



AFRICAN UNION ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE – SOUTHERN AFRICA WEBINAR – 23rd June 2023,

CONCEPT NOTE

1. CONTEXT

The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) is an African Union continental undertaking to promote the uptake of ecological organic agriculture (EOA) on the African continent. EOA is understood as a holistic production management system focused on attaining a balanced food system that can also enhance biological diversity, promote healthy use of soils, air and water and be reliant on renewable resources in locally organised agricultural systems. It therefore encompasses approaches to agriculture such as organics, agroecology, permaculture, biodynamics, bio-intensive agriculture, ecological farming, sustainable ecological agriculture, agroforestry and more.

EOA is viewed as more appropriate and accessible for resource-limited rural people and it minimises damage to the environment – the resource base from rural people derive their sustenance and livelihoods. The EOA-I works with the following core values:

- Biodiversity, respect for nature and sustainable development.
- Promote family farming cultures, indigenous knowledge, cultural practices and wisdom.
- Embrace fairness and justice to the ecosystem.
- Promote safe, nutritious and healthy food.

2. BACKGROUND

The EOA-I was started in response to the African Heads of State and Governments' call for the promotion of organic farming in Africa. In 2010 in Lilongwe, Malawi, the African Heads of States [Decision EX.CL/Dec.631\(XVII\)](#) requested the African Union Commission (AUC) and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (currently the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) to: (i) initiate and provide guidance for an AU-led coalition of international partners on the establishment of an African organic farming platform based on available best practices; and to (ii) provide guidance in support of the development of sustainable organic farming systems and improve seed quality. Thirdly, the decision also called upon development partners to provide the relevant technical and financial support for the implementation of this decision. To ensure action, the AUC was tasked to report regularly on the implementation of this Decision.

To sustain the interest and facilitate a planned and coordinated development of the organic agriculture sector, various governance structures have been established in Africa.

They include the Continental Steering Committee (CSC), which is chaired by the African Union Commission and draws its membership from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional EOA Steering Committees, Civil Society Organisations, Women's groups, Organic

Certification bodies, Research and Academic institutions, Development partners, the Private sector, the African Organic Network (AfrONet), and Regional EOA Clusters.

The CSC provides strategic guidance and oversight to the implementation of the EOA Initiative as mandated by the Decision EX.CL/631 (XVIII) on Organic Farming.

EOA implementation at the regional and national levels is overseen by the Steering Committees, namely Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and National Steering Committee (NSC). These institutional structures are responsible for approving workplans and budgets and constantly monitoring the implementation of EOA at their respective levels. The structures are also responsible for supporting resource mobilisation and fundraising, particularly at country level, and providing strategic direction to the initiative. The NSC and RSC have multistakeholder representation drawn from civil society, academia, government, private sector, etc. A national steering committee is chaired by a senior officer from the Ministry of Agriculture, supported by a Secretariat. These national steering committees feed into regional platforms (cluster) comprising similar multi-stakeholder representation. The regional platforms subsequently feed into the continental steering committee.

Regional EOA-I platforms for each of the five sub-regions of Africa are to be chaired by a Representative of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Currently, it is only the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and East Africa who have established EOA-I regional platforms supported by functional Secretariats. The Central Africa regional platform was officially launched in December 2021 and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) nominated a representative to the CSC. However, ECCAS is yet to set up a RSC. The Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) has also developed a road map for the establishment of an EOA-I regional platform for North Africa but are yet to launch it officially.

3. RATIONALE

The Southern Africa region comprises the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Despite the strides being made in organic agriculture by the southern Africa countries and having a representative at the CSC, the region is yet to properly constitute its RSC. The CSC of the EOA-Initiative plans to operationalize and launch the Southern Africa Regional Platform soon. Prior to this, a webinar organized by the African Union in collaboration with the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa and the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) Southern African Network will be held on **23rd June 2023 from 10:00-12:00 SAST** to sensitise stakeholders in the region on EOA and reach a consensus on how to establish a Southern African EOA Platform. The meeting will RECS, government representatives in the Southern Africa region, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, private sector, research and academic institutions, among others.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE WEBINAR

The process of establishment of the Southern Africa steering committee is underway but is dependent on the establishment of national committees, which ideally would nominate representatives to the RSC. Therefore, the objective of the webinar will be to:

1. Create awareness about the EOA-Initiative in Southern Africa
2. Develop a roadmap for developing National SC that will feed into Southern Africa Regional Cluster.
3. Share lessons and best practices in managing operational and effective regional clusters for EOA on the continent
4. Map a way forward in launching the EOA Southern Africa Regional Cluster

5. Expected outcomes:

1. Awareness raised on Ecological Organic Agriculture among stakeholders
2. Roadmap developed for establishing regional EOA Steering Committees and southern African cluster
3. Way forward mapped for launching Southern Africa EOA-I cluster

5. DRAFT AGENDA: EOA-I SOUTHERN AFRICA WEBINAR

Time (EAT)	Activity	Lead
09:45am – 10:00am	☐ Welcome slides and Introduction to Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa	Stefanie Swanepoel & Angela Coetzee
WELCOME, INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS		
10:00-10:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Remarks: <i>Dr. Janet Edeme, Agriculture and Food Security Division, AUC</i> • Remarks: COMESA Secretariat – TBC • Opening Remarks: SADC Secretariat - TBC 	Dr. David Amudavi, BvAT (EOA-I Secretariat)
10:15-10:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Presentation of the Background, objectives and expected results of the Webinar • Presentation of the agenda 	Wezi Chunga-Sambo, Program Officer, African Union Commission
SESSION 2: BACKGROUND PRESENTATIONS		
10:20-10:45	Presentation 1: Overview of the AU EOA Initiative (Governance structures) – <i>Alex Mutungi, EOA-I Secretariat</i>	Wezi Chunga-Sambo
10:45-11:00	Presentation 2: Lessons from West and East Africa Regional platforms- Regional Steering Committee Chairpersons	
11:00-11:15	Presentation 3: Journey and development of the SnA Platform (Lessons and aspirations) - <i>Fortunate Nyakanda</i>	
	Questions and Answers	
SESSION 3: INTERACTIVE SESSION – ROADMAP AND WAY FORWARD		
11:15-11:35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitated discussions on how the development process of the Southern African EOA cluster could help to mobilise support for ecological organic interventions in the region and enhance agroecology 	Wezi Chunga-Sambo and Alex Mutungi
11:35-11:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of a draft roadmap for the formation of an EOA Southern African Cluster - <i>Colleen Anderson, South African NOAM and Eston Mgala, Malawi NOAM</i> - Roles and responsibilities – Poll on organisations/countries interested in forming/participating in national working groups that will feed into regional cluster – TBC 	
SESSION 4: CLOSING SESSION		
11:45-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SnA Representative – TBC - African Union Commission 	Wezi Chunga-Sambo