

Productivity and Growth in Organic Value Chains (ProGrOV)

- Write-shop at the 4th Project Training and Project Meeting 14-19 September 2014



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'How does research on development of organic value chains link to and contribute to peoples' food sovereignty? Do the findings contribute to the development of the local food system and/or farmers' control over food and their own livelihoods? How do the findings and results contribute to the development of the local as well as the global food system?

These were some of the questions discussed and reflected upon during the 4th ProGrOV training workshop.

This year the workshop aimed at assisting the students not only in scientific research but also looking at their research from the development and livelihoods perspective, at both local and global level.

The 4th ProGrOV training and project workshop was held in Kampala Uganda. It was dubbed a 'write-shop' as the main focus this time was scientific write-up from the PhD and MSc studies, as well as how to synthesise results and knowledge from the studies in a form that can be used for dissemination at farmer, extension and policy level.

The project will at the end provide lessons learnt and give recommendati-

ons on how research can support the development of organic value chains. Such recommendations will be given on the basis of the experiences learnt though implementation of the individual research projects, and also based on knowledge and experiences shared with stakeholders across the value chains as well as between all project partners.

Thus following this approach, the project had invited Ugandan stakehol-

ders for a workshop whose agenda focused on making ProGrOV research results beneficial for the development of the organic sector in Uganda.

There is a need for information

The ProGrOV research projects in Uganda addresses integration of livestock (dairy cattle) with crops (pineapples) and the export of these high value products. Thus the stakeholders present represented the various

actors in the organic value chain within these areas as well as representatives from the ministry of agriculture in Uganda.

Through the various presentations, we learnt that currently Uganda's policy on organic agriculture has had tremendous progress and an implementation plan was drafted in November 2013. However as much as the policy level is taking shape, the local market still has some loopholes. A presentation from one

About ProGrOV

ProGrOV is a research, development and capacity strengthening project funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This 5-year project commenced in 2011 and takes place in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. This year the annual project training workshop and project meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya at the Oak Place Hotel. The main items on the agenda included

- Training for students and monitoring the progress of the studies
- Stakeholders workshop - feedback and interaction with different organisations and stakeholders from the organic sector,
- Field trip - visit to organic farmers.



Group picture with stakeholders



of the local supermarkets (Uchumi) pointed out they do sell organic produce (mainly fruits and vegetables) however they lack shelves allocated for these organic produce and they are mixed up together with the conventional products.

They also mentioned that within their contracts with the suppliers they would have a 'return policy' meaning produce not sold would be returned to the farmers and they would incur losses.

An interview with one of the stakeholders representing Namulonge Horticultural Farmers Association, clearly voiced out that the organic farmers have had to struggle with the traders when it came to selling and marketing their produce. The farmers in this association have opted not to sell their produce to the big markets (supermarkets) but rather have small farmer market days where they would organize and sell their produce themselves. This is mainly due to delays in payment and the low rates the traders offered.

Having their own market has been successful and it is mainly because of the loyal consumers who, through word of mouth have promoted their produce and this created more opportunities to sell these harvest within different areas of Kampala. However they still endure some disadvantages such as not being certified-factor that would help them attract bigger markets, storage facilities and transportation of their produce to the centers which are all very costly.

Given the above, it is clear that there is a challenge in connecting organic producers and the consumers within this market. It was strongly expressed by the stakeholders that access to information would empower the different actors to be more involved and also better positioned within the chain in relation to the market.

Organic value chain research-a development perspective

Having feed-back from stakeholders has proved important for the students to understand the needs

of the stakeholders and for the students to be able to convey the results from their research in a way that is useful and understandable to the end-users. In order to convey messages from research it may also be important to understand what role one research plays and may contribute to the development of local and global food systems. Just as the previous years the project workshop includes a PhD course – this time addressing 'High value chain development in relation to global food systems, food sovereignty and global social change'.

The training looked at how the ProGrOV project is related to these topics and what contributions it would give to these fields.

Food sovereignty: with its definition as 'the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems', the concept of food sovereignty can

be seen to be linked to the ProGrOV project as some of its principles are inter-related to those of organic agriculture. The principle of fairness is one that satisfies this argument in that it emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties.

Within ProGrOV, the project emphasizes on the importance of a working value chain and how each responsible party has an important role to play for there to be any value addition with these products.

Through discussions with the students it was seen that with organic agriculture, sustainable production can be acquired as it also encompasses the protection of the natural resources, a principle that food sovereignty holds. This is due to the minimal use of inputs and biodiversity which promotes a better ecosystem ensuring that the natural resources are enriched and reserved.

Farmers' livelihoods: It is generally accepted that organic agriculture will have positive impacts on the environment, health etc. But how does conversion to organic production influence livelihoods of actors' (including farmers) in the organic value chain? In the context of ProGrOV this question is important and is addressed from two levels: Policy: Justification for governments and development agents to support organic value chains.

Field/farm: To inform farmers (and other actors) on potentials and challenges in converting to organic. Thus ProGrOV as a research and capacity building project not only needs to provide reliable data on: Agro-ecology and Agricultural Productivity on innovation, inputs, yields, production costs ; Value Chain and Agribusiness Development on demand for organic (global & domestic), access to markets, transaction costs, incomes, it also needs to identify the factors that enhance or constrain peoples' capacity to earn their livelihoods that is the capacity to make a living in an economically, ecological-

ly and socially sustainable manner.

Global food system: There are very different trade profiles within different countries and more so with the East African countries. However these countries have experienced an increase in the demand of high value products both in local and global markets.

The importance of the shift from traditional to a non-traditional products for exports is that it decreases vulnerability from dependence on commodities in that the shift to high value exports implies more diversified export portfolios and the high value products fetch a higher price in comparison to the traditional tropical export thus creating opportunities for rural income mobility and poverty reduction among smallholder producers in developing countries.

The ProGrOV approach mainly takes a micro approach i.e. focuses on farmers, consumers, unit of analysis: transactions, governance and the implications of governance choices.



What we learn from the findings in ProGrOV is that there is still a missing link i.e. missing markets, credit implementations which are essential to have a fully functioning value chain that can suffice the global and local organic food systems.

knowledge in this field. However it is high time that the research results are synthesised to messages that would directly benefit the end users.

As it was addressed by the stakeholders, research in organic agriculture is quite essential as it does help the actors within the value chain to gaining more



More information

The gathering included 37 project participants – students and their supervisors from Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Nairobi in Kenya; supervisors from Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen, the Organic Movements from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya; and the coordinators from ICROFS.

The annual workshop and project meeting is an essential event for all the participants as this is where all the participants meet and share their work, findings and challenges and review progress.

Read more about ProGrOV: <http://www.icrofs.org/Pages/Research/progr-ov.html>