

**Organic farming in Africa
– between global food markets and food sovereignty –**

GEROLD RAHMANN¹

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Organic farming is a worldwide harmonized concept (IFOAM standards 2005, FAO/WHO codex alimentarius 2008) to ensure the environmentally sound and socially fair production and consumption of agricultural products. Organic production is practiced in more than 110 countries (of a total of 197 countries) on 32 million hectares of land (0.7 % of total agricultural land use) by more than 650,000 farms (of a total of 700 million farms) (Willer & Yussefi 2008). The products are mainly consumed in developed western countries – the market has a value of more than 40 billion US-\$ and is growing by more than 10 % annually (Organic Monitor 2008). The global organic market is attractive for developing countries to sell premium products.

Only 0.1 % of the farm land in Africa (900,000 ha or 3 % of the world's organic farm land) is certified for organic farming. About 130,000 farms practice organic farming. Some countries dominate organic farming in Africa. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya alone comprise 400,000 ha on 90,000 organic farms. A total of 60,000 ha of the organic land in Africa is arable land (7 %), 300,000 ha are permanent crops (33 %) and 35,000 ha are pasture (4 %). No information is available for 450,000 ha (50 %). Coffee, tea, tropical fruits, herbs, drugs and cotton are the main products and most of them sold to Europe. Only in some African cities are labelled organic products sold on the local, national market – mainly to foreigners and wealthy people.

There is a big market for wild food in Africa. This is mainly collected for local consumption. Some wild crops are for global markets as well (roibush, *Harpagophytum* spp). The exploitation of natural resources by wild collection can be severe. The export-focused organic market has many aspects of eco-colonialism: it defines the standards, the price and the markets. Participation and fair food sovereignty are fulfilled both in this sector and in the conventional sector.

Besides serving the global market, organic farming is able to fulfil the demand of food self sufficiency and food sovereignty. Particularly in Africa the food crises are severe and will be critical in the future (FAO 2008). Climate change, increasing population and natural (droughts, floods) and man made (wars, desertification, degradation, de-forestation, diseases) disasters lead to hunger, migration and critical economic and social situations. Organic farming measures can improve land use management and increase production yields in low input and self sufficiency farming systems. The organic movement must define the role of organic farming development in Africa.

¹ Prof. Dr. agr. habil. Gerold Rahmann, Institute of Organic Farming, German Federal Research Institute for Rural areas, Forestry and Fisheries (vTI), www.vti.bund.de, Trenthorst 32, 23847 Westerau, Germany, e-mail: gerold.rahmann@vti.bund.de