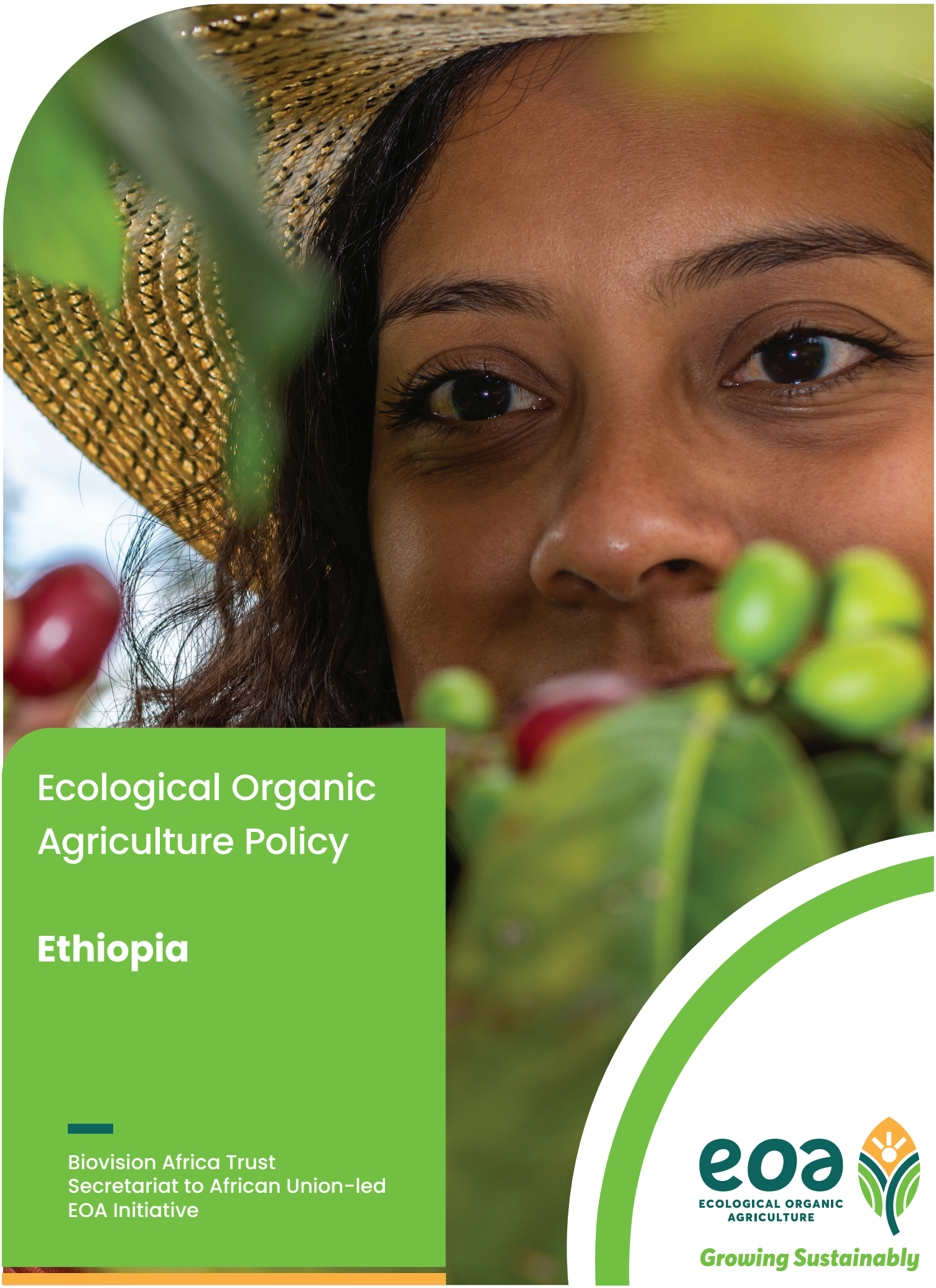

# Ecological Organic Agriculture Policy

## Ethiopia

Biovision Africa Trust
Secretariat to African Union-led
EOA Initiative

eoa
ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

*Growing Sustainably*

BvAT (2021). Ecological Organic Agriculture Policy Brief for Ethiopia

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**For**

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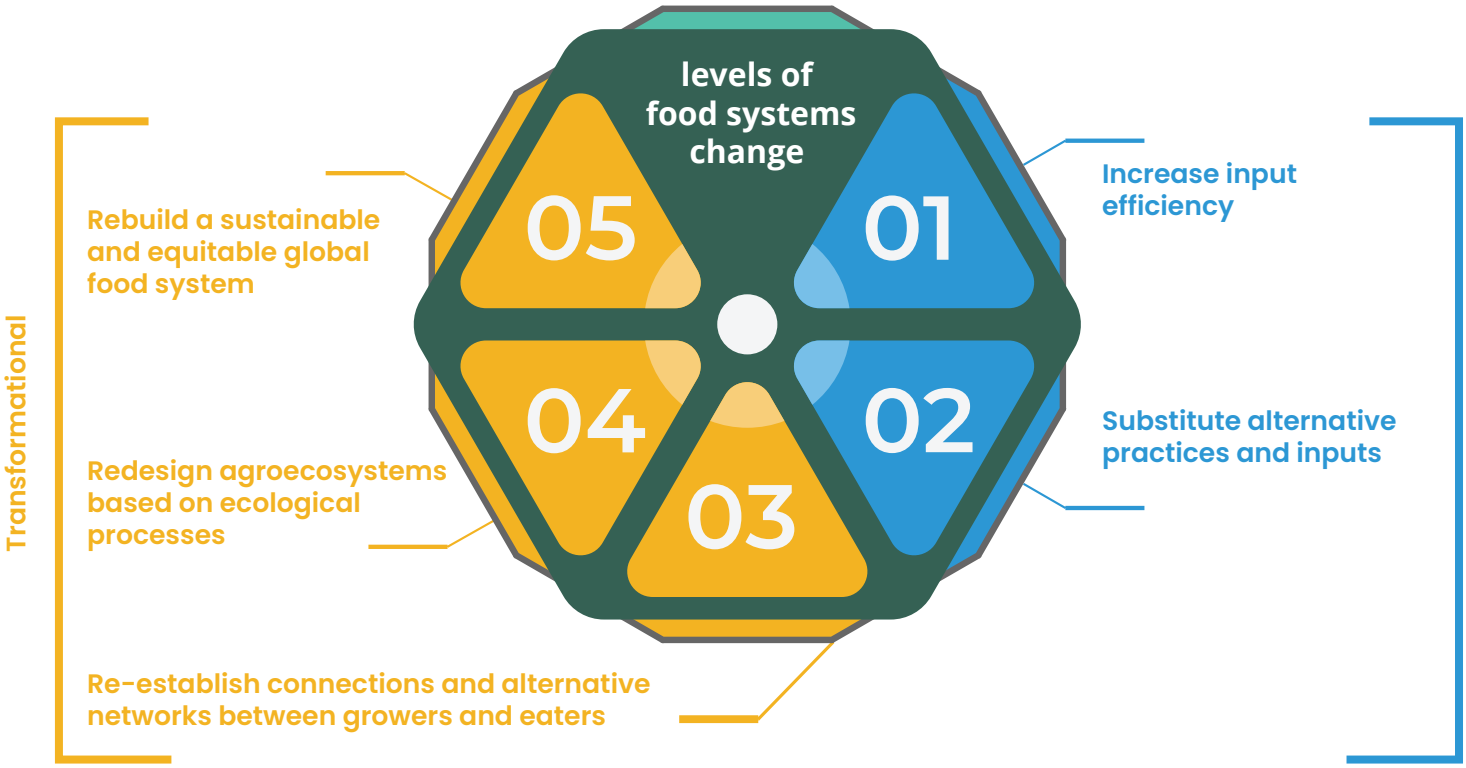
# Eastern Africa Agriculture Context: Why Ecological Organic Agriculture?

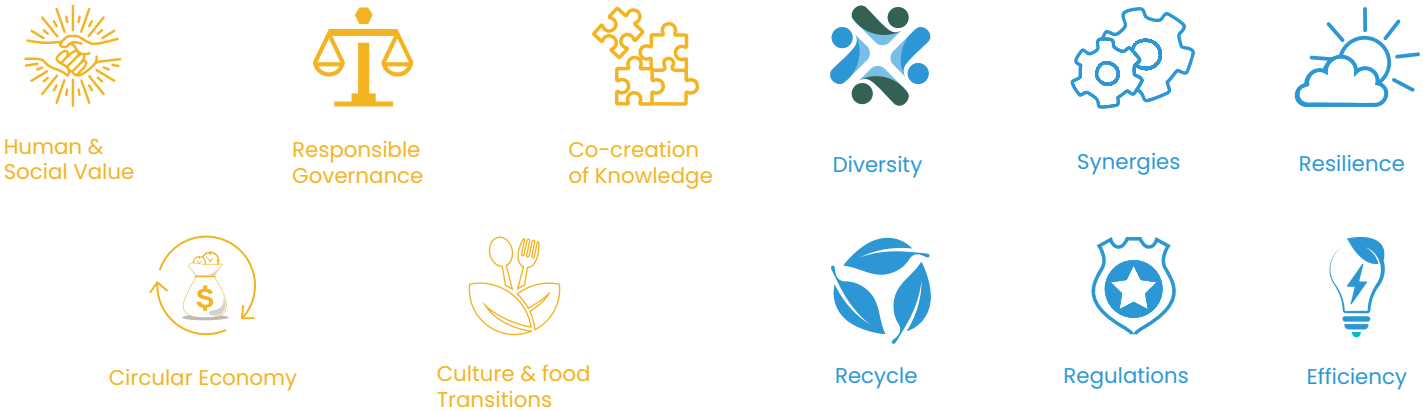
Africa's food systems and agriculture face complex and interrelated challenges, requiring systemic solutions supported by an enabling policy environment for food systems transformation. Hunger and food insecurity are rising, and these issues are worsened by growing numbers of micronutrient deficiency and obesity-related health issues. Dwindling biodiversity and the impacts of climate change further threaten agricultural and food systems and require fundamental transformations. These transformations are essential in enhancing sustainability, resilience and increased production of quality and quantity of food under dramatically changing conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has painfully highlighted the poor resilience and equity in industrial food systems. Agroecology and organic farming increasingly take a whole food systems approach. The FAO Agroecology Criteria Tool distinguishes five levels of food systems change, the first two associated with incremental changes and the last three with transformational changes.

Using a typology developed for the African Union based on five EOA types, there are four (4) advanced EOA countries, eleven (11) active EOA countries, ten (10) developing EOA countries, twelve (12) infant EOA countries and eighteen (18) countries awaiting inspiration regarding Ecological Organic Agriculture. In West Africa, Benin, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal have joined EOA Initiative. In Eastern Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda have also joined the EOA Initiative.

## The Agroecology Criteria Tool + 10 elements of Agroecology




Organic agriculture and agroecology provide systemic and evidence-based solutions to these interrelated challenges, resulting in increased sustainability, equity and resilience of food systems. This, however, requires a major shift in funding and public policies. Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) will put carbon into the soil, not the atmosphere; it will reduce poison use, reduce pollution, improve food quality and increase water use efficiency. Since the 2010 decision on Organic Agriculture of the African Union (AU) Heads of State, the EOA Initiative has been implemented to support small-scale farmers and improve African food security and sovereignty. Eastern Africa has more countries supporting Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) than any other region of Africa through the EOA Initiative, but there is still a long way to go.

Several issues need to be addressed in Ethiopia's agricultural development, such as:

- Transport infrastructure for access to markets.
- Equitable land rights.
- Public procurement schemes for sustainably country produced foods.
- Payment for ecosystem services to farmers.
- Communities and entrepreneurs.
- Elimination of subsidies for synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds.
- Integrated seed systems value traditional varieties and breeds and seed exchange systems.
- Promotion of agroforestry.
- Strengthening of agroecological research and development as well as participatory extension services.
- Integration of agroecology in the country's climate change adaptation plan.
- Organic waste strategies take principles of the circular economy into account.
- Formalized inclusive multi-stakeholder processes for policy development on food system change.

## The situation in Ethiopia: Food system and agricultural production

Ethiopia has one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, averaging over 10% per year. It's a landlocked country situated in the Horn of Africa, sharing frontiers with Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan, covering an area of 1,133,380 km2. Ethiopia is endowed with significant environmental and natural resources to increase agricultural productivity. However, while 85% of the population lives in rural areas, agriculture in Ethiopia is characterised by low production and productivity. Numerous environmental, physical and institutional factors contribute to low productivity (weak extension service delivery, crop and livestock diseases, soil and environmental degradation, inadequate coordination and lack of institutions that provide adequate and quality services to the smallholder farmers).

Despite Ethiopia's great progress and improvement in health and nutrition over the past 30 years, reports confirm that poor nutrition remains, with 38% of children under five stunted and 18% severely stunted in 2016. While undernutrition among women of reproductive age has declined from 30% in 2000 to 22% in 2016, the prevalence of women who are overweight or obese has increased from 3% to 8% during that same period. Anaemia is also prevalent among women of reproductive age (16%) and children under five (57%). Households escaping and then falling back into poverty is a major issue. Poverty fell by 33% between 2000 and 2011, but 63% of those who escaped poverty between 1999 and 2009 fell back into it within five years, suggesting that net poverty reduction would be substantially higher if households could sustainably escape poverty.

Agriculture accounts for 40% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 80% of exports and employs an estimated 75% of the workforce. Ethiopia cultivates staple and cash crops and has the largest livestock population in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country's agricultural production is dominated by highland smallholder farmers who manage over 90% of the agricultural land. In contrast to the highlands, lowland pastoralists rely on livestock. To counteract deforestation and soil degradation, the sector needs significant investments in sustainable practices and technologies such as EOA and agroecology, improving climate resilience and adaptation. Tigray region's recent Gold Award by World Future Council for the world's best land restoration effort provides an inspiring example of what is achievable.

# Elements of policy required to transition to sustainable food systems in Ethiopia

**2003**
GoE formed a team to come up with organic agriculture laws and regulations.

**2006**
The OA System (Proclamation No.488/2006) was issued, signed into law.

**2007**
The Ethiopian Association of Organic Agriculture (EAOA) was formed .

In 2003, Government of Ethiopia (GoE) formed a team to develop organic agriculture laws and regulations to describe how organic products would be defined as part of the government's new commitment to supporting the development of organic agriculture. The OA System (Proclamation No.488/2006) was issued, signed into law, and approved by the Ethiopian Parliament on 8 March 2006. This made it possible for Ethiopia to access new markets. In 2007 the Ethiopian Association of Organic Agriculture (EAOA) was formed by 12 NGOs who directly and indirectly supported the organic sector development in terms of training, funding and advocacy. These NGOs included the Institute of Sustainable Development (ISD) in the Tigray Project and Save the Children of the UK, which initiated the first organically based integrated pest management programme in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region, Amhara and Tigray regions, and private companies for the development of EOA. More recently, Ethiopia joined the EOA Initiative.

As a guidance document to implement ecological organic agriculture nationally, a road map for the Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) policy in Ethiopia was drafted in 2018, using lessons and experiences from EOA activities conducted by the different implementing partners. A clear, strong national policy from Ethiopia's federal and regional governments to promote agroecological production will be a major driving force for organic producers, traders and consumers to build a safer, more sustainable, and socially just local food system. A national organic regulation that enforces its implementation is required.

The Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), in collaboration with numerous partners, including the national Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resource, universities, NGOs and media institutions, has been implementing EOA activities in different parts of the country since 2013. In recent years they worked with vegetable farmers in the Holeta area of the Oromia region and the South Wollo zone of the Amhara region, and helped these farmers to set up their own organic farming associations to find better market links. They were able to create better market links and bridge the gap between organic producers and consumers. The results revealed a strong demand for organic products, mainly in the capital, Addis Ababa. To link trained organic farmers more directly with consumers in Addis Ababa, ISD supported farmers in agreeing on contracts with supermarkets and organising organic market open days. The 2018 road map for EOA in Ethiopia is a guidance document for implementing EOA nationally.

In 2005, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) took a more consultative approach to policy formulation, as reported by Kareko-Munene (2020, pp.86-89). The result was the "Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty" (PASDEP). However, although the process included some civil society organisations, it was eventually still put together by a small group, mainly in the office of the prime minister. It was modified after comments by several groups early in 2006, and Phase 3 (2019 to 2023) looks promising but still contains little content on EOA. The pioneering work in Tigray has shown how mobilised communities can achieve miracles, but current violence in Tigray may impact negatively on these achievements.

The Feed the Future initiative has also committed to Climate Smart Ecological Intensification; it is built on sustainably increasing crop and livestock productivity and diversification, improving the business enabling environment, increasing alternative livelihood pathways, including employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, especially for the youth, and expanding access to markets with increased urban opportunities. Together, these will increase employment and income in rural and urban areas and increase the availability of diverse and nutritious foods. This growth will support a gradual shift from an agrarian economy to an economy with an increased share of manufacturing and services coupled with urbanisation. Furthermore, the coordinated effort to link nutrition-sensitive agriculture with other nutrition-specific and sensitive approaches will reduce overall malnutrition.

The Tigray project, which recently won the World Future Council Gold Policy Award, shows how well-planned participatory EOA projects can transform severely degraded regions. This award recognises the work of the Tigray regional government, which has mobilised villagers to volunteer 20 days a year to build terraces, irrigation projects, build stone walls on mountains and hillsides, and other projects to restore land on a massive scale.

As a result, the erosion has decreased significantly, the groundwater levels are recharged, and the uptake of sustainable agricultural practices made a significant contribution to food self-sufficiency and economic growth. Since 1991 Tigray has managed to improve soil and water conservation and closed off 1.2 million ha of land to allow plants to regrow. "Ethiopia's Tigray region shows that restoration of degraded land can be a reality. The model provides hope for other African countries to follow suit," said the Council Chair. The "Tigray Project", as it is often referred to, demonstrates that ecological agricultural practices such as composting, water and soil harvesting, and crop diversification to mirror the diversity of soil conditions can benefit poor farmers, particularly women-headed families.

Among the benefits demonstrated are:

- Increased yields & productivity of crops,
- An improved hydrological cycle with raised water tables and permanent springs improved soil fertility,
- Rehabilitated degraded lands,
- Increased incomes and biodiversity,
- Increased mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

The project is farmer-led and builds on the local technologies and knowledge of the farming communities. Local communities have been empowered and have now developed legally-recognized by-laws to govern their land and other natural resources management activities.

The project's successes have led to its expansion to include many more communities in the Tigray Region and the rest of the country. This happened because the government has now adopted the approach used by the project as its main strategy for combating land degradation and for eradicating poverty in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's main certified organic export products are coffee, honey, sesame, pulses, teff, pineapples, bananas, incense (myrrh), linseed, spices and herbs. Coffee export earns 65% of foreign exchange. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Germany is Ethiopia's primary export partner, accounting for 11-13% of the export volume. Other major partners are Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, the United States, Switzerland and Italy.

The African Union (AU) commissioned an assessment of policy interventions to mainstream EOA in Africa. This study developed a system of measuring progress in EOA based on whether the Country has an organic policy, a product standard, any government support for the sector, well-organised farmers, private sector involvement and developed domestic and export markets for organic products. Based on these seven criteria, a typology ranging from Type 1 (Advanced EOA sector) to Type 5 (Awaiting Inspiration) has been developed. Rwanda has been evaluated as Type 3 (Infant EOA Sector).

# Preliminary EOA Type (Type 3)

**Ethiopia has a developing domestic and export market, some NGO activity, some guidelines and exports, but little government support.**

The summary of evaluations for all 55 African countries of Africa is shown in Figure 1; only four African countries achieved the status of "Advanced EOA Sector" (Type 1). Countries will be re-evaluated regularly according to the seven criteria mentioned above, and the assessment gives key policy interventions needed at each stage of organic sector development.

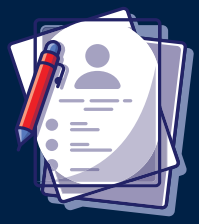
## The Elements of Change Identified for Ethiopia Are:

Nutrition education at school and for young mothers. (Starting point for Type 5).

A school curriculum for healthy and sustainable food systems. (Types 5 & 4).

A training programme for agricultural extension officers. (Type 3).

A support programme for EOA conversion, scaling up and quality management. (Type 2).



Marketing and certification support for semi-commercial EOA farmers. (Type 1).

Support for quality management through training in Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). (Type 2).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Source: Surveyor General.
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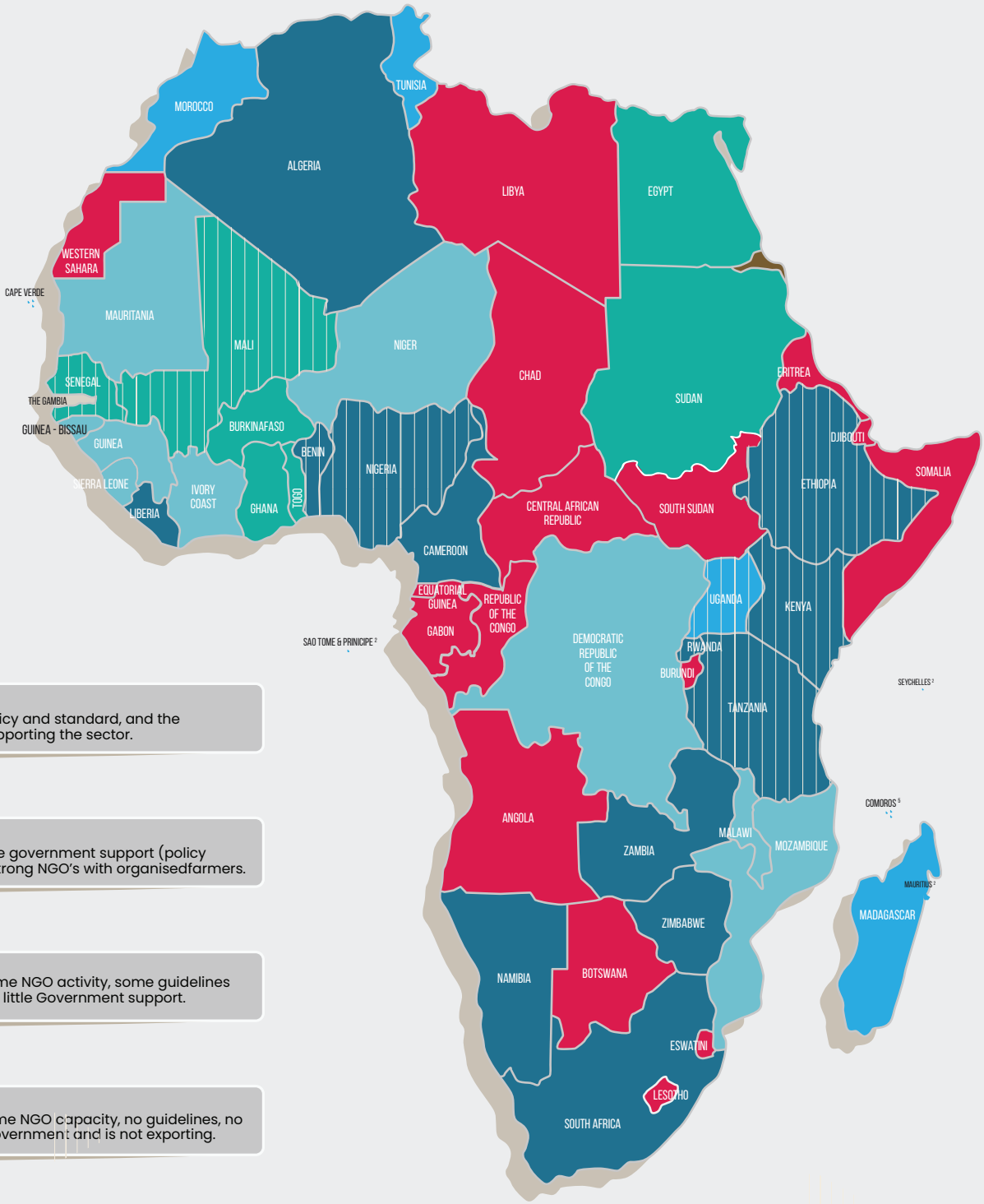


**01**
Country has a policy and standard, and the government is supporting the sector.

**02**
Country has some government support (policy underway) and strong NGO's with organisedfarmers.

**03**
Country has some NGO activity, some guidelines and exports but little Government support.

**04**
Country has some NGO capacity, no guidelines, no support from government and is not exporting.

**05**
Country has very little institutional capacity, no government support and is not exporting.

EOA-I member.

Figure 1: Ecological Organic Agriculture Status of the 55 Countries of Africa
*Source: Biological Systems Consulting & Research for the African Union Commission in 2020*

# Monitoring and evaluation of sustainable food systems in Ethiopia

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is based on the five typologies developed for the assessment analysis study, using the following six criteria:


While Uganda has now adopted an EOA Policy, and the East African Organic Product Standard is available for the whole East Africa Community (EAC), other countries could learn from Uganda and move ahead more swiftly with National EOA policies. All EAC countries need to integrate EOA into the training of their farmers and extension officers. The current FISP approach should largely be abandoned, except that EAC farmers can be helped to produce compost, and, where needed, basal dressings of rock phosphate should be made available at subsidised prices in order to rectify those soils which are deficient in available phosphate.

**The African Union Heads of State agreed in 2010 that EOA should be supported, and each country should monitor progress and report to the AU through CAADP Programme every three years using the M & E Framework.**

# Food system targets and a monitoring and evaluation system to meet them

The indicator framework is built based on the five typologies developed for this study, utilizing the six criteria given:

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**Regarding the first criterion, the assessment requires the following process:**

1(a) An in-depth integrated assessment **of general agriculture policies, programmes and plans should be performed to understand how they affect the competitiveness and production** of the organic sector.

1(b) Objectives for government involvement in the development of the EOA sector **must be clarified and formulated.** All relevant stakeholders should be involved in developing policy, plans and programmes. Objectives can include increased income, environmental protection, biodiversity enhancement, smallholder competitiveness, human health, increased exports, and domestic growth.

1(c) **One government ministry or agency should be assigned a leading role in sector development,** and organic desks should be established in other relevant ministries and agencies.

1(d) **A national organic action plan or strategy must be formulated and implemented.** Plan typically would include aspects of standards, regulations, market development, production issues, capacity-building and research. The plan should be correctly sequenced (logic) and should state measurable targets for the organic sector to help agencies and stakeholders focus their efforts.

1(e) **A Country must formulate a national EOA policy based on participatory policy development with close interaction between the government and the sector.** Government should actively support the sector's organisation and its participation in the policy formulation process.

1(f) A Country has formulated and promulgated some EOA regulations.

1(g) A Country should formulate implementation decrees and action plans for the actioning of the EOA Policy.

1(h) **EOA should be recognised and integrated into the main policies of the country,** e.g. agricultural policy, food, health, education policies, environmental, and poverty eradication policies.

The development of mandatory regulations is considered to be the right policy response to develop the organic sector:

- They give organic agriculture a more respectable and credible image.
- Improved access to export markets.
- Development of the local market.

**Regarding the second criterion (national certification and standards), the following is needed:**

2(a) Standards are available.

2(b) A Participatory Guarantee System needs further development.

2 (c) Governments should **facilitate access to certification services.** The Government could consider establishing a governmental certification service.

**Indicator:** Measure of government support for certification. A proxy may be the ease of access of farmers to certification (i.e. are certification requirements excluding some farmers?).

**Regarding the third criterion (government support), the following is needed:**

3(a) The existing roadmap from EAOA should be used to develop a budget for EOA support.

3(b) Research and extension need to be strengthened in accordance with the Strategic Plan.

**Regarding the fourth criterion (civil sector strength), the following is needed:**

4(a) Mapping of civil society organisations must be performed & assessment of their capacity undertaken.

4(b) Government should support the development of a well-organized sector through EAOA.



**Regarding the fifth and sixth criteria (civil society involvement & markets), the following is needed:**

5(a). Annual growth in an organic agricultural area (ha) must be measured and evaluated against the strategy.

5(b). Measure the change in the number of EOA producers (no.) and set targets for the next three years.

5(c). Determine annual growth in EOA earnings through export and domestically (currency).

5(d). Assess changes in civil society involvement in the organic sector.

EOA Polic
for Ethio

## The Regions of Africa

Like many country borders in Africa, the regions of Africa are subject to discussion, and several countries are involved with more than one region. In developing regional policies for EOA in Africa, the **Eastern Africa** region countries include Southern Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as Somalia. In the **Northern Africa** region the ten countries are Mauritania, Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan, as well as Eritrea and Djibouti.

The fifteen **West African** countries of ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. As several Central African countries are also in the East African Community (EAC), we include only the following eight countries in the **Central African** EOA Policy: Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the island state, Sao Tome & Principe. Under the **Southern African** regional policy, we include Angola, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, South Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius and the Comoros Islands. In this way, each of the 55 countries of Africa is only included in one region for the purposes of this policy.

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