

ITC Support to the Organic Sector in Developing Countries

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The International Trade Centre (ITC) is the joint technical assistance agency of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). ITC supports the organic and biodiversity sectors in developing countries through its Trade, Climate Change and Environment Programme (TECCP).

Developing countries face a number of obstacles to the export of organic products, including meeting buyers' demands on quality, a lack of information about requirements under standards, dealing with the complexities and costs of certification, and building trust with buyers.

ITC works with small and medium enterprises and trade support institutions in overcoming these obstacles and improving access to international markets.

The Trade, Climate Change and Environment Programme supports the organic sector through the provision of market information, facilitating business contacts, training in standards compliance, trade promotion and support for more favorable policies for organic agriculture and trade.

Market information and analysis

ITC provides comprehensive information service for developing countries on organic markets through Organic Link (www.intracen.org/organics), its dedicated portal for the organic sector. Organic Link maintains a free-to-use database of over 2'000 buyers and sellers of organic products, searchable by country and product category. An evaluation of the database in 2009 showed that it facilitated business contacts leading to over USD 4 million in revenues. Organic Link also provides links to market research and business news including ITC's own Market News Service. MNS is a bimonthly publication for SME's and trade support institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. It carries information on prices, market trends, in-depth features on selected organic products and geographical focus areas.

Climate change

ITC recognizes the challenge that climate change is presenting agriculture in developing countries. In 2009, UNCTAD's Trade and Environment Review² published a leading article from ITC reviewing the effectiveness of different market mechanisms to support the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions in traded agricultural products. ITC also published a booklet in 2010 on the impacts of climate change on coffee production and the opportunities for the sector in carbon credit markets. In 2008, ITC published a study with FiBL on the role of organic farming in adaptation and mitigation strategies and will build on this work with further analysis in 2010.

Wittler, Helga and Kitcher, Lukas, (Eds.) (2010)
The World of Organic Agriculture - Statistics and Emerging Trends 2010.
IFOAM, Bonn, and FiBL, Frick

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² UNCTAD's Trade and Environment Review, www.unctad.org/trade_env/TER

Meeting standards

In 2009, ITC trained 2'500 farmers in organic practices, through national partners in Uganda. Supplying three different companies, the farmers are producing mainly coffee but also herbal teas and chilies. These activities resulted in the certification of three groups and the granting of in-conversion certificates, thus enabling more active organic marketing. In 2010, another 3,000 farmers will undergo a similar process with ITC support.

ITC's Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) portal will be launched in 2010 and provide access to information on the leading sustainability standards, including the IFOAM organic standard.

Trade promotion

At BioFach 2009, ITC supported the participation of 15 companies from sub-Saharan Africa, giving them a chance to market their products at the African Pavilion. The results for these companies were impressive. A follow-up evaluation in June 2009 revealed that six confirmed orders had been placed with four companies at a total value of 110'000 US dollars. Five companies were in serious negotiations for another eight orders at an estimated total value of 280'000 US dollars. In 2010, ITC will also work in partnership with the Africa Pavilion and the Swiss Import Promotion Agency in supporting African companies at BioFach.