CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGROECOLOGICAL ENTERPRISES AND TERRITORIAL MARKET ACTORS IN UGANDA

Brief from peer-to-peer session

1st Country Convening
for Agroecological Entrepreneurs and
Territorial Market Actors
in Uganda

26th-27th July 2023

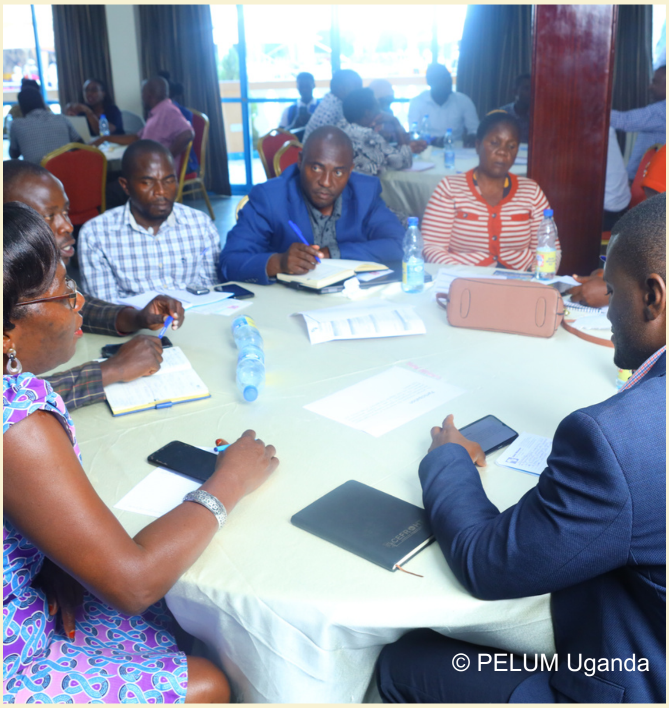
SUMMARY

Over 100 representatives of agro-ecological enterprises (AEEs) and territorial market actors came together over two days for the convening organized by PELUM Uganda, AFSA and Biovision Foundation.[1]

PEER-TO-PEER SESSION

The peer-to-peer session focused on fostering connections between different agroecological enterprises, identifying common challenges and opportunities along the value chain and across different actor groups, and co-creating and exchanging best practices and formulating demands and policy recommendations.

[1] PELUM Uganda together with AFSA selected the AEEs and territorial market actors in advance, focusing on enterprises and actors, that apply at least 6 out of the 13 principles of Agroecology (HPLE 2019).



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REPRESENTED ACTORS

The following actor groups took part:

- Agroecology extension workers / advisors
- Agricultural input producers
- Farmer groups
- Agri-processors
- Territorial market actors
- Agritourism / Agroecology farms
- Civil society / institutions

MAIN POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incooperate agroecology in the national agricultural extension services
- Focus on local value creation through more value addition activities
- Support standardization and certification of AE sector to ensure quality
- Focus on rasising awareness of impact and opportunity of AE with consumers, civil society and other stakeholders
- Support Agroecological Enterprises’ formalization and commercialization along the whole value chain through
  - affordable and suitable financing
  - creating incentives
  - tax exemptions

HIGHLIGHTS

First the different actor groups exchanged amongst themselves, and then provided inputs to other actor groups in mixed sessions. These exchanges demonstrated the potential and breadth of knowledge to be accessed through peer-to-peer exchanges. It also helped the different actors to understand challenges and opportunities for collaboration along value chains and across different roles.

And finally, clear policy recommendations were formulated, showing the need for more advocacy work and an enabling policy environment for the shift to more sustainable and equitable food systems. These recommendations will be used for upcoming policy work and to further understand the pressing issues AEEs face.

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Missing connectivity between agroecoleogical businesses hinders knowledge and experience sharing
- Missing quality control standards and labels
- Limited consumer knowledge about agroecology
- Establishing fully agroecological value chains
- Other common challenges for small and medium businesses

MAIN DEMANDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on local value creation through more value addition activities
- Consumer awareness and education
- Distinctive marketing of agroecological products (packaging and marketing)
- Targeted and suitable financing for whole value chains
- Capacity building and awareness raising with producers
- Standardization and quality control of the agroecological sector, mainly also through participatory guarantee systems
- Need for the collection and use of data
- Need for the scaling of agroecological produce
- Strengthening of the AE community through networks

MARKETS & CONSUMERS

BEST PRACTICES

Earth markets & organic markets

- Promotion sustainable food systems and raising consumer awareness
- Productivity scale-up (market is available)
- Organic stalls also in common markets
- Provision of clean, fair and good food
- Specific market days
- Encourage market to market networking
- Focus on consumers (customer care)
- Enable connection between farmers and consumers
- Advocate for AE through markets
- Offer a traceability system
- Increase fairness through more direct market linkages

Common markets

- Availability of a variety of products
- Affordability
- Increased stall size
- Employment opportunities

CHALLENGES

Earth markets & organic markets

- Low production of AE products
- Poor accessibility
- Timely supply
- Competition between common markets and organic markets

Common markets

- Waste accumulation
- No food safety practices
- Environmental degradation
- Poor storage facilities/preservation
- Poor sanitation
- Non healthy food
- Management is a challenge
- Competition for customers
- Competition between organic and common markets

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Embrace technology for online stalls
- Focus on awareness creation
- Improve accessibility
- Adopt certifications & standards
- Organic produce organizers
- Improve preservation of fresh produce (cold rooms)
- Offer value addition training
- Improve delivery services

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Raise consumer awareness for the importance of organic products and markets.
- Create information campaigns and trainings for farmers and market traders in value addition activities: How can it be ensured that they do not lose out on profits?
- Offer tax exemptions for AE inputs.
- Ensure that organic and agroecological policies that exist are implemented.

AE EXTENSION WORKERS / ADVISORS

BEST PRACTICES

- Farmer mobilization
- Organize community-based learning exchanges (seminars, workshops, demos)
- Organize AE fairs and exhibitions
- Conduct field visits
- Participate in media talk shows (mass-outreach) through digital tools, apps, media engagements
- translate knowledge & information in the various local dialects (posters, flyers etc.)
- Foster networking and collaborations
- Use pull and push communication mechanisms
- Integrate digital tools (farmer profiling, data collection, traceability)
- Ethics of professional extension work

CHALLENGES

- Conflicting narrative and crituque about AE
- Government policies like vision 2040 focus on large-scale industrial production
- Affordable extension equipment and logistics
- Increasing use of agrochemicals and synthetic fertilizers
- Low extension worker to farmer ratio
- Limited incorporation of AE in NARS (national agri-resource systems)
- Climate change
- Expensive media channels
- Competition from large conventional agriculture companies with larger (financial) power

OPPORTUNITIES

- Growing demand for sustainable food systems
- Strong need for ISFM (integrated soil fertility management) for tropical soils
- Advancement in communication technology
- Enabling government policies
- 68% are smallholder farmers
- Availability of knowledge and information on agroecology (AEAKIS)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Certification for AE extension workers and businesses
- Incorporation of AE in education institutions
- Support Agroecology research and research centers
- Adaptation to climate change
- Create more incentives for agroecology

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Incorporate agroecology in the national agriculture extension system.
- Create incentives along the whole value chain.

FARMER GROUPS

BEST PRACTICES

- Use of organic manure and organic pesticides
- Intercropping
- Soil and water conservation structures
- Agroforestry
- Locally made beehives on farm
- Process and package farm products such as honey, chili, coffee, etc.
- Crop rotation
- Recommended spacing and seed rate
- Rare animals and birds on the farm
- Farmer saved seeds
- Water harvesting to irrigate farm
- Proper post harvesting handling directly on farm
- Good leak proof and rodent prone storage
- Mulching
- Farm waste recycling
- Minimum tillage

CHALLENGES

- Climate change
- Limited financing in agroecology
- Existence of a knowledge gap between farmers and buyers
- Limited value addition initiatives
- Low recognition of organic products among buyers

OPPORTUNITIES

- Resources are readily available around / on farms e.g. manure
- Upcoming agroecology markets locally
- Increasing demand for organic produce and products globally
- Organic markets

RECOMMENDATIONS

- More awareness on agroecology is needed. Advocate for translation into different languages.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- By laws at group level and subcounty level and district level to enable AE to be a success (e.g.: if every farmer must recycle their residues and make fertilizers, agroecology can be successful).
- Financing the AE value chain from the farmer level: for example through affordable financing/loans for for agroecology farmers and other actors.

INSTITUTIONS / CIVIL SOCIETY

BEST PRACTICES

- Partnerships and collaborations
- Advocacy
- Networking
- Capacity building and information sharing
- Documentation of agricultural practices
- Studies and surveys on different issues (for research or M&E)
- Provide linkages to different markets both local and international
- Offer opportunities for resource mobilization
- Coordinating different stakeholders

OPPORTUNITIES

- Gender mainstreaming
- Use of ICT
- Government funding
- Enabling government policy
- Available farmers willing to learn and practice agroecology
- Formation of cooperatives
- Expertise on agroecology
- Research opportunities
- Collaboration of government and private sectors

CHALLENGES

- Limited funds
- Donor dependency
- Consumer awareness is limited
- Uncoordinated information among farmers
- Corruption
- Conflict of interest
- Competition from other conventions
- Political interference (counterproductive incentives)
- Negative perception towards agroecology
- Limited capacity in ICT
- Contradiction between organic and non-organic practices

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for consortium grants
- Create self-sustaining initiatives
- Have income generating projects within the CSOs
- Awareness creation among farmers and consumers
- Advocate for transparency
- Engage the government from an initial stage
- Localize information to farmers

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Profile agroecology activities, particularly products, and generate data on products that can be used for decision-making.
- Develop a framework for agroecological enterprises to be able to commercialize. This may be a checklist that defines what an agroecology business is.

AGRO TOURISM / AE FARMS

BEST PRACTICES

- Agroforestry
- Food and culture
- Entertainment (music, dance, drama)
- Culture and history
- Attractive farm environment
- Walking/navigation track
- Accommodation facilities
- Reading materials (books on farm programme)
- Community impact
- Educational (on nature and farming)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Income generation/diversification
- Knowledge sharing
- Job creation
- Exposure visits
- Products free from chemicals
- Competition free
- Availability of customers
- Easy access to social media
- Increasing awareness

CHALLENGES

- No regulations in place
- Poor quality services
- No sensitization within the activities
- Limited funding
- Traditional spirit of giving things for free
- Poor management systems
- Need of owning a large piece of land
- Climate change

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Capacity building
- Proper documentation
- Farm development programme
- Constant training and networking
- Use of media to create awareness
- Government should regulate through proper policies
- Self-regulatory bodies
- Adaptation to climate change

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen agrotourism associations, this will help to create one voice and be more impactful.
- Capacity building in setting up farms, awareness and documentation of farms.
- More relevant and supportive regulations need to be in place.

AGRO PROCESSORS

BEST PRACTICES

- Pre-inspection of farms
- Quality assurance of raw materials
- Traceability and recording
- Grading and sorting of the raw materials
- Cleaning and drying (waste management)
- Check for moisture content
- Test for different quality parameters
- Safety measures (PPEs)
- Processing (drying, crushing, rinding, frying)
- Preservation (packaging cofriendly)
- Test final pdt-sensory analysis
- Storage and dispatch
- Ensure certification (organic, uality, export)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Seasonal raw materials, which can be bought in season and at low cost – to add value
- Agro-industrialization by government, NGO and civil society
- High demand for Ugandan locally grown products (organic) by local and international markets
- Availability of agroecological entrepreneurs (agro-processors)
- Funding opportunities for agroecology enterprises
- Tax exemption (manufacturing & agro-processing)
- Advanced technology (solar energy, robotics)
- Labour force unskilled and skilled

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Facilitate and encourage business formalization and certification, allowing agro-processors to easily certify their products with URA, UNBS, and URSB.
- Promote and strengthen local value addition through local agroecological products and import substitution.

AGRO INPUT PRODUCERS

BEST PRACTICES

- Identification of clean planting materials (indigenous seeds)
- Use of integrated pest management
- Use of organic/biofertilizers
- Soil testing
- Seed sampling & seed variability
- Use of bio pesticides
- Use of organic herbicides

CHALLENGES

- Certification of the products
- Low production capacity
- Logistics
- Pests and diseases
- Soil degradation
- Storage
- Taxes
- Inadequate capital
- Unfavorable policies
- Durability of products
- Production time

OPPORTUNITIES

- Production of biofertilizers / organic
- Multiplication and sale of indigenous seeds
- Production of bio pesticides
- Accessibility of locally available material

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establishment of local seed banks
- Working with co-operative societies
- Certify products
- Advocate for better policies
- Connect to market
- Collaborate with other parties and funders
- Offer trainings and advisory services

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on certification and standardization of the agroecological sector. The quality of agroecological products needs to be ensured.
- Create awareness about agroecological input and offer training to smallholder farmers.