

Uganda Organic Agriculture Stakeholders Workshop Dissemination and Packaging of the ProGrOV Studies

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Introduction:

The project 'Productivity and Growth in Organic Value Chains (ProGrOV)' is a collaboration between universities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Denmark addressing the need for sustainable development of smallholder farming systems in East Africa with focus on organic value chains for local high-value markets as well as export chains. This is done by undertaking participatory research projects as MSc and PhD studies in collaboration with the organic movements in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Some of the studies in ProGrOV address different elements of the organic farming systems while others look into the governance of the organic value chains and consumer preferences. The knowledge generated in the MSc and PhD studies as well as the experience gained through the implementation of the project will be compiled, discussed and synthesised for the development of the organic sector and for the benefit of stakeholders such as farmers, extensionists and policy makers. ProGrOV, thereby, contributes to the development of a platform of scientific capacity and evidence on potentials of organic value chains and agroecological approaches to agricultural development.

Background:

Information flow and participatory approach in ProGrOV:

ProGrOV's approach has adopted a knowledge interaction approach to form interactive cycles from the problem definition (which is done jointly with project team and end-users), to relevant research activities, and finally interpretation and dissemination. As collaboration with the chain actors, such as farmers and processors, is essential in the studies, the value-chains approach of the project is combined with participatory approaches in each of the studies, in order to ensure that the knowledge generated through the studies will be useful and applicable to real life situations. Therefore, ProGrOV organises workshops with stakeholders to inform about the project activities, progress, challenges and findings and to get feed-back from stakeholders on the approach and direction of the activities.

This approach is similar to that of innovation platforms where they are now a very popular way to stimulate positive change in smallholder agriculture. In principle, these platforms bring together a range of stakeholders to identify and solve common problems and they ensure that different interests are taken into account. This has been witnessed in research whereby the platforms identify the most important issues, select promising ways to solve them, test these options, monitor results and provide information to the relevant members. The concept differs from the classic research as it encompasses a participatory approach that not only involves the farmers but also other stakeholders who bring in their different skills and expertise [Duncan, A. et al 2013(ILRI)]. The ProGrOV stakeholder workshops are not formalised innovations platforms; however they serve the same purpose creating information flow between the various actors and they also try to link with relevant existing innovation platforms.



This year ProGrOV held its 3rd stakeholder workshop in Kampala Uganda. Previously stakeholder workshops have been held in Arusha, Tanzania, and in Nairobi, Kenya. These stakeholder workshops are also kind of ‘follow-up’s to stakeholder consultations held in the beginning of the project to identify challenges in the primary production system and their market access. This time the stakeholder-researcher forum focused on the prospects of how to disseminate research findings on

organic agriculture to the public. 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 theme ‘Making ProGrOV research results beneficial for the development of the organic sector in Uganda’ was the guide to the different actors that were invited for this forum. The stakeholders present represented the different sectors within the organic value chain in Uganda including farmers, traders, exporters, NGOs and representatives from the ministry of agriculture in Uganda.

Presentations:

The forum was opened by a welcoming note from the Uganda project leader Prof. Fred Kabi, and thereafter were presentations from both students and stakeholders on the works of the organic sector in Uganda. The stakeholders’ presentations included:

- Experiences in sourcing and marketing organic products- by Muheki Perez, FFV Supervisor Uchumi Supermarket
- ICT and organic agriculture by Agriit Institute
- Organic product processing and export for the local market- By Samuel Nyanzi RuciFresh Ltd
- The potential role of multi-stakeholder processes in growth of organic products value chains in Uganda; the SNV experience: Dr. Sarah Mubiru
- Experience of NOGAMU-Mak partnership in disseminating ProGrOV Project results to end user communities. By Musa Muwanga the C.E.O of NOGAMU
- The current status of the organic policy in Uganda: challenges and opportunities for the sector: Andrew Mugisha of MAAIF

Through the various presentations, we learnt that currently Uganda’s policy on organic agriculture has had tremendous progress. An implementation plan was drafted in November 2013 and a cabinet paper has been prepared and is awaiting presentation by the Minister to Cabinet for approval. This is indeed a step further than the neighbouring countries; Kenya and Tanzania.

However as much as the policy level is taking shape, the local market still has some loopholes. A presentation from one 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.

The afternoon session was allocated for group discussion where the objectives were further discussed and elaborated upon through the following questions that were prepared:

- Who benefits from the different research outputs presented
- How to make research more beneficial
- How best to reach out to end users (farmers and other stakeholders)

All participants were randomly divided into four groups and this brought out a blend of the different actors within the organic value chain discussing on how best to address the issue of dissemination and the gaps felt within the research as it is. The results from the groups is summarised in the table below.

Feedback:

Table 1, below shows feedback from the group work and their presentations. The work has been summarised and turned into common headings. As mentioned earlier the group work was guided by questions related to dissemination of the information derived from the research studies. In answering the question of who would benefit from the different research outputs presented, the summary from the groups' shows that majority of the actors within the organic sector would benefit. This includes; farmers, consumers (organic and non- organic) traders- export companies

and the academia/research institute.



On the discussion on how to make the research more beneficial, it was presented that research should move to the level of advice in that studies and dissemination should be more focused on the solutions of the problems faced within the organic practices. It was also pointed out that information should be simplified and easy to understand as well as translated to local languages. This

information should also be made available to both public and private institutes as they would be able to disseminate it through extension officers, pilot projects, ICT etc.

As to how best to reach out to the end-users, the discussions suggested that Multi- stakeholders Platforms, local media (TV, radio, Newspapers), ICT, trainings and demos at agricultural shows, use of local entertainment i.e. plays/skits as some of the forms communication that would best reach the end-users.

Conclusion:

Through the discussions and presentations, it is evident that there is a need for collaboration with all the actors within the organic sector particularly when it comes to research (relevant studies that need to be investigated and not duplication other studies) and significant dissemination of this information that should be tailor made for the relevant actors. Innovation in agriculture has been commonly viewed as linear where agricultural research and development generating technologies are transferred by extension services to farmers who would adopt these technologies. With this understanding, it supported that science is the only legitimate source of knowledge and that then needs, experiences and knowledge from end-users on innovation do not need to be taken into consideration. However with complex challenges faced by the agricultural sector (climate change, food security, sustainable rural development) that exceed the capacity of single farms, there a need

for a non-linear approach to innovation with all actors included as relevant sources of knowledge rather than just consumers of research-based knowledge.

COMPILED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Who benefits from the different research outputs presented	How to make research more beneficial	How best to reach out to end users (farmers and other stakeholders)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic farmers: Will benefit more when there are institutions involved, ready markets to sell their products, more technology to promote and produce better yield. There is still need for more farmers training on organic farming. • Traders, Export companies • Consumers (both organic and non-organic) • Academia/ research institutes- capacity building at universities • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research should move to the level of advice. What is the solution/ how best to tackle these pests and diseases? • By training the extension officers and farmers about the good organic practices discovered by these research studies. • By documenting information in usable/simplified form and translated into local language • By using E-learning extension (ICT) for education. • By all actors within the organic sector respecting each other • Making pilot areas to see whether the results are practical, creating demos for the results i.e. research on animal feeds from pineapples • Ensure that findings are disseminated and shared with stakeholders where the studies are done • Results should be available to public and private institutions that can translate recommendations into attainable projects. (this is currently not done and a lot of information lies on the shelves of universities and research institutes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Multi- stakeholders Platforms through NGOs and local governments as they are have the capability of translating information to the stakeholders • Local workshops in the grassroots/villages • Local media radio, TV, newspapers and Civic education • Through training, demos, field days and Agricultural shows • Brochures and fliers • ICT- information by messages that would reach many people in a short time • Scientific conferences. • Use of local entertainment: plays/drama as a form of extension • Research and extension should join hands and develop joint projects for community uptake of technologies •