





ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND FAIR TRADE IN WEST AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, biodiversity and people. It relies on ecological processes and nutrient cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of external inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines traditional knowledge, innovation and modern science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved (IFOAM, 2004).

Organic agriculture is developing rapidly and is now practised in more than 120 countries of the world. As at the end of 2007, almost 32.2 million hectares of land were managed organically all over the world by 1 219 526 farmers, of which the majority (43.5 percent) is in Africa. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2008) reported that organic agriculture can increase agricultural productivity and can raise incomes with low cost, locally available and appropriate technology, without causing environmental damage. Further, the report showed evidence that organic agriculture can build up natural resources, strengthen communities and improve human capacity to cope with environmental challenges, thus improving food security by addressing many different causal factors simultaneously. The benefits of organic farming for Africa are numerous, from increasing yields and conserving water in semi-arid areas and combating desertification, to debt reduction for farmers, strengthening of social systems and maximization of environmental services.

West Africa is lagging behind in the development of organic agriculture with only ten out of the 16 countries therein having a formal record of organic agriculture activities. Overall, West Africa has a total of 733 359 000 ha of land (FAO, 2000), of which 50 568 ha is under organic agricultural production (Willer and Kilcher, 2009). This is 0.007 percent of the total land in the region and an indication of the low status of organic agriculture activities in West Africa, which mainly focus on vegetables, fruits and fibre products. In 2008, operators were private sector business people while most governmental organizations provided little or no support to the development of organic agriculture.

Apart from information sharing among members of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in the region and perhaps members of the Institut Africain pour le Développement Economique et Social–Centre Africain de Formation (INADES-Formation), interaction across countries in the region among organic agriculture stakeholders is low. Even within countries, few interactive efforts are known among the operators. This situation is not conducive for the growth of the organic sector. The national organic movements known in West Africa are the Organic Movement of Mali (MOBIOM), the National Federation of Organic Producers of Senegal (FENAB), the Ghana Organic Agriculture Network (GOAN), the Nigerian Organic Agriculture Network (NOAN) and L’Organisation Béninoise pour la Promotion de l’Agriculture Biologique (Benin Organization for the Promotion of Organic Agriculture) (Willer and Kilcher, 2009).¹

One of the steps for proper development of the organic sector in the region is to encourage cooperation among stakeholders. This action often leads to synergies that can fast track development of the organic sector. Benefits that can be derived from the influence of collaborative efforts among similar organizations cannot be overemphasized. Hence, practitioners of organic agriculture in West Africa have a lot to benefit from working together in order to catch up with global developments. Some national organic agriculture movements in West Africa have already shown interest in collaborative efforts within the region but much is yet to be done to fast track this development.

In East Africa, the cooperation among organic agriculture practitioners supported the increase in organic agricultural activities and the development of the East African Organic Products Standard. The move to develop the East African Organic Products Standard started with three countries, namely Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, and by 2009, up to nine countries in the region were involved. This cooperation as well as other projects such as the Export Promotion of Organic

1 A complete list of the West African members of IFOAM can be found at the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org

Products from Africa (EPOPA) with the involvement of many donors together with national and international actors has led to increased production and export of organic agriculture produce which is contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the countries involved.

TABLE 1

West African countries with known areas of land under organic agriculture systems as of December 2007

COUNTRIES	LAND (HA)	NUMBER OF PRODUCERS
Benin	1 488	2 354
Burkina Faso	7 267	5 808
Ghana	24 449*	3 900*
Guinea Bissau	5 600	401
Ivory Coast	943	No data
Mali	3 402	7 526
Niger	131	No data
Nigeria	3 154	No data
Senegal	1 589	1 306
Togo	2 545	4 183
Total	50 568 (5.81% of that in Africa)	17 592 (3.39% of that in Africa)
Africa	870 329	529 986
World	32 221 311	1 219 526
Uganda	296 203	206 803
Tunisia	154 793	862

* 2008 data

Source: Adapted from Willer and Kilcher, 2009

CURRENT STATE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN WEST AFRICA

In spite of the low level of activities in the organic agriculture sector in West Africa, the region has some strengths that can be exploited for its accelerated development.

- Evolution of national organic agriculture movements in the region: West Africa is currently experiencing an increase in the number of national organic agriculture movements. In 2003, IFOAM (2003) reported little evidence of

emerging or 'joined-up' agro-ecology movements in the region. Then, it was only in Senegal and Ghana that individuals were found promoting organic agriculture. However, by 2009, things were changing; national movements were emerging. Currently, at least five such movements are known in West Africa. These national organic agriculture movements are either full members of IFOAM or related in some way to IFOAM. Information flow and interaction among IFOAM members could be harnessed for a positive evolution of organic agriculture practices.

- **Majority of farmers disfavour the use of synthetic inputs:** Traditional farmers make up to 70 percent of the farming population. They seldom use synthetic inputs in their fields. For example, farmers producing yam, cassava and most fruit tree crops do not use any chemical inputs. Thus, conversion to organic agriculture would be easy for these farmers if they are well informed about its benefits.
- **Biodiversity:** One of the characteristics of a traditional African farm is its great biodiversity. A farmer can have up to ten or more varieties of crops and different types of domestic animals on her/his farm. This fits the principle of ecology in organic agriculture. Many benefits are found from keeping good diversity of both flora and fauna in the farm. Many problems such as poor soil fertility, pest and diseases that deter many farmers from practicing organic agriculture can easily be managed with good biodiversity. Again, agro-ecology in the region is also very diverse; West Africa has many of the agro-ecologies found in Africa.
- **Good trade relationship between ECOWAS states:** The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) encourages free trade among countries in the region. This situation provides potential opportunities to move both inputs and produce within the region for effective organic agriculture business.
- **Increased interest of stakeholders in organic agriculture:** With the increase in awareness of the benefits from organic agriculture, more people are getting interested in organic produce. Both sides of demand and supply are increasing.

UPDATE ON ORGANIC AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES IN WEST AFRICA

Ghana

Ghana's capital, Accra, has the country's first organic restaurant – Café Baobab – where organic menus are offered to the customers. The establishment of this restaurant aims at initiating a farm to restaurant marketing strategy, where organic producers and consumers can meet. Therefore, the growth of local markets for organic produce can be triggered. Café Baobab was formally opened in July 2007 with the help of GOAN, by Lady Tangi, an Australian whose husband is a Ghanaian.²

Key organic products from Ghana

Ghana's main organic export commodities are palm oil and fresh fruits. The certification of farms already using organic methods is making progress. Other key organic products include cocoa, banana, cashew nut, culinary herbs, cereals, vegetables, cotton and shea butter (IFOAM, 2003). Ghanaian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and farmers' groups promote the expansion of organic production in the existing product range as well as in new sectors. Indigenous groups are active in developing and disseminating improved organic farming methods.

The network

GOAN is the main grouping of organic NGOs and trade associations in Ghana, which is working actively with concerned organizations such as the International Trade Centre (ITC), Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA), the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom and Pesticide Action Network, United Kingdom (PAN-UK) in developing the organic sector in the country.

² Source: First organic restaurant in Ghana, by IFOAM Africa Centre Office, 16 Jan 2008. Available at <http://www.modernghana.com/news/153740/1/first-organic-restaurant-in-ghana.html> (accessed 8 February 2010; verified 21 March 2010).

It has about 150 member groups and organizations, representing a thousand individual members.

With the assistance of HDRA and PAN-UK, GOAN in 1995 established an agriculture centre to provide information, training and advice on organic agriculture practices. It also has links with research institutes to examine alternative methods of pest control, particularly for cocoa, oil palm, cotton, cereals, fruits and vegetables (ITC, 2009).

Nigeria

Organic agriculture in an organized manner is still young in the country, with less than five years of experience. As of 2007, Nigeria had 3 154 hectares under organic agriculture, of which 50 ha were fully converted (Willer and Kilcher, 2009).

Practitioners are still few despite the great potential for organic agriculture. The following are the main stakeholders:

- ✓ **Dara/Eurobridge Farm**, which is the known pioneer organic farm in Nigeria that produces lemongrass, turmeric, ginger, plantain and medicinal herbs.
- ✓ **Organic Agriculture Project in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria (OAPTIN)**, which organized a pioneering network in 2004. Its activities focus on capacity building and networking of academics in organic agriculture.
- ✓ **Olusegun Obasanjo Centre for Organic Agriculture Research and Development (OOCORD)**, which was established in 2007 and is the first of its kind in Nigeria. It focuses on research and development in organic agriculture.
- ✓ **Nigerian Organic Agriculture Network (NOAN)**, which was formed as an initiative of OOCORD and designated to be an umbrella body for organic agriculture activities in Nigeria in August 2008. Its function is to network organic agriculture organizations in Nigeria.
- ✓ **Organic Farmers Association of Nigeria**, which coordinates the activities of Nigeria's organic farmers.
- ✓ **Organic Fertilizer Association of Nigeria**, which coordinates the activities for organic agriculture fertilizer production.

- Others – “Nigeria Go Organic”, which is currently focusing on a campaign for “Ibadan Go Organic”, organic beekeepers, snail keeping, etc.

First West African Summit on Organic Agriculture

The first West African Summit on Organic Agriculture took place at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, between 17 and 21 November 2008 with the theme “Organic Agriculture and the Millennium Development Goals”. The keynote address was given by Moses K. Muwanga, Chief Executive Officer of the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) and Member of the World Board of IFOAM.

The idea of having a summit on organic agriculture in West Africa was raised among the West African participants at the East African Organic Conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in June 2007.

Nigeria was chosen to host the maiden edition of the summit, as it is also the headquarters of ECOWAS. The event was hosted by OAPTIN in collaboration with the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

The summit aimed at:

- Disseminating current information, indigenous technologies and competences in organic agriculture in West Africa;
- Providing a forum for sharing experiences among organic agriculture scientists and practitioners in West Africa; and
- Enhancing international collaboration among higher educational institutes and other stakeholders in organic agriculture in West Africa and developed countries.

The event received sponsorship for participants from IFOAM, Association of African Universities (AAU), UNCTAD, GOAN, Sustainable Agriculture Development Network (REDAD) of Benin, Agrecol-Afrique of Senegal, INADES-Formation of Cote d’Ivoire and Agro Eco of the Netherlands. There was also local funding through donations and the registration fee.

A total of 119 participants were registered including representatives from 16 countries: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, The Netherlands, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Special events at the summit included:

- ✓ Training by IFOAM on advocacy and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS);
- ✓ Prioritization of advocacy needs for organic agriculture in Africa;
- ✓ Experience sharing among organic agriculture practitioners in Africa;
- ✓ Networking of organic agriculture practitioners (producers, marketers and researchers) in West Africa; and
- ✓ Organic agriculture trade opportunities within West Africa.

The following resolutions were adopted:

- ✓ Participants were charged to step up the level of advocacy on organic agriculture at national, regional and continental levels;
- ✓ Participatory Guarantee Systems should be adopted to increase local organic market systems while third party certification could be used for international markets;
- ✓ A steering committee was constituted to work out a *modus operandi* for formation of a West African Network for Organic Agriculture in consultation with IFOAM;
- ✓ Next West African Summit on Organic Agriculture to be hosted by Ghana in 2010; and
- ✓ Positive spirit of the summit to be maintained and the tempo sustained at continental level.
- ✓ As a result of the summit, the organizers look forward to seeing:
 - ✓ Food security improved through better availability and accessibility of organic produce;
 - ✓ Improved and sustained environmental services and biodiversity;
 - ✓ Good health for people, animals, the soil and the environment;
 - ✓ Improved livelihoods through fair trade organic markets;

- ✓ Good spread of information on organic agriculture in research, extension, advocacy; and
- ✓ Abundant trained personnel to drive organic agriculture in the formal and informal sectors in West Africa.

ORGANIC AND FAIR TRADE EXPORTS PROJECT IN WEST AFRICA³

The FAO organized a project to encourage the export of organic and/or fair trade produce from Central and West Africa to Europe. The project was funded by the government of Germany. Beneficiary countries were Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The implementation period was September 2005 to September 2009. The aim of the project was to assist farmer groups and small exporters to help them overcome challenges and take advantage of remunerative markets.

An IFOAM survey of 2003 revealed that West Africa lagged behind other regions in the development of its organic sector. At the same time, the region has often been viewed as having the potential for developing exports of certified organic products, especially tropical fruits. Furthermore, agro-ecological initiatives promoting rural development and food security, and based on enhancing soil fertility, are a strong point in the region.

Therefore, a project was developed to support farmer groups in West Africa to build their capacity to produce and export organic and fair trade certified products in order to increase the income and food security of their farmers.

The project was conducted in a participatory manner, based on a ‘tailor-made’ programme of activities for each supply chain. A programme of activities, usually for one-year periods, was agreed upon in collaboration with the beneficiary group and/or exporter. In the cases of Cameroon, Burkina Faso and

³ Extracted from <http://www.fao.org/organicag/organicexports/organicexports-home/en/> (accessed 8 February 2010; verified 21 March 2010).

the sugarloaf pineapples in Ghana, export was already taking place when the project started. In these cases, activities focused on the weakest part of the chain or on activities necessary to obtain certification. In the other cases, supply chains had to be set up from scratch and activities started from the level of organization and capabilities already present. Contracts were drawn up with the exporter and/or farmer group, in order to give them the means to implement as many activities themselves. For farmer groups, the negotiations of the contracts and meeting delivery requirements before the next instalment were learning activities in themselves and prepared them for more demanding and less flexible commercial contracts.

Product and group selection

During the project formulation phase in 2004, a market study was conducted to identify organic and fair trade growth markets in Europe. The following product categories were selected:

- ✓ Tropical fruits: pineapple and mango;
- ✓ Cocoa; and
- ✓ Shea butter.

Subsequently, producer groups and exporters were selected based on four criteria:

- ✓ Ability to supply one of the selected products;
- ✓ Readiness to export, or already having current exports;
- ✓ Interest in organic and/or fair trade certification; and
- ✓ Possible advantages of the project for small farmers.

Results and outputs

The project has worked with seven different supply chains and more than seven farmer groups, each with their distinct characteristics and starting situation, thus outputs and results vary much according to supply chain.

Training has taken place in all farmer groups. The project trained in total:

- 2 078 farmers in organic agriculture and fair trade;
- 229 shea nut collectors in organic requirements for collection;
- 108 shea butter producers in organic requirements for butter production;
- 68 produce agents/harvesters in quality requirements and record keeping/traceability requirements;
- 36 Internal Control System (ICS) managers/field officers/internal inspectors on their role in the ICS;
- Four documentation officers in record keeping, filing and administrative management;
- 16 executive and board members of farmers' associations in the running of their organizations, including development of sales to exporters (one group) or in direct exports (two groups); and
- Five managers of exporting farmers' organizations and one exporter in the development of their export business.

All groups were certified as planned. In terms of export development, results have been as follows:

Burkina Faso:

- BurkiNature increased exports of organic and organic/fair trade mangoes by 40 percent from 2005 to 2006, and between 2006 and 2008 by another 50 percent.
- Club des Productrices de Beurre de Karité Biologique (CPBKB) increased exports of organic shea butter five-fold in the course of the project.

Cameroon:

- Pineapple growers' association Groupement d'Interêt Commun – Union des AgroPasteurs du Cameroun (GIC UNAPAC) increased exports of pineapples by 40 percent from 2005 to 2008.

Ghana:

- Tropical fruit exporter WAD Ltd. increased sales of dried and fresh pineapple, and now buys 2.5 times more pineapples from the farmers than at the start of the project (increase of 170 percent).

- ✓ Volta Organic Mango Farmers Association (VOMAGA) started selling mangoes to processors.

Sierra Leone:

- ✓ Cocoa association Kpeya Agriculture Enterprise (KAE) exported its first container of fair trade certified cocoa in January 2009.

Impacts

The most important criterion for the success of a project is the impact on the target group. To get a better idea of the impact at farmer level, the project conducted impact surveys in all countries. With the exception of Senegal, these surveys were conducted in the period April–June 2008. The impact of later project activities and developments has thus not yet been assessed.

The impact surveys concluded that the new organic production methods have resulted in improved quality of the products. The majority of respondents also observed an increase in production, which was due to a combination of higher yields and increases in cultivated areas or in the case of shea butter, an increase in collection efforts of shea nuts and subsequent increased transformation of nuts into shea butter.

According to the organizers of this project, whether this increase in production and exports have resulted in reduced poverty and food insecurity is more difficult to ascertain for two reasons. Firstly, the impact of the adoption of the new agricultural and processing methods on the total costs of production varies considerably from one sub-project to the other. Secondly, the starting situation of each sub-project varied considerably as well as the level of poverty and food insecurity of the group members.

Concerning the cost of production, it is clear that the implementation of the organic methods generally resulted in an increase in labour costs and a decrease in the costs related to the purchasing of agrochemicals. Group marketing reduced the transportation costs of the products to the market. Regarding the variations in the living conditions at the start of the project, it can generally be concluded

that the poorer the producers, the more the project's impact manifested itself in terms of poverty alleviation and food security.

In general, the project has resulted in an increase in the incomes of its participants as a result of the increase in the production volumes or the price paid to the producers. The additional income generated through the sale of certified products is mainly used for purchasing food or clothing, for paying school fees and for medical expenditures, thereby improving the living conditions and the food security of the participants. Five out of the seven sub-projects had led to the marketing of certified products at the time of the impact surveys. The producers in these groups confirmed nearly unanimously the positive impact of the marketing of the certified products by the producer groups; no disadvantages were mentioned. The impact surveys also confirmed the project's impact on employment through the creation of jobs for workers directly involved in the production of certified products, as well as for workers and administrative staff involved in production supporting services.

CHALLENGES FACING ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

Based on observation as well as a review of past studies, especially by IFOAM (IFOAM, 2004), the main challenges facing the development of organic agriculture in West Africa are briefly described below.

- **Poor local marketing:** Like any other business, organic agriculture thrives with efficient marketing systems. Generally, many farmers have been discouraged from going into organic production because of the lack of or poorly developed local markets for organic products. The majority of the organic agriculture operators in West Africa focus on export markets. Many farmers who cannot afford the cost of third party certification find it difficult to sell their organic produce at prices that would have compensated for extra efforts put into an organic system of production. However, there are exceptions; for example, Ghana and Senegal have some organic market points. In some situations, organic products are sold without

any differentiation from the conventional agriculture products. A certified organic farm in Nigeria, for example, currently sells its organic lemongrass tea, turmeric and other produce to the local market, a situation many regard as under-maximization of the premium benefits in organic agriculture. However, local markets make it easy for resource-poor farmers to sell their products and interact with processors and consumers. In Europe, America and some parts of East Africa, there are organized sales outlets where consumers can get organic products. This situation has a way of encouraging producers in such regions to stay in business.

Low level of organic certification: Third party certification in Africa is mostly used as a means of accessing foreign markets. However, the majority of the farmers in West Africa cannot afford the costs of getting their farms certified through the third party system. Hence, the number of certified farms in the region is very low compared to East and South Africa. Perhaps this is due to poor public awareness of business opportunities in organic agriculture, because people in the region are not so poor to the level of finding it difficult to invest in organic agriculture. Many of the business communities in the region are oblivious to the big international market in organic agriculture. Without building awareness of the opportunities, little or nothing can be done to improve investments in the sector. However, use of a participatory guarantee system, mainly for local markets, could be explored in the region, as this does not incur such high costs as third party certification. It also has the advantage of building confidence between local producers and consumers.

Little information on organic agriculture activities: Information on organic agricultural activities in the region is meagre. Perhaps, more farmers would have become interested in organic agriculture if they had access to information showing how feasible it is to invest in the practice. Where organic agriculture is practised, producers claim increased income due to the premium price paid for their produce as well as the avoidance of costs for external inputs. The profitability of organic agriculture has been reported to attract the interest of many operators. In East Africa, the number of organic farmers has multiplied

three-fold within a few years. There is no doubt that concerted information dissemination on organic agriculture in West Africa could contribute to the growth of the organic sector in the region.

- ✓ **Little or no policies to safeguard organic agriculture activities:** Most national governments in West Africa have no policies in place to safeguard organic agriculture practices in their countries. Some of the countries in the region could have some plans, but these are yet to be translated into working documents that organic agriculture producers could refer to for sustainable and confident investment in the organic agriculture sector of the region. Indiscriminate use of agrochemicals and other synthetic inputs is not yet adequately recognized as a serious problem in the region. These situations are challenging the development of organic agriculture.
- ✓ **Sourcing of appropriate inputs for organic agriculture:** A major constraint to the adoption of organic agriculture in West Africa is the lack of appropriate inputs, such as bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides needed in organic agriculture production. It is easier to get the conventional agriculture inputs. Information on appropriate cultural methods to address the challenges of soil fertility decline and pests and diseases is not widely available to the farmers. It is a fact that producers are not able to produce beyond resources at their disposal; even if they are willing.
- ✓ **Poor private sector involvement:** The current level of involvement of the private sector in organic agriculture in West Africa is very low. This is true when one compares the situation with what is found in East, Northern and Southern Africa. In other places of the world, private firms invest heavily in production, processing and marketing of organic agriculture products. The resultant effects are increased activities and the expansion of the organic agriculture sector.
- ✓ **Lack of technical assistance:** Compared to East and Northern Africa where there are a reasonable number of organic agriculture service providers, the opposite is the situation in West Africa. Often, farmers need technical assistance in terms of

soil fertility maintenance, pest and disease control, mechanization and acquisition of useful skills that can enhance good production in the organic sector.

• **Low interaction among national organic networks in the region:** Interaction among national organic networks as well as other stakeholders in West Africa is still very low. Though many steps are on-going to bridge gaps among operators, much still needs to be done. The West African Organic Agriculture Summit, reported above, was held to start to change the situation, but the fact is that a lot of efforts are still needed to bring stakeholders together.

• **Lack of funds to foster organic agriculture projects:** Unlike projects in conventional agriculture, organic agriculture projects receive less attention from most donors. Much still needs to be done in terms of proper awareness and public education on the benefits of organic agriculture. Major operators in the organic system in the region are private farms that find it difficult to spend their resources on public enlightenment.

FAST TRACKING DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN WEST AFRICA

The following interventions are needed for proper development of organic agriculture activities in West Africa:

Research, training and development

1. Carrying out of a comprehensive survey of the current situation in the field in order to determine the advantages and constraints to the development of organic farming in West Africa, because little or no information is available on specific issues.
2. Land capability and suitability evaluation of areas that could be adapted to organic farming within the different agro-ecologies in the region.
3. Development of support measures for organic farming. There is a need to develop collaborative training modules for organic farming to build capacity of organic

agriculture operators in the region. Establishment of technical support structures, workshops and public awareness on organic agriculture focusing on benefits derivable from it as well as mass sensitization through posters, newsletters, etc.

Administration and policy

1. There should be strong advocacy and lobbying to promote organic agriculture in the region.
2. Efforts should be made to make governments of the region come up with national land tenure policies to encourage organic agriculture.
3. There is a need for integration of organic farming into the agricultural policy of ECOWAS states.
4. Governmental and private investments in organic resource inputs should be encouraged.
5. Rationalization of organic farm certification costs through the establishment of local certification bodies and encouragement of more private investment in this aspect of organic agriculture.
6. Organization of farmers' associations along commodity lines e.g. rice, cocoa, cassava growers' associations.
7. Strengthening of national organic agriculture movements through regular meetings to encourage more farmers to go organic.
8. Regular inventory of organic farms and farming activities in the region should be done at country level.
9. Establishment of ECOWAS organic produce standard could encourage inter-country organic business activities in the region.
10. There should be solution centres for organic agriculture in the form of 'Help Desks' (international, national and regional) in the region.
11. There should be regional and national organic agriculture coordinating centres.
12. Model pilot projects on organic agriculture should be instituted in strategic locations in countries within the region to serve as learning places for others.

Marketing and quality control

1. Potential producers and consumers of organic products should be encouraged to invest in the organic sector.
2. There should be the organization of standard sales outlets for organic products to bring organic produce closer to potential buyers.
3. Regional regulations and quality control measures should be developed.
4. Cooperation with appropriate international bodies, such as ITC, UNCTAD, UNEP and IFOAM should be encouraged in the region.

CONCLUSION

In 2009, West Africa still had a low level of organic agriculture activities. However, considering the potentials within the region that can support organic agriculture, 'the sky is the limit' for the expansion of organic agriculture. Though there seem to be a lot of problems facing the development of organic agriculture, all these are surmountable if most of the necessary interventions suggested above are put in place. The fact that West Africa has a diversity of agricultural ecological zones, as well as other strengths, could provide a comparative advantage for the region over others in Africa for diversified organic agriculture production.

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