement a project ‘Switch Africa Green, Sesame – Green Jobs Uganda’. The overall goal of this project was to increase livelihood opportunities for young sesame farmers through improved eco-agriculture production and green economy inclusion.

NOGAMU also participated in the Productivity and Growth in Organic Value-chains (ProGrOV) project, which was a combined research, development and capacity building project aimed at strengthening research-based knowledge for supporting increased productivity and sustainable growth in OA production and value chains as well as building capacity for future development of OA-based value chains. The project was implemented from 31 December 2010 to 31 December 2016 coordinated by
Makerere University in Uganda in collaboration with the Danish International Centre for Research into Organic Farming Systems (ICROFS), Danish universities as well as universities in East Africa and the NOAMs of East Africa. The project was funded by Danida. The overall objective of ProGrOV was to increase OA productivity and development of agribusiness for economic growth, improved livelihoods and sustainable development in Africa. Previously, NOGAMU worked with the Export Promotion for Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) project, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (EPOPA, 2008a).

In addition, NOGAMU also works and collaborates with other institutions in both the public and the private sectors to create synergy in the development of a strong and vibrant organic sector in Uganda, the East African region and the rest of Africa. These include, but are not limited to:

- NGOs and CBOs working with farmers at the grass-roots level, which are involved in training and farmer mobilization;
- national trade promotions and business support organizations such as the Uganda Export Promotions Board, Uganda National Bureau of Standards and Private Sector Foundation Uganda;
- government ministries such as: (i) the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries; (ii) the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities; (iii) the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives; and (iv) the Ministry of Water and Environment;
- district local governments; and
- international trade promotion and other organizations such as the AU, the International Trade Centre, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the European Union (EU)/Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP) Pesticide Initiative Programme, and the Centre for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries in the Netherlands.

NOGAMU is also involved in the implementation of the regional AU-led EOA Initiative (as already mentioned earlier in the chapter) and is part of the Continental Steering Committee chaired by the AU Secretariat. In addition, NOGAMU acts as the Country Lead Organization for Uganda.

**Funding partners**

Since its inception, NOGAMU has received financial support from various partners including Hivos, Ford Foundation, GTZ (now GIZ), SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Swedish Development Cooperation (SDC), and Organic Denmark.

**NOGAMU’S Role in the Organic Sector**

As a national organization, NOGAMU has played various roles in its efforts to develop the organic sector in Uganda. These roles are discussed below.

**Coordinating and developing OA in Uganda**

Following its mandate NOGAMU has played a major role in coordinating and developing OA in Uganda. Certified OA in Uganda started in 1993 mainly as a response to unfolding market opportunities in Europe and by 1994 some commercial companies were exporting organic products (Taylor, 2006). Increase in certified acreage, however, was slow until 2001, when NOGAMU was started and the fastest development of OA was noted between 2002 and 2007. Increase in certified OA in Uganda may be attributed partly to the efforts of NOGAMU, but also to the various project efforts such as the SIDA-funded EPOPA project (EPOPA, 2008a). Currently, certified organic land in Uganda is 241,150 ha (NOGAMU, 2017; Willer and Lernoud, 2017), which makes Uganda 27th worldwide and the second in Africa after Tanzania in terms of size of area cultivated organically. The number of certified organic producers in Uganda is 190,670 (NOGAMU, 2017; Willer and Lernoud, 2017), making Uganda the fourth worldwide in terms of number of producers after India (585,200), Ethiopia (203,302) and Mexico (200,039) and the second in Africa.
Creating market access for smallholder farmers

Since its inception, NOGAMU has mobilized, trained and linked various farmer groups and producer organizations to local, regional and export markets dealing in different value chains. The biggest organic value chains include Arabica coffee, sesame, cocoa, vanilla, fresh and dried fruits (pineapple, apple banana, mango, papaya, jackfruits), spices and essential oils. Most of the mobilized groups have been supported to attain organic third party certification.

Some of the organic produce sold on the local market is sold through Shop Organic, a retail outlet started by NOGAMU in Kampala. Shop Organic was started in 2002 to serve as an outlet for farmers’ organic products, but also as a training medium through which farmers and processors could learn and improve product quality, packaging and product development.

NOGAMU established an organic trade point in 2008 at its office premises to act as a one-stop information centre for all organic sector information in Uganda. The organic trade point has a database of exporters, producers, processors, farmers, buyers, importers, existing markets, prices and volumes of products available.

During the period 2009–2011, NOGAMU coordinated the participation and presentation of Ugandan producers and exporters in the African Pavilion at the BioFach (in collaboration with the Tanzanian Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM)) and registered a big success. This success translated into a number of requests and orders, especially for dried fruits, from organic importers.

Besides mobilizing producers, NOGAMU sensitizes consumers and creates awareness of organic production and marketing as part of its market development drive. It provides market information to exporters and facilitates their participation in local and international exhibitions. It also links exporters and potential clients to producers.

Developing and reviewing standards

Over the years, NOGAMU has taken an active role in developing and reviewing organic standards. These standards define the procedures for growing, processing, labelling and inspecting organic products with the aim of building trust between farmers, processors and consumers.

With support from EPOPA, NOGAMU started developing the Uganda Organic Standard, in 2001. Between 2002 and 2004 NOGAMU mobilized stakeholders in the organic sector to make various contributions to the standard. Technical support from Grolink Ab and financial support from SIDA through the EPOPA project boosted the process of developing a Ugandan Certification Programme in 2002 (EPOPA, 2008b). The Uganda Certification Programme consisted of developing the Uganda Organic Standard and establishing a local certification company, Uganda Organic Certification Company Ltd (UgoCert), to provide certification services.

The Uganda Organic Standard is a guide to certification based on the Ugandan situation with regard to the international organic principles. It is built on the IFOAM basic standards and is owned by NOGAMU and UgoCert. It serves as a tool for actors in the organic production sector such as advisors, researchers, policy makers and government institutions involved in the development of OA, for ensuring compliance.

After adopting the Uganda Organic Standard in 2004, NOGAMU spearheaded the development of regional standards for the East African region with support from EPOPA. It mobilized fellow NOAMs in the East African member countries, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as their national bureaux of standards to become part of the multi-stakeholder process which involved intensive consultations and participation by national governments, the private sector, NGOs, and international institutions. This process was supported by the joint UNEP and the UNCTAD ‘Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development’ (UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF) initiative.

The EAOPS was adopted in 2007 by the East African Community as the single, official standard for OA production in the region. It was launched in Dar es Salaam on 28 May 2007 (EPOPA, 2008b).

An organic mark (the East African Organic Mark) was registered together with the EAOPS and is owned by the three NOAMs of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN), TOAM and NOGAMU).
It is used on products that conform to the EAOPS. To use the mark on a product, one has to register with one of the NOAMs in Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda. Any product that bears the East African Organic Mark must comply with the EAOPS or equivalent rules. The mark is currently used on dried fruits, honey, nuts, coffee and tea that are sold as organic, or ‘Kilimohai’ in East African markets.

In May 2017, NOGAMU signed a memorandum of understanding with the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics to promote the implementation of OA and product-related standards, practices and organic certification in Uganda. This initiative was intended to strengthen inspection, auditing and certification of organic products to meet local and export market requirements.

The EPOPA project

The EPOP A project was important for small farmer development and capacity building in Uganda in the early days. Paraphrased extracts from the Executive Summary of the final report (EPOP A, 2008a) are presented in Box 15.1 for context.

Establishing a local certification body

One of the challenges NOGAMU noted early in the marketing of organic products is the high cost of certification. As an initiative to support organic producers, NOGAMU together with shareholders, established an independent certification body, the Uganda Organic Certification Company Ltd (UgoCert) in 2004, to offer credible certification services against the Uganda Organic Standard and reduce certification fees, initially with accreditation from the certification body Institute of Market-ecology (now amalgamated with Ecocert). Later in 2005 UgoCert attained its independent accreditation to the EU regulation.

Conducting advocacy on policy issues

Since 2004, NOGAMU has played a major role in organizing and facilitating the drafting and development of an organic agriculture policy. In 2003 the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) instituted the Organic Policy Development Committee to work on the draft policy (Taylor, 2006) and expected it to be ready by the end of 2005. The process however, has been much slower than formerly expected. In October 2016, MAAIF presented to stakeholders the final draft of the National Organic Agriculture Policy, which it plans to present to parliament together with its regulatory impact assessment and the action plan for its implementation.

NOGAMU has also been instrumental in advocating for the inclusion of OA in the Uganda National Development Plan.

With support from EPOP A and SDC, OA has been institutionalized in tertiary institutions such as Uganda Martyrs University where a bachelor’s degree in organic agriculture was started in 2005.

Networking

In its role as a coordinating organization, NOGAMU has established various networks with academic institutions (e.g. Makerere University and Uganda Martyrs University at Nkozi), government ministries (e.g. MAAIF and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Co-operatives) and related organizations (e.g. the National Environment Authority, National Agriculture Research Organization, Uganda Export Promotion Board, Uganda Investment Authority and Uganda National Bureau of Standards) as well as international organizations. These networks have enabled NOGAMU to lobby successfully for inclusion of OA in various programmes, and consideration of organic enterprises, producer organizations and companies for support by private and public institutions.

Impact on Farmers’ Livelihoods

There is increasing adoption of OA by smallholder farmers in Uganda. This can be attributed partly to NOGAMU’s efforts to sensitize farmers to OA, and supporting them to market organic produce. In general, NOGAMU has
The EPOPA programme was initiated in the mid-1990s by GroLink and Agro-Eco with support from SIDA. In the period 2002–2007 it was considerably scaled up and subsequently phased out in 2008. It operated in Tanzania and Uganda and briefly in Zambia. EPOPA was a ‘development through trade’ programme with the objective of improving the livelihoods of rural communities through exports of organic products. Exporters were the main partners and the programme worked directly with them to develop exports of organic products. The programme also supported emerging institutions in the organic sector.

Farmers … sold organic products for approximately US$15 million/year and the total export value is more than double that amount. A total of 110,000 farms have participated, but only 80,000 have actively delivered products to the exporters. … Some 600,000 people have been beneficiaries of the programme. The cost of the programme for the Swedish taxpayers was one cup of coffee per taxpayer.

In order to set up a successful export project, there was a need to find the right mix of the following:

1. A willing and capable exporter.
2. A production base (i.e. willing farmers with basic knowledge of production in an area with suitable conditions).
4. Products that could be competitive in quality and price.

Hardly any funds were made available for investments or other incentives for the participating exporters. The focus of the programme was to create viable businesses, and EPOPA assisted the actors through a wide range of services, from farmer training to marketing and certification.

The participating farmers were smallholders. Most of them … used almost no agrochemical inputs before participating in the programme, but also did not manage soil fertility effectively. Organic farming itself posed few problems for the participating farmers. Despite the great variety of crops and the large number of farmers, there were no insurmountable problems in the production or with pests. … [It was hoped that] improved crop rotations, better nutrient recycling, cover crops and green manures and soil conservation would result from project initiatives] but that didn't happen to a very significant extent. Farmers experienced improved food security, largely as a result of increased income, as well as generally improved livelihoods, as demonstrated by improvement in housing, children attending school, and investments in farming.

Government support is needed for the progress of OA: [there is a] lack of supportive policies, but perhaps even more the existence of policies that are harmful to development. Therefore, a programme like EPOPA, despite its private-sector focus, also has to engage in policy dialogue and action. The continued strong demand for organic products and the increased policy support contributed to the success of EPOPA. Other important success factors were:

- clear market focus of the projects and focus on tangible results;
- using commercial actors to link farmers to markets;
- integrating extension work into the commercial chain so that the exporters are responsible for extension work, enhanced by income from the trade; and
- the use of group certification to facilitate the certification process.

Central to the implementation of the projects was the establishment, by the exporters, of a field organization for extension work and for internal control of issues related to certification. All in all, the organization worked, but most of its energy was absorbed by certification issues, and the efficiency of the agronomic advice in many of the projects can be questioned. This was not a main interest of the exporter.

A main challenge to the programme was finding competent and committed exporters. The organic market represented something new for the exporters, and it took quite a while for them to adjust. Project periods were 3 years, but this clearly was too short in most cases; agricultural projects in general need a longer time. Extensions were awarded mainly to improve the sustainability of the venture. Value addition in developing countries is an appealing proposition, but it is not always so easy to achieve. Many of the projects that included value addition experienced major challenges, in particular regarding product design and imported packaging materials and inputs.

Continued
impacted farmers’ livelihoods in the four major areas elaborated below.

**Increased food and nutrition security**

In all areas where NOGAMU has worked, organic farmers are more food and nutrition secure than other farmers in the same locality. This has been reported earlier by Hine et al. (2008), in a study where they observed that adoption of OA led to increased sustainability and quantity of food produced per farm. The increase in food production leads to household food security and results in all members of the household having access to enough and nutritious food.

**Better incomes**

The increase in food production on organic farms enables farmers to sell off bigger surpluses at local markets and hence benefit from higher incomes. Where organic farmers have access to organic markets they benefit from premium prices, which increases their incomes further.

**Access to functional markets**

Organic farmers linked to buyers by NOGAMU have benefited from access to assured and regular markets. Besides increasing their bargaining power, this has increased their capacity in organic production, diversification and trade, which acts as an insurance for community development.

**Building social capital**

NOGAMU works with smallholder farmers, who cannot produce enough output consistently to attract a buyer and usually cannot afford to pay certification fees individually to be certified as organic. The strategy used to overcome these two challenges is to mobilize the farmers into groups or producer organizations so that they can bulk their produce and market together. They can also get a certificate as a group, which reduces unit certification costs.

Working in groups helps farmers to interact, increase knowledge and skills transfer, build capacity in solving local challenges and improve social capital resulting in stronger social organizations at local level. One of the approaches used by NOGAMU which seems to build social capital in the local community is the Farmer Family Learning Group approach (Vaarst et al., 2012). When more than one member of a family is supported, the family is more likely to change the way they farm, especially when there is a local learning group.

Farmers participating in OA have improved capacity to participate in self-help projects within communities to provide social services and

**Box 15.1. Continued.**

In most of the projects, large groups of farmers were involved, and they did experience a substantial increase in income, expressed as a percentage. However, especially for those producing basic commodities, the increased income was not sufficient to lift them out of poverty. For farmers producing high-value crops, such as cashew, fresh fruits and spices, the increased income is substantial in absolute terms also.

The support to emerging institutions, such as local certification bodies and national organic movements, was successful. There are now organic standards and internationally accredited certification bodies in Tanzania and Uganda and the NOAMs are involved in local market development, advocacy and policy development.

Working with the commercial sector to develop agribusiness involving many smallholders has proved to be successful. Business objectives of commercial actors may not be the same as the objectives of the development cooperation, but with good design, dialogue and pragmatic implementation they can work well together. The organic markets do provide special incentives. The organic production system is well adapted to African smallholders and is sustainable. Apart from the effects on income, organic farming also produces public goods and ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
support others to create a shared vision and functional networks for community development.

**Challenges**

There are various challenges that affect NOGAMU as an organization as well as those that affect its operations and potential impact.

**Lack of a government policy on OA**

The process to develop the National Organic Agriculture Policy has been going on since 2004, but it has not been concluded up to now. This means that no funds from government can be expended to support organic activities. Mobilization into viable commercial groups is only supported by the private sector. All activities implemented so far in OA have been supported by the private sector and donors. Lack of government investment in the organic sector limits the impact NOGAMU would have on its target group.

**Lack of legislation on organic production standards**

Although the Uganda Organic Standard was adopted in 2004, it is not legislated in Uganda as a national standard. This means that organic farmers implement the Uganda Organic Standard and EAOPS as voluntary standards and they are open to impostors and false claims, though the EAOPs is legally in the custody of the East African Community.

**Limited research on OA**

Research gaps and aspirations in organic farming have been determined, but most ongoing research is focused on validating indigenous practices. There is a lack of comprehensive local research on OA. Organic practitioners rely on experiences and organic research from other geographical areas as well as related conventional agriculture research. Thus far, National Agriculture Research Systems (NARS) have not embraced OA.

**Low investment in OA production and marketing**

Uganda faces the same agri-financing challenges as other developing countries. Organic companies involved in agriprocessing, farmer cooperatives and small-, micro- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) engaged in commodities like coffee, cocoa, chia seed and sesame are interested in expanding their processing capacity, but finance is a major limiting factor. This means that some NOGAMU members are limited in exploiting the full potential of the market opportunities NOGAMU mobilizes for them. Exporters and other traders repeatedly fail to meet the orders and requests for organic products.

**Conclusion**

OA in Uganda has been promoted by a number of actors for more than 20 years. Its institutionalization under NOGAMU marked a turning point that has seen OA develop faster than during the first 10 years. Promotion and coordination of OA by a single entity has played a major role in development. Privately led management is not enough to maximize and optimize benefits from existing opportunities. Therefore, getting public sector involvement and support is key to further development of the organic sector. Furthermore, though certification is a marketing tool, sometimes it may limit growth of the organic sector especially when certification costs are not based on realistic market forces of supply and demand, which influence all other monetary factors. Hence the need to adopt other user-friendly and market-related systems such as PGS. In the context of climate smart agriculture and Organic 3.0 (see Introduction and Chapter 2, this volume), the organic sector is likely to become more attractive as a viable alternative system.
References


