STUDENT RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM UNDER ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE INITIATIVE (EOA-I) IN KENYA

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STUDENT RESEARCH SUPPORT


1. Background
The Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Initiative is an African Union-led continental undertaking started in 2011 and currently implemented in eight countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda). It is implemented under the guidance and oversight of the AU chaired Continental Steering Committee (CSC) to establish an African organic farming platform based on available best practices; and to develop sustainable organic farming systems and improve seed quality. Its mission is to promote ecologically sound strategies and practices among diverse stakeholders involved in production, processing, marketing and policy making to safeguard the environment, improve livelihoods, alleviate poverty and guarantee food security among farmers in Africa. The goal is to contribute to mainstreaming of Ecological Organic Agriculture into national agricultural production systems by 2025 in order to improve agricultural productivity, food security, access to markets and sustainable development in Africa. In addition, these efforts are hoped to reduce exploitation of the organic farmers in Africa.

The initiative embraces holistic production systems that sustain the health of soils, ecosystems and people, and relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions rather than reliance on the use of external inputs with adverse effects on people’s total health (human, animal, plant and environmental). The EOA initiative was started in response to the African Union Heads of State and Government’s call for the promotion of organic farming in Africa. The African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with several civil society organizations, organized an inception workshop in May 2011 in Thika Kenya, with financial support from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) to discuss how to implement this decision. The workshop successfully resulted in a roadmap, concept note and an African Organic Action Plan to mainstream ecological organic agriculture into national agricultural production systems. The action plan was supported by SSNC, in a pilot undertaken in 2012 in six countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in Eastern Africa; Zambia in Southern Africa; and Nigeria in Western Africa) while Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supported baseline studies in Benin, Mali and Senegal in the third quarter of 2013. Further discussions led to the development of an 8-country project proposal supported by SDC for the first phase (2014-2018) while SSNC with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation (Sida) supported the EOA Initiative in some Eastern Africa countries through civil society organizations from 2013 to date. The African Union also supports the EOA Initiative through funds provided by the European Union and other sources.

The implementation of the Initiative’s five-year Action Plan (2015-2020) and Strategic Plan (2015-2025) is anchored on six complimentary pillars: (i) Research, training and extension, (ii) Information and communication, (iii) Value chain and market development, (iv) Networking and partnership, (v) Policy and programme development, and (vi) Institutional capacity development. However, in the current SDC contribution, the initiative is driven by the first three technical pillars and fourth one encompassing
coordination, management and networking, basically integrating components of pillars (iv), (v) and (vi).

The key four objectives of the EOA Initiative are:
1. To increase documentation of information and knowledge on organic agricultural products along the complete value chains and support relevant actors to translate it into practices and wide application.
2. To systematically inform producers about the EOA approaches and good practices and motivate their uptake through strengthening access to advisory and support services.
3. To substantially increase the share of quality organic products at the local, national, regional and global markets.
4. To strengthen inclusive stakeholder engagement in organic commodities value chain development by developing national, regional and continental multi-stakeholder platforms to advocate for changes in public policy, plans and practices.

2. About Research support component by SSNC

Under the function of ‘research component’ the EOA Initiative seeks to support students currently undertaking studies in public institutions. The support targets students keen on undertaking research in Organic Agriculture/Agroecology and related sustainable agriculture research and studies that will contribute towards informing and populating the research data on organic agriculture.

This is being undertaken in form of issuance of a student research opportunity. The issuance is being undertaken under the auspices of the Biovision Africa Trust the lead coordinating organization in charge of two EOAI pillars (Information and Communication and Policy and Program Development) within which the function of research lies. More information about the EOA Initiative can be found here; https://eoai-africa.org/

3. About the Research Opportunity Program (ROP)

The Research Opportunity Program (ROP) gives Masters and PhD students a chance to participate and contribute to the EOA research agenda while earning their course credit. Successful students in the program have the rare opportunity to be involved in hands-on, cutting-edge research, working one-on-one with a public university while being financially supported by the EOA Initiative. Through the ROP, the student will gain practical skills and knowledge that can be applied in their careers or towards future graduate studies. The student will use the experiences to build strong relationships with EOA practitioners in their research field and explore new areas of interest.

4. Why the Research Opportunity Program (ROP)?

Through this call, the EOA Initiative aims to contribute towards building a body of scientific data supporting ecological organic agriculture by identifying, understanding and filling the gaps in the uptake of ecological organic agriculture practices along the entire commodity value chains. The goal of the programme is to increase the number of under-represented students who pursue graduate study and research careers in sustainable agriculture as well as to promote youth involvement in agriculture by funding their research. The ROP helps prepare undergraduates for graduate study through intensive research experiences with EOA practitioners and enrichment activities. The research opportunity will favor students currently undertaking organic research in a relevant topic.

5. Deliverables

- Should submit final thesis approved and finalized by the University with Biovision Africa Trust support acknowledged under Ecological Organic Agriculture project within 2 years of this support
- Should publish at least 2 articles from this work within 2 years of this support
• Should acknowledge Biovision Africa Trust as one of the contributors/authors to the publications from this support

6. Requirements
The successful candidate should;

• Be a master’s or PhD student providing evidence from the dean of students on ongoing studies in sustainable agriculture or related course (students within the EOA network of stakeholders will have an added advantage)
• Have an approved research proposal by the University.
• Should demonstrate the need to receive partial funding for activities and show evidence of support for the rest of the planned activities
• Should acknowledge Biovision Africa Trust as one of the contributors/authors to the publications from this support
• Should publish at least 2 publications from this work

7. How to apply
Interested candidates should submit the following:
a) A brief proposal indicating why you need the research support and how it will help in contributing to Ecological Organic Agriculture agenda.
b) Financial budget showing the cost of conducting the study, breakdown of research costs and work plan
c) Names and contacts of three referees (phone numbers and email) including your main and assistant study supervisor
d) A one-page write-up showing why you are the most suitable person to get support

If you are interested in the above call for student opportunity and can demonstrate your ability to meet the qualifications required, then submit your expression of interest with the above mentioned documents to info@biovisionafricatrust.org with the subject heading: Student Research Opportunity Program Under Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) In Kenya

The closing date for applications is 31st of August 2018

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interviews.

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