



Green Economy and Trade Opportunities Project (GE-TOP) South Africa
2nd national Stakeholder Workshop – Summary Report

Spier Wine Estate, biodynamic farm, Stellenbosch
11 August 2015, 9:00 – 17:00



Introduction

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) undertakes the Green Economy and Trade Opportunities Project (GE-TOP) to identify and assess sustainable trade opportunities arising from the transition to a green economy, and to provide stakeholders with targeted recommendations and assistance.

In this context, the national-level GE-TOP in South Africa has the objective to assess the sustainable trade potential of South Africa's organic agriculture sector arising from the implementation of internationally recognised organic certification. Through an analytical study of the organic agricultural sector, GE-TOP South Africa contributes to the global GE-TOP project as one example showcasing sustainable trade opportunities at the country and sector level.

Organic products are produced, regulated, certified, researched, sold and consumed by a large range of actors, in a global market that can be disaggregated to regional, national and local level. To facilitate a shift towards a green and more sustainable economy, the objectives of various actors need to be fully understood, so that recommendations at farmer, policy and industry levels can holistically address needs and generate environmental, social and economic benefits from organic production and trade.

For this purpose, the GE-TOP South Africa assembled key stakeholders of the South African organic sector on 11 August 2015 at the Spier Wine Estate in Stellenbosch, to discuss challenges and opportunities for sustainable exports of organic produce from South Africa and related Green Economy benefits.

Rationale for GE-TOP South Africa

Organic Agriculture and the Green Economy are inseparably linked, as organic farming practices address economic, social and environmental aspects. The global food industry is influenced by numerous food safety and production standards that arise from national regulations, retailer requirements, and also consumer demands. South Africa has had an organic industry for many years, yet, in absence of a national organic standard the industry is still in its developmental phase and lacks behind in public awareness – often, a very central challenge is to define “what is organic?”.



Globally, 82 countries have adopted rules and regulations to inform and conceptualize organic production. Broadly defined, organic production comprises many categories and includes crop production, animal husbandry, aquaculture, fibres, and so forth. Predominantly, in Africa and Asia, countries have decided not to adopt an organic regulation but have published a national organic production standard, which serves as reference point for certification services. Both organic regulation and organic production standards have many primary and secondary effects, which include to

- neutrally inspect standard compliance without a conflict of interest;
- enable consumer awareness to stimulate an active dialogue across society;
- facilitate value added manufacturing to create employment opportunities;
- assist the development of composite products and product innovations;
- contribute to South Africa's trade and balance of payment agenda.

The national GE-TOP study identifies and assesses trade aspects of organic agriculture and the green economy in order to contribute to the development of the organic industry in South Africa. Further, the study analyses benefits that result from a shift to organic production, and export opportunities that result thereof. In particular, the following benefits and opportunities from organic production were identified as follows:

- to allow domestic suppliers to benefit from an unsaturated demand;
- to contribute to business and market development activities;
- to stimulate debate around more sustainable farming practices.

Workshop Summary

The workshop welcomed a well-balanced group of actors with an interest and stake in the South African organic sector. It comprised participation of government officials, certification bodies, academia, farmers and processors, traders and value chain advisors, as well as local and international organizations.

The workshop was designed to facilitate stakeholder engagement. Each workshop theme was introduced by a presentation / panel discussion and evolved into an open floor component where attendees were able to ask questions and provide comments related to the theme. The workshop was



guided by a professional facilitator, who managed the group process throughout the day.

The stakeholder workshop was structured as follows:

Session 1: Trudi Hartzenberg (tralac) and Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga (UNEP South Africa) welcomed the participants and introduced the GE-TOP from a global perspective. Both made references to the global trade and sustainability agenda relevant for South Africa.

Session 2 was led by the question how organic farming practices can be promoted in South Africa to harness international export opportunities and related Green Economy benefits. Lennart Kuntze (UNEP ETB) presented the trade and green economy nexus, explained the global GE-TOP project, tracked the green economy evolution in South Africa and eluded to further UNEP project activities in organic agriculture. Willemien Viljoen (tralac) explained the situation of organic agriculture in South Africa, highlighting aspects for primary products. Armin Roggendorf (Afri-Trade) provided an overview of the EU organic market and how export opportunities can be realized at company level. Further, he explained a UNEP cost-benefit analysis methodology, highlighting aspects relevant for organic sector development in South Africa.

Session 3 discussed the Regulatory Environment for Organic Farming in South Africa. The session involved three members of the SABS technical committee, namely Sue Jackson from Wensleydale Organics; Hans Klink from Agro-Organics; and Alan Rosenberg from Lindros Earth Consultants / South African Organic Sector Organisation. The group discussed whether national standards facilitate organic sector development. They provided an overview of the regulatory environment, and highlighted the issue in publishing the draft organic standard. The group concluded that standards contribute to establish consumer confidence and development of trade and manufacturing opportunities, and thereby can indeed facilitate organic sector development.

Session 4 discussed Sustainability Certification in South Africa and involved three organic certification bodies and a sustainability standard programme, namely Dr Marianna Smith from Ecocert; Lisa Ryser from UTZ Certified, Sönke Hobbensiefken from Ceres Cert, and Werner Euler from Control Union. A leading aim of this session was identifying what would be required to support South African organic farmers. Certification body representatives further explained



challenges of certification bodies, especially the common misunderstanding that they would be able to consult and guide farmers towards compliance.

Session 5 opened the floor to re-cap on themes of the day, and how the workshop could best inform finalization of the GE-TOP study as well as contribute to an organic industry development in South Africa. Key challenges and recommendations identified at the workshop are summarized below:

Issues/Challenges in Certified organic farming

1. Comparison with rest of Africa is problematic (supply & demand aspects)
2. Assessing global yield/ha, SA's commercial agriculture is on 'steroids' (excessive use of fertilizers etc.). What is the CBA of non-conversion to more sustainable farming practices?
3. The organic Industry is not organized well
4. Need for increased knowledge sharing in the industry - what is the best practice (product categories, regions etc.) for organic farming in SA?
5. Farmers often do not understand what is meant by certification or what is required
6. Farmers need have better advice and assistance to move away from agro-chemical use
7. Traceability of value chain is important and third party certification are needed
8. Farmers often lack core market/business skills
9. Lack of organic trade fairs in South Africa and of access to international trade fairs for South African organic producers
10. Evidence of organic yields must be made publically available
11. Need to develop a whole value chain – does it start with the farmer?
12. Need for certified / organic alternatives to pesticides, and better information for farmers of allowed inputs

Recommendations

- 1) Uncertified farmers (small-scale and commercial) need to be included in the discussion around environmental, social and economic sustainability
- 2) Get the South African Organic Standard sorted by removing language-issues (WTO TBT compatibility) in the draft standard
- 3) Develop adequate consulting services / Information hub / regional training groups or programmes, in order to assist organic farmers / farmers who would like to become (more) organic



- 4) Strengthen the organic sector body with financial resources and relevant capacities as organic agriculture touches on many interrelated aspects
- 5) Register all organic training courses and capacity building initiatives with Agri-Seta
- 6) Stimulate conversation with the market, i.e. consumers, retailers, traders. To develop a local organic market the retailers would need to acknowledge and support the SABS standard
- 7) Develop a communication and knowledge exchange platform so that existing expertise is connected with stakeholders
- 8) Develop an organic advocacy system that facilitates an organic policy and responds to legal issues around international trade and organic agriculture
- 9) Start a national farmer development programme that gets farmers into farming and that promotes a Participatory Guarantee System
- 10) Develop labelling (markets) for farmers in conversion
- 11) Run a parallel process for local and export market development
- 12) Develop value added products for export market, which are also located in Africa and Asia – watch standards, harmonization and equivalence
- 13) Develop case studies that look at commercial and small farmers and develop a cost benefit analysis for each farmer category as well as crop under production
- 14) Circulate organic policy document
- 15) Stimulate more workshop / discussion gatherings of this nature
- 16) South Africa to connect with the international community
- 17) Identify substances that can be used as allowed inputs
- 18) Get organized as a sector and speak with one voice
- 19) Start speaking to your neighbor (farm level, department level, country level)
- 20) Establish a joint gov't and industry initiative of sustainable value chains

Further information & slides

Please click this link [here](#)