

The comprehensive certification process in ADDA's ecology project in Tanzania

By Erik Schiøtz

ADDA Project Coordinator, Tanzania

Photo: Erik Schiøtz

This article is a follow-up to the article, 'Organic Food Production in Tanzania - About ADDA Project Partners and Methods' by ADDA's Project Coordinator in Tanzania, Erik Schiøtz in News & Views 36. He describes the group certification process that is the basis for the ecological project to be realized. Here you can read how it will take place.

Registration

The first step is to teach the individual farmer in organic production and in the pros and cons of her/him. If the farmer agrees, her/his personal data and information about her/his land will be recorded on a group certification agreement signed by the farmer and the buyer's representative (ADDA's partners). When the farmer is registered, she/he must continuously be trained in organic production methods as long as she/he is enrolled in the group certification.

Documentation

The next step is that every farmer must, in principle, document his activity through a field diary. This diary must be updated on a regular basis and valid for one year at a time. Every year in November, the field diaries must be collected and archived by the organization responsible for the certification. In this project, it is the company Vantage Organic Foods. As the majority of the farmers do not have a fair amount of schooling, the field diaries will in practice be completed and updated by the 'Lead Farmers', which also represents the ongoing training and upgrading of the peasants.

Internal control

Third step is the establishment of an internal control system, which consists of representatives of the partners responsible for training and field diaries, taking care of all farmers and checking that their agriculture is organized and driven ecologically. For this purpose, a form is filled out for each farmer, where all relevant control information is collected and recorded.

External control of farmers group certification

Data from the field diaries and control forms must be recorded in a database and sent to the internationally recognized inspection supervisory approved for issuing ecological certificates. In this case, it is the Dutch 'Control Union' which is also in the field for annual inspection visits to see a representative sample of the participating farmers. Here we look at the farmers' fields and crops, agricultural tools, etc., as well as follow-up interviews with the farmers visited. During the inspection visit, the inspector takes randomly selected samples of the crops submitted to an internationally recognized laboratory where they are analyzed for pesticide residues, chemical fertilizers and other unauthorized impurities / contaminants.

Based on the results of the inspection visits and analyzes, the 'Control Union' may issue a one-year certificate if they are convinced that the production has been carried out according to the standards.

Training, documentation, internal control and external control / certification must be repeated every year to maintain the ecological group certification.



Nishant from VOF, and Erik from ADDA inspect a sunflower field.