

Advancing ecological organic agriculture in Africa

State of scientific evidence and recommendations



African food systems are facing a number of interconnected challenges, due to the negative impacts of climate change, among other factors. Nevertheless, Africa holds a primordial position to create more resilient and sustainable food production systems.

More than half of the African population base their livelihood on agriculture; and half of Africans live in urban regions due to a strong rural exodus over the last 50 years. There is substantial evidence illustrating that the dominant agricultural systems feeding the growing population are not a sustainable option for the future. Global environmental and social challenges are especially pronounced on the African continent, and the adverse effects of climate change, bi-

odiversity loss, and food and nutrition insecurity make a transition to ecological organic food systems imperative.

Organic agriculture and agroecological approaches are gaining importance in Africa as they are supposed to enhance nutrition security and well-being of both smallholder farmers and urban consumers by contributing to healthy, diversified diets.

Currently, only ~1 % of the 204 Mio ha arable land in Africa is dedicated to certified organic farming⁶. A multitude of land is farmed in non-certified or agroecological ways. However, for African food systems to flourish and contribute to sustainable development, institutions, policies, programmes, markets and society must support a conducive environment for change.

Key messages

- The profitability and productivity of organic farming in the tropics can equal or exceed that of conventional farms.
- Ecological organic agriculture requires a shift of approach – to active, holistic farming. This is knowledge intensive and requires auxiliary institutions and policies.
- The policy landscape must strengthen to capitalise on the benefits of ecological organic agriculture and food safety.
- Markets must adapt to serve the distinct needs of organic farmers and consumers.
- Networks across levels and borders must improve.