



7<sup>th</sup> April 2022.  
Kampala, Uganda.

Dear Consumers,

## **RE: ORGANIC FOODS FOR SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES**

The World Health Organization estimates that more than 13 million deaths around the world each year are due to avoidable environmental causes. This includes the climate crisis which is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. Our political, social, and commercial decisions are driving the climate and health crisis. According to the World Health Organisation, over 90% of people breathe unhealthy air resulting from the burning of fossil fuels. Extreme weather events, land degradation, and water scarcity are displacing people and affecting our health. Pollution and plastics are found at the bottom of our deepest oceans, the highest mountains, and have made their way into our food chain. Systems that produce highly processed, unhealthy foods and beverages are driving a wave of obesity, increasing cancer and heart disease while generating a third of global greenhouse gas emissions.

On this World Health Day, held on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April each year, we the small-scale food producers thought of reaching you the consumer with a message on feeding on organic products for better health. World Health Day is an annual day dedicated to promoting the benefits of good health and wellbeing worldwide. The theme for World Health Day 2022 is "***Our Planet, Our Health***".

While the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated science's ability to heal, it also revealed the world's injustices. The pandemic exposed flaws in all aspects of society, emphasizing the importance of building sustainable communities committed to ensuring fair health for current and future generations while remaining within ecological boundaries. The goals of a decent economy should be human well-being, justice, and environmental sustainability. Breaking destructive cycles for the earth and human health require legislative action, business reforms, and incentives for individuals to make healthy choices.

We acknowledge the importance of organic foods in fighting poverty and malnutrition in communities. Over the years, we have focused on mobilizing small-scale farmers to conserve and change consumers' perceptions on neglected and underutilized plants, conservation and protection of plant genetic resources through community seed banks (CSBs), participatory plant breeding, establishing organic farming demonstration centres, creating awareness about the need to transition to agro ecology including influencing policies and practices.

WHO guidelines emphasize the importance of eating healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and beans, among other items. These healthy organic foods are produced by small-scale farmers using agro ecological production systems.

Moving forward, we upon consumers to join us and support the transition to a sustainable agriculture system by doing the following actions;

1. Abandon the consumption of unhealthy foods produced using dangerous chemicals, you can do this by always demanding organically produced food in the market. You should know that some of the chemicals that are used in Uganda to produce the food that we eat are banned in developed countries, we need to deliberately stay away from such chemicals. We are advised to “Eat Your Food as your Medicine, Otherwise, you will have to Eat Medicines as your Food”.
2. We challenge you to join the campaign to have laws and policies that promote the safeguarding of the health of soils, ecosystems, biodiversity, and rights of small-scale farmers developed, passed and implemented. Such policies that promote agroecology will protect us from harmful inputs hence keeping us healthy because agrochemicals are dangerous. Agroecology improves the health and well-being of consumers and small-scale farmers while strengthening community resilience.
3. Beware of large-scale land-based investors in the agriculture sector (who in most cases are foreign companies); most of whom are promoting industrial agriculture which highly depends on agrochemicals and damage both our ecosystem and health. We should challenge the government to fund agroecology rather than giving incentives to such investors.

We call on the general public to support small-scale farmers who are producing organic foods.

Organic products reduce public health risks by minimizing exposure to toxic and persistent chemicals. Organic food has higher nutritional content than chemical-rich foods and can be beneficial in preventing dangerous diseases.

We wish you a Happy World Health Day, Go Organic to keep healthy.

**Small-Scale farmers,**

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers’ Forum (ESAFF) Uganda

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