

Honey Industry Empowers West Nile

Bee Natural Products Ltd. is a private limited company established in 2002 by Maria Odido and Antonio Di Fonzo. The company's business concept was to fully engage in the apiculture industry, which preliminary studies showed had commercial potential, coupled with social and economic benefits, for the poor, rural communities in the West Nile region in Uganda. From its head office in Kampala, Uganda's capital, the concept became a reality with the commissioning of a honey-processing plant in Arua, the major town of the West Nile.

Since then, the company's directors have relentlessly pursued the dream of making the West Nile a hub for honey production, feeding the Ugandan, regional, and overseas markets with high-quality honey. Bee Natural Products (BNP) works to empower its bee-keepers with improved knowledge and skills for sustainable bee-keeping practices. Bee-keepers are instrumental in the chain of supply and handling of the product on the farm. They are thus trained to maintain the highest level of hygiene during honey harvesting and handling while at the farm. Through its well-established field organization and support structures, bee-keepers are advised by the full-time staff of BNP on how to enhance productivity in their bee-keeping business. BNP takes it to another level by providing modern hives (i.e., the top bar and Langstroth hives) to its bee-keepers on a cost-sharing basis.

According to the marketing department of BNP, the demand for their honey, which is described as being "sinlessly sweet", is so high that the company saw fit to enhance productivity by quick multiplication and division of colonies through the rearing of queen bees.

Bee Natural is also targeting the production of organic honey, which will be sold on the niche organ-



Rearing queen bees and providing modern hives are two successful strategies along with the certification of organic honey.

ic market. Through the support of EPOPA, an initial number of more than 300 households have the opportunity to get organic certification for bee-keeping and to sell their honey at a premium price to BNP. The honey will be sold in niche organic up-markets overseas. The potential for production is high, as the environment is conducive to the production of organic and natural honey. Honey produced in this region is multi-floral; the bees collect nectar from the natural forest and wild flowers.

With the introduction of colony multiplication and division, bee-keepers will have access to hives that have already been colonized. The result: no longer will it be a long wait before the honey starts to flow. Rearing queen bees and multiplying colonies pose no risk to the potential for organic honey. The process is handled as naturally as possible, and the initial colonies are fed with natural organic honey. Best wishes to BNP as it develops a potential that for a long time has lain dormant in the West Nile.

Florence Nagawa – Project leader – EPOPA Uganda

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Happy people at ESCO headquarters. They recently received golden recognition of their excellence as exporters from the Uganda Export Promotion Board.

Photo: Alastair Taylor

Organic Goes Gold

Has EPOPA Uganda branched out and is now certifying gold as organic? Unfortunately, no – or at least not in regard to the heavy metallic material. For the contract farmers of two former EPOPA partner companies, however, organic has proved to be a gold mine

In October 2006, the Uganda Export Promotion Board (UEPB) held its annual presidential awards ceremony for export excellence. The event was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala, and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was the chief guest. More than 300 stakeholders from the Ugandan export sector attended the glitzy occasion and to witness the export stars of Uganda receiving recognition. The awards were based on more than sheer export volume. Within each category, the exporter had to show not only an export lead within the sector but also a commitment to the environment, the community at large, and to equality of the sexes within its marketing channels.

Not bronze or silver, but gold awards and organic got a strong mention twice from the chief executive of UEPB, Florence Kato. First, Kawacom received an award in the coffee sector. Then ESCO beat off the opposition in the cocoa sector. Both companies deal in conventional and organic produce, and in both cases their organic lines began with assistance from EPOPA. Between the two companies, more than 18,000 farmers are involved in organic production.

Through the organic premiums they receive for their organic crops, they usually obtain between 10 per cent and 20 per cent more money for each kilo they sell. Another exciting fact is that most of these farmers are from the far fringes of Uganda, tucked behind the Rwenzori Mountains (also known as the “Mountains of the Moon”) in Bundibugyo District, on the slopes of Mount Elgon on the border with Kenya, and far in the north of the country on the steep hills that form the watershed of the Congo and Nile rivers and also the border of Uganda and the Congo.

They say that diamonds are forever and gold is for eternity, but when you are a farmer living in a grass hut and collecting water from a protected spring, and when the nearest electricity is 20 miles away, such things do not matter much. What is important is a means of producing quality produce for home food security and also for marketing—to raise the essential shillings (the Uganda currency) that are needed to cover health costs, send the children to school, and buy basic items for the household that are not available locally, such as salt, soap, sugar, and paraffin. Kawacom and ESCO have provided some of the “green gold” needed for these farmers’ hopes to become a reality.

Alastair Taylor – Country manager – EPOPA Uganda

Congratulations!
to Kawacom and ESCO from the entire EPOPA team for your Presidential Gold Award

How Ginger in Syrup Became Dried Spices

Sometimes a project turns out to be impossible to run as planned. This is the story of how a project that was supposed to promote the export of organic ginger in syrup shifted to organic spices.

In 2004, during a study of the supply and demand of organic products in Arusha, Tanzania, our roving consultant, Ray Mjunguli, met with Cleopa Ayo, director of Golden Food Products (GFP) Ltd. GFP is a processing plant producing and bottling peanut butter, honey, and several types of jam with Tanzanian fruit. The products were not organic but had a natural image and were made without artificial colours and flavours. They were sold under the trade name Golden African.

Request for organic ginger in syrup

EPOPA had received a request from a European trader for organic ginger in syrup, possibly from a source in Africa. One plus one made two, and after talks, EPOPA started the Golden African ginger-in-syrup project. The production area for the ginger was to be the East Usambara Mountains in the Tanga region. Since many farms in that area were already organic, ginger would increase the market for the farmers.

Several challenges lay ahead. Ginger was being produced in the Usambara, but not in large enough quantities; ginger for processing needs to be soft, fibreless, and reasonably big; sugar needed for processing needs to be certified organic. Moreover, processing and bottling had to be developed from the start, and metal lids for the glass jars had to be ordered from abroad.

Energetic head start

EPOPA, represented by Ray Mjunguli (project leader), was assisted by Samuel Zongolo and Cleopa Ayo, director of GFP. They started full of energy. Farmers were mobilized. The traditional irrigation system in the area was repaired in cooperation with the government irrigation engineer. Extra planting material was introduced to boost production. Two food technologists were hired to work on the processing methodology, one through the PUM (Netherlands Senior Experts Scheme). Two hundred smallholder farmers were producing ginger. But production in the first year failed. All over Tanzania, the rains did not come in 2005.



Golden Food Products is a well-established producer of fruit conserves and peanut butter. The picture above is a sample from their web page: www.gfp.co.tz

Problems piling up

Preparations were made to purchase inputs (sugar, jars, and lids) for processing. Unfortunately, just before the preparations were made, the government had banned imports of sugar in order to support the local sugar industry. An exception was possible for sugar for industrial use. The permit was obtained, but buying the sugar and paying the import taxes became very expensive for the exporter. Specified glass jars could not be obtained in Tanzania, and because of import taxes and rising fuel prices, the prices for glass jars rose enormously (from USD 0.32 to USD 0.64 per jar plus lid), resulting in high costs for buying enough jars (32,340) to fill a container. Anyway, buyers whom we contacted preferred to buy processed ginger packed in five-kilogram sterile plastic bags. This equipment was not available.

Calculations were adjusted with each change in the situation, but in the end it was clear that it would take too long for the investments and loans to be paid back, and hopes for a feasible business started fading.

Redirection of the project

However, in the course of developing the project, Cleopa Ayo saw a new opportunity in the export of organic spices, traditionally grown in the area. The two parties, GFP and EPOPA, have decided to redirect the project and focus on buying and exporting dried spices, including ginger, in order to continue our collaboration, which is so promising.

Marg Leijdens – Project leader – EPOPA Tanzania

Fair or Not Fair Trade – a Day in the Field

In the Luwero district, the pineapple season has started. The harvest began in mid-September and it will continue until December, when Christmas sparks high demand.

The pineapple farmer and her family

The farm where the Klespo family lives has around six acres with certified-organic pineapples. The three family members have an equal share of the land, and the harvest is managed separately. During our visit to the farm, the farmer and her husband showed us how they have distributed the responsibilities. Each family member has his or her own income and takes care of the planning, planting, mulching, weeding, and harvesting.

It was a great pleasure to see the structure and workload distribution done by the family. In the EPOPA programme, we try to integrate sexual equality in all levels of work – and it's of great importance at the farmer's level.

Farmers join in groups

The harvested fruit is brought to a collection point nearby. The collection point is managed by one of the farmers who works as the representative to Biofresh (mainly because it's the closest farm to the road where the truck from Biofresh is picking the fruit). The fruit is brought to Kampala, and early the next morning it is sent to the airport and from there to Europe. Some days later, the consumer can enjoy fresh fruit straight from Uganda.

Fair trade is not for exporters

Most of the farmers providing Biofresh with pineapples are formed in groups, encouraged by the exporter. The farmers' groups work according to the fair-trade standards, which are a respected certification scheme. But the fair-trade system is not willing to provide the certification. The way the fair-trade organizations see it, Biofresh is an exporter (or an agent, if you will) that is selling the pineapples for the farmers. In order to be fair-trade-certified, the farmers need to sell directly to an importer or agent (e.g., in Europe). This needs to be through an organization or group owned by the farmers. Farmers' groups in Uganda are rarely big enough to organize themselves to sell products to big European buyers. Therefore, an organizer is needed. Does it matter if that is an organization or a company working on behalf of the farmers?



Photo: Kolbjörn Örjavið

The Klespo family are registered to sell their harvest to Biofresh. The organic export pays a higher price for their product

Transparent exporter

'If fair trade is going to be more than a trend—if fair trade is going to survive as a concept in a global market—a change is needed. The labelling organizations need to open up their certification to companies and agents who are paying a premium to their farmers', thinks Sonia Mwadime from Biofresh. Transparent exporters should be rewarded with a premium. The exporter is alone, an independent part of the supply chain. So when hearing Biofresh request fair-trade certification, what we are really hearing is that they want to be inspected and reviewed for doing something good. EPOPA has approached the fair-trade labelling organisations for a dialogue about how the labelling can accommodate different supply chain concepts.

Premiums paid by Biofresh

About 25 per cent of turnover goes to the farmers for their produce. Biofresh are paying premium prices—some 50 per cent to 100 per cent higher than the local market price—and loans are given without interest.

Results: what do farmers invest in?

The farmers we met have built a well 50 feet deep from income based only on the premium price given by Biofresh. The well is frequently used by the farmers in the area, not only the ones providing pineapples to Biofresh.

Kolbjörn Örjavið – marketing consultant – EPOPA

Group Certification of Smallholder Farmers

When smallholder farmers aim for the organic market, they need to be recognized as organic farmers with organic products. In order to get access to the organic market, they therefore need to be organic-certified.

Certification cost too high for individuals

Usually the cost and requirements for certification are a big hurdle for a farmer. Group certification, therefore, has been developed as an option. This article will describe how this is done for smallholder farmers linked to Uganda Crop Industries Limited (UCIL) and their EPOPA project "UCIL Spices"

UCIL Spices is a specific support to exporter (SSE) project, which means that they don't need the whole package of support that EPOPA offers for their activity to come to completion. UCIL is a medium-sized agribusiness company with a successful record of working with out-grower farmers to introduce and develop high-value export crops. UCIL has chosen to develop and export organic cardamom, vanilla, and black pepper after identifying an adequate market for those crops.

Internal control system is the key

Instead of having all farmers seek individual certification, UCIL has established an internal control system (ICS) for the whole group. In this case, the group has 300 farmers. The farmers are located in the same area and are similar in size and production. The ICS includes a growers' list, a contractual agreement between each farmer and UCIL, internal inspectors employed by UCIL and an ICS manual that describes the system and ensures that the farmers fulfil the requirements for organic certification.

Mobilization of farmers

Work to develop the ICS manual started early this year. The field staff and the internal inspectors were trained before they started their work. The first activity in the field is the mobilization of and information to the farmers who are targeted. It is important that farmers understand the requirements that they should fulfil and that the farmers voluntarily join the group. After that, registration takes place. All interested farmers fill in a registration form, on which their farm is described as well as their production. Then the farmers are visited. Those who are deter-



Photo: Peter Lustig

The vanilla farmer would hardly be able to pay for certification on his own. Those who have fulfilled the criteria are offered to sign a contract with UCIL in which they promise to follow the organic standards. Then all farmers in the group are inspected by the ICS internal inspector and the outcome is documented.

First certified crop in June 2007

When the the inspector from Ugocert inspects UCIL, he or she only makes spot checks of the farmers. The emphasis is on making sure that the ICS is working properly. Therefore the certifier assesses the internal inspection outcome, the documentation, and the actions taken if there are any deviations from the internal organic standards. After the first external inspection, UCIL will get a certification decision, and most likely they will get certified in conversion. It is expected that the first products can be organically certified by June 2007, which means that the farmers in the group can deliver organic produce from the harvest in June 2007.

Ten months since the inception of the project on 6 January 2006, UCIL is waiting for the outcome of the external inspection done in August 2006. While waiting for the outcome, UCIL field staff are busy training the farmers in the practices of organic agriculture and what quality criteria will be needed when they start delivering their crops to UCIL.

Peter Lustig – project leader – EPOPA Uganda

FAO Shows Interest in Exploring the Potential of Organic Agriculture for Food Security

From October 30 to November 4, the Committee on World Food Security of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) met in Rome to discuss a host of issues, including the presentation of the Mid-term Review of Achieving the World Food Summit Target, a report that concludes that practically no progress has been made since its establishment in 1992.

Taking a solutions-oriented approach, a side event organized by IFOAM in the FAO headquarters drew attention to the potential of organic agriculture for achieving global food security

EPOPA presented as a positive example

John Bosco Mugisha opened the side event by presenting the successful work of the Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) project, which began in 1994 as a programme of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). EPOPA aims to provide African smallholder farmers a better livelihood through the development of local and international organic markets. The increase in agricultural production benefits rural communities, and thus the farmers. Through the projects—which reach more than 30,000 smallholder farmers—the agricultural sector, particularly in Tanzania and Uganda, is constantly exposed to innovative and environmentally sound organic-farming techniques, leading to abundant local spin-off developments.

Organic Agriculture fits small farmers

Thomas Rath of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) presented the evaluations IFAD has undertaken on the impact of organic agriculture on the alleviation of poverty. The evaluations show that organic agriculture is a promising alternative for small farmers, and that in almost all the countries where the evaluations were carried out, small farmers needed only marginal improvements to their technologies to make the shift to organic production.

Patrizia Sentinelli, Italian vice-minister of foreign affairs, explained her view on organic agriculture and



local development in the international cooperation. She said that: "Solutions for food security should both address the need of smallholders and should not exploit the environment and natural resources. Producers having direct contact with consumers, having security in access to land and some financial space through micro credit, can contribute themselves to a sustainable future. Organic agriculture drives local development so that local communities can be sustainable in their economy and in their use of and dependence on natural resources like water and land."

FAO conference on organic agriculture and food security in 2007

Alexander Müller, assistant director general of FAO, said that many countries request FAO's assistance to develop organic agriculture. He said that "there is a need to shed light on the contribution of organic agriculture to food security, so that FAO can provide objective and informed advice to its member countries. Thus, FAO plans to hold in 2007 an international conference on organic agriculture and food security." The conference aims to identify organic agriculture's potential and limits to the food-security challenge, including conditions required for its success. The report of the conference will be submitted to the 2007 Session of the Committee on World Food Security.

A tool for the alleviation of poverty

Mette Meldgaard, IFOAM's vice-president, noted, "The major constraints to achieving universal food security are found in social, economic, and political conditions, more than in problems regarding agricultural productive capacity. One of the most important factors for poverty alleviation is rural development. Organic agriculture, based on the principles of health, ecology, fairness, and care, is the more advanced tool for rural development." Concerning the announcement of Müller, Meldgaard said, "We are glad that the planned FAO conference provides for an opportunity to show organic agriculture's potential."

EPOPA at Trade Fair in Kampala, Uganda

Epopa was well presented at the Uganda Manufacturers Association Trade Show held at the Lugogo Show Ground in Kampala 4-10 Oct. 2006. There were various presentations ranging from manufactured goods to farm produce.

Under the umbrella of NOGAMU, EPOPA had a table on which were products from Amfri Farms, a company that exports dried fruits. Among the items at the table were dried fruits such as pineapples, pawpaws, and bananas. The samples of fresh pawpaws, pineapples, and pumpkins surprised the audience, who wondered how we could train farmers on the drying of fruits which during the harvest were normally thrown away because of spoilage. Some demanded to taste the dried fruits. I gave the fruits to them and smiled as they ate the fruits with relish.

On the third day, the EPOPA table was filled with more fresh organic vegetables, among them tomatoes, carrots, and green peppers. These products



were grown organically on Nanga Farm (now called the Tree Shade Organic Farm). This is part of the research programme for identifying the right organic formulations for the control of pests and diseases affecting vegetables.

People could not bypass the sight of products said to be organically grown. I could then proudly explain to them how EPOPA Uganda was working tirelessly to find solutions to the problems that pests and diseases cause vegetables. A number of people signed the visitors' book. Here is a sample of their comments:

"V. good work, Excellent, Great, Liked the idea, Interesting, Fantastic, Good Explanation, Commendable, Good display, Thanks and more effort required"

A good number of them have already visited the office.

Lucy Senya – Local expert – EPOPA Uganda

EPOPA at Tanzania Trade Fair and National Farmers day

"Saba Saba" and "Nane Nane", the "seventh of the seventh" and the "eighth of the eighth", respectively, are two national days selected by Mwalimu Nyerere, the former president and founder of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Saba Saba is the national trade fair and a national public holiday and festivity. It began as a show of successful local businesses in each town and village with festivities around it. Nowadays, the highlight is the large international trade fair in Dar es Salaam. Nane Nane is the national farmers' day. Four towns have large fairgrounds, and the national show rotates among them. Each region chooses a town in which to hold the regional show.

For the second time EPOPA presented itself in the Saba Saba. The stand was organized with TOAM (the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement) and Tancert. Some farmers also joined the presentation. There was a lot of interest from the public. Interest came from students, possible customers ("Where can you buy the organic products?"), and farmers who would like to start organic production and sales. Each



year the organizer of the fair (the Board of External Trade) announces the 10 best stands. The organic stand came in fourth!

Our compliments to Grace Murungi of EPOPA, Jordan Gama of TOAM, and Leonard Mtama of Tancert.

On Nane Nane—the national farmers' day—EPOPA, TOAM, and Tancert joined with Faida Mali in the stand space. Faida Male is an NGO working in the area of market linkages for farmers.

TOAM made use of the opportunity of Nane Nane to make an official launch. The Saturday in the week of the fair was made into an "organic day". Speeches and lectures were given by several people linked to the organic movement, and the minister of agriculture came to visit the stand. There was a lunch for special guests, with as much organic ingredients as possible.

Marg Leijdens – project leader – EPOPA Tanzania

News in brief

South Africa: Organic Food Industry Expands

from Organic Monitor 04/09

Organic farming is proving to be one of the fastest-growing sectors within South African horticulture. This is being reflected in ongoing expansion at all levels, from production to sales. For instance, in 2005, the number of certified farms rose to 200, while the area under organic management leapt to a record 515,000 hectares. Within this, increasing emphasis is being placed on fruit and vegetables, particularly apples, grapes, avocados, blueberries, and citrus. In parallel with this, retail sales have increased annually.

Exports, too, have been on the rise, with the United Kingdom and Germany prime destinations for fresh products and the United States for processed. In fact, according to the Export Promotion of Organic Prod-

ucts from Africa, the position is being helped by moves towards co-operative marketing and to greater liaison with partners overseas.

This upward trend is being boosted by an increasingly proactive stance by the government and the introduction of new practices and procedures. A further boon has been the formation of the South African Council for Organic Development and Sustainability

Tuna from Tanga is on the move

In EPOPA newsletter No. 2, we had an article about the tuna project in the small harbour town of Tanga on the Tanzanian coast. In October the project was approved as an EPOPA project. It is on for two years, up to September 2008..

EPOPA calendar

Date	Place	Topic
10-12 December	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Middle East Natural Products – Trade fair EPOPA will be in the Out of Africa pavilion, booth G23-G26
13 December	Nairobi, Kenya	Forum about regional and international organic standards
15-18 February 2007	Nuremberg, Germany	BioFach – Trade fair, EPOPA will be in Hall 1 Stand 310
9-10 April 2007	London	Organic Products Europe – Trade fair EPOPA will be in the African pavilion, booth number 2051

Current EPOPA projects

Uganda

barkcloth, Barkcloth
Cardamom, UCIL **New**
dried fruits, Amfri **New**
essential oils, Tamteco **New**
fish, wild-catch frozen "Kyoga wild", Greenfields
fresh and dried fruits, BioUganda
fresh fruits, Biofresh
hibiscus, Nile Teas
honey, Bee Natural Products
processed food ingredients, RECO

sesame, Outspan
shea oil, North Ugandan Shea
vanilla, Ibero Robusta coffee
vanilla, CNPU OAE
vanilla, Lakeside Vanilla and Fruit Products

Tanzania

arabica coffee, KNCU
canned pineapples, Dabaga
ginger in syrup, Golden African
honey, Fidahusseini

peanuts, Tanpro
sesame, Biosustain **New**
tuna, Sea Products Ltd **New**
vanilla, West Lake Agriculture Products

New: Projects designated "New" started in January 2006 or later.

If you want to know more about a certain project please contact the Country Manager; see contact info in box below.

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