



ANNOUNCEMENT

BENIN'S ORGANIC AGRICULTURE NETWORK (BOAN)

Organizes

The 3rd West African Conference on Organic Agriculture

Theme: Institutionalizing Ecological and Organic Agriculture in West Africa

DATE: 27th - 29th August, 2014

PLACE: Cotonou, Benin



1- BACKGROUND

Agriculture is still remaining the backbone of the economy of many African countries. It is practiced as permanent occupation by a very large number of small scale farmers. The increasing use of agrochemical threatens the ecological support of agriculture. From the necessity of preserving the environment and human health emerged initiatives and movements promoting ecological responsible agriculture under various names: organic farming, sustainable farming, fair trade agriculture etc. organic farming. Whatever their names, ecological and organic farming initiatives (as such baptized in 2011 by the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union) have been marginally considered, without any real coordination or synergy between the actors as regards to public policies that focused mainly on conventional agricultural systems.

Since the introduction of certified organic agriculture in West Africa in the 1990s, several movements and associations have been created to support its development. But the lack of synergy and coordination of these movements still limit their impact on the development of ecological and organic agriculture and the expected benefits on environment, economical and social life. Regional Conferences on ecological and organic agriculture have been established under the leadership of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) to strengthen the coordination of activities at the regional level. In 2008, the first West African Organic Conference took place at the University of Abeokuta in Nigeria. During the second Conference in 2012 at the University of Ibadan, the responsibility was given to Benin to organize the Third Conference in 2014.

In 2011 the Heads of States and Governments of the African Union adopted a resolution [(Doc. EX.CL/631 (XVIII))] for the promotion of organic and ecological agriculture in terms of its potential to contribute to food security, rural poverty reduction and resilience to climate change. This initiative called Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) is carried by the CAADP (Comprehensive Program for the Development of African Agriculture) and aims to **integrate the principles of organic and ecological agriculture in the policies and strategies for agricultural development in African countries**. Various technical and financial partners have already positioned themselves to support this initiative, including the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Swedish Society for the Conservation of Nature (SSNC). This initiative opens the way for a comprehensive review of the status of ecological and organic agriculture in West Africa. All stakeholders have to take advantage of this opportunity to develop the necessary synergies that will help West Africa to expression its potentials in terms of EOA.

2- OBJECTIVE AND THEMATIC

The main objective of the Third West African Organic Conference is to contribute to defining mechanisms to integrate the principles of organic and ecological agriculture in agricultural development policies and strategies of West African countries. This Conference aims to raise public awareness and engage with stakeholders (researchers, academics, public sector, private sector, civil society, development partners...) reflections on best strategies for the implementation of the resolution [Doc. EX.CL/631 (XVIII)] in West Africa.

In relation with this overall objective, the central theme of this Third West African Organic Conference is entitled: **"Institutionalizing Ecological and Organic Agriculture in West Africa"**. Activities and discussions during the conference will be organized around the following sub-themes.

3- SUB-THEMES AND SIDE EVENTS

❖ *Institutionalizing ecological and organic agriculture: Current status, challenges and perspectives;*

- National and regional initiatives integrating EOA in national agricultural policy and regional unions policies (ECOWAS and WAEMU);
- Implementation of pilot EOA projects in West Africa : Results, challenges and perspectives ;
- Integration of EOA in training curricula of Universities and agricultural schools;
- Integration of EOA in research programs : Results, challenges and perspectives ;
- Integration of EOA in agricultural extension programs: enabling conditions and reforms needed;
- EOA and business in West Africa : business model and partnership;
- lobbying and advocacy for the integration of EOA in the policy of regional institutions (WAEMU, ECOWAS, CORAF, etc.).

❖ *Ecological and Organic Agriculture: what contribution to food security and poverty reduction?*

- Impact EOA on food security farmer's income;
- EOA and gender;
- Access to land and EOA;
- EOA and nutrition security;
- Policy recommendations.

❖ *Ecological and organic Agriculture and adaptation to climate change;*

- EOA and biodiversity;

- EOA and resilience of agricultural production systems;
- EOA and fertility conservation and management;
- Integrated perspectives of pest management: IPM, LEC, GIPD, etc. ;
- Technical recommendations.

❖ **Access mechanisms and governance of seed for ecological and organic agriculture: what biotechnical risks?**

- Development of transgenic crops and genetic pollution risks ;
- Moratoria on import and manipulation of GMO : lessons, limits and perspectives ;
- Coexistence of organic and GMO crops: institutional, organizational and technical implications;
- Development of organic seed chains;
- Policy and technical recommendations.

Possible side events

- ❖ Side event with IFOAM: training in Benin;
- ❖ Side event with FiBL: presentation of results of research on organic farming systems in West Africa;
- ❖ Side event with African Union Commission: EOA Steering Committee meeting;
- ❖ Side event with FAO: Presentation of results of research on the links between good farming and good market practices.

4- PARTICIPANTS AND ACTIVITIES

Participants at the Third Conference will come from NGOs and associations promoting ecological and organic agriculture, research institutes, universities and businesses operating in the value chain of organic products in West African sub-region. They will also come from international governmental institutions supporting the development of ecological and organic agriculture in Africa.

Activities and events that will be carried out during the Conference are:

- ❖ Thematic presentations in plenary sessions;
- ❖ Workshops discussions;
- ❖ Poster presentations;

Visiting practical initiatives in the field (Organic vegetable farms, organic products processing units, Songhai project).

5- REGISTRATION FEE AND CALL FOR PAPER SUBMISSION

Registration fee

The Conference fee registration is US \$150 or its equivalent in FCFA. The fee covers Conference participation, all conference materials, lunch, and tea/coffees and snacks during the breaks. Transportation to and fro conference venue throughout the period has been built into the Conference fees.

Call for paper submission

Full paper (scientific or technical) focusing on the sub-themes of the Conference, not more than 12 pages in Times New Roman font 12, A4 size and 1.5 spacing should be submitted electronically to boanbenin@gmail.com

6- LOGISTIC AND DEADLINES

The Conference is scheduled for three days. It will take place between the **27th - 29th August, 2014**. The intended location for the Conference is CIEVRA Center, thirty kilometers far from Cotonou (in the direction North) on the main road Benin-Niger. Two accommodation options exist: a) In the CIEVRA center there is possibility of accommodation, b) Participants who wish to stay out of the CIEVRA Center can find hotels in Abomey-Calavi and Cotonou.

Deadlines

Date	Activities
December 2013	Announcement of the Conference
15th April 2014	Call for Abstracts
15 June 2014	Results of Abstracts review
15 July 2014	Final Documents, presentations and posters.
15 June 2014	Opening registration.
15 August 2014	Closing the registration.

For more enquiries and confirmation of attendance please contact;

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