



MEDIA LAUNCH OF THE ANNUAL NATIONAL ORGANIC WEEK (NOW) 2020

Embracing organic products for healthy living amidst COVID-19

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Kampala, Uganda

Today we launch the Second Annual National Organic Week (NOW) 2020 which will take place from 12th to 16th October 2020 in various parts of the country as we celebrate organic agriculture. This comes at a time when the world over is battling a pandemic whose defeat is highly related to nutritious feeding.

Agriculture is a primary sector that serves as the main source of livelihood and provides employment to over 85% of Ugandans most of whom are small-scale farmers. The sector is further seen as critical in achieving food and nutritional security, poverty alleviation and building community resilience to shocks such as COVID-19. Organic Agriculture which is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people plays a key role in driving the small-scale farmers towards higher productivity, self-sufficiency and supporting export promotion. It should be noted that there is an increasing desire to harness the comparative advantage offered by Uganda's unique and diverse physiography and environmental conditions and Organic Agriculture is one such option in which Uganda has unique strengths since it relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects.

Globally, production and trade in Organic Agriculture has been expanding exponentially. The unfolding market opportunities especially in the developed countries comes out of a shift in consumer preferences to safe and hazard free organic food, increasing consciousness about environment conservation as well as health hazards associated with agrochemicals. These are some of the major factors for the growing interest in Organic Agriculture.

Mr. Hakim Baliraine, the National Chairperson of ESAFF Uganda notes that organic farming does not only help reduce public health risks, mounting evidence shows that food grown organically are rich in nutrients, such as Vitamin C, iron, magnesium, and

phosphorus, with less exposure to nitrates and pesticide residues in organically grown fruits, vegetables, and grains which has been proved to boost the body's immunity against COVID-19. He further adds that with the National Organic Agriculture Policy 2019 in place, there is hope for more embracement of organic farming and products among the public.

With such a backdrop, ESAFF Uganda in close collaboration with other partners in 2019 initiated the Annual National Organic Week (NOW) under the theme "Celebrating Organic Food, Farming and Products in Uganda". ESAFF Uganda is organizing yet another National Organic Week celebration under the theme "**Embracing organic products for healthy living amidst COVID-19**". During this week, ESAFF Uganda will join the rest of the World to commemorate the International Day of the Rural Women, which is celebrated every 15th October, and the World Food Day celebrated every 16th October. ESAFF Uganda will organize different engagements in different parts of the country through in-person meetings, webinars and radio talk shows. During the same week, small-scale farmers will also participate in regional and global engagements organized by People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty (PCFS) and La Via Campesina (LVC) to further amplify the voices of small-scale farmers on organic agriculture.

Prior to this celebration, ESAFF Uganda launched two milestone campaigns, one being the Small-scale Farmers Manifesto 2021-26, which highlighted the 10 key policy demands of small-scale farmers that aim towards promoting organic agriculture. And second is the 50,000 Tree Planting Campaign, which contribute to protecting the environment and promoting organic agriculture.

This event aims at increasing consumer demand, confidence and appreciation for organically grown products, goods and raising the general public's awareness of the vital connection between organic farming methods and genuine global environmental sustainability: especially between climate change abatement and organic farming practices.

Resources;

National Organic Week 2019 Events Report: <https://bit.ly/3doKObf>

About ESAFF Uganda

Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led policy influencing movement in Uganda. ESAFF Uganda was established to bring together small-scale farmers into a social movement to build common aspirations, learnings and linkages. ESAFF Uganda, which is a membership organization with members in 54 districts works to enhance the small-scale farmers' ability to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in development, processes at local, national and regional/global level. ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers' organisations (ESAFF) in other 15 countries in eastern and southern Africa.

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