

# **Organic Certification for the Namibian and International Markets**



**Stephen Barrow**

**Afrisco Certified Organic ([www.afrisco.net](http://www.afrisco.net))**

**Namibian Organic Association ([www.noa.org.na](http://www.noa.org.na))**

# Why go organic?



- Environmental considerations
  - Long term production
  - Mitigation of climate change
    - Carbon sequestration
    - Resilience
  - Biodiversity
  - Working with Nature's powerful forces

# Why go organic?



- Promotion of health
  - Of farmer family and workers
  - Consumers
  - Environment
- Economically justifiable
  - Farmer's viability

In short - Sustainability

# The Organic Approach to Sustainable Agriculture



The International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements has drafted a “Best Practice Guideline for Agriculture and Value Chains” aimed at generating an understanding of the organic movement’s vision of a sustainable society.

# The Organic Approach to Sustainable Agriculture



- Best Agricultural Practices:
  - Social – people live in equality
  - Ecological – common resources are used sustainably
  - Economics – trading leads to prosperity
  - Culture – inspiration, innovation, leadership
  - Accountability – for our actions in a transparent manner with stakeholder participation
  - See <http://www.ifoam.org/en/value-chain/ifoam-best-practice-program>

# What is Organic Agriculture?



- Agricultural systems that promote the **environmentally, socially and economically sound production** of food and fibres.
- **Soil Quality, Health and Fertility** are key to successful production.
- It aims to optimise quality in all aspects of agriculture and the environment by **respecting the natural capacity** of soils, plants, animals and the landscape.
- Dramatically **reduces external inputs** by working with the powerful laws of nature to increase yields of high nutritional value and disease resistance while refraining from the use of synthetic agro-chemicals.
- Adheres to **globally accepted principles**, which are implemented within the local social, economic and environmental context.
- **Positively contributes to the environment, food security and sovereignty and the economic status** of farmers practicing the system and their region.

# A system of production which



- Requires active promotion of soil quality, health and nutrition
- Produces crops and livestock which are appropriate to the local environment
- Deals with pests and diseases in a natural manner
- Is concerned with social, animal and environmental welfare
- Has exploding international demand, led by the USA and Europe

**Consumers create the demand, voting with their purses and in so doing demand assurances relating to the production methods**

**... And so organic certification is needed**

# Organic Certification



- Farmers, packers and processors must be certified to a set of standards
- Logo and labelling indicate certification
- However there is no international agreement on standards
- > 50 sets in use or being prepared by different countries
- But fortunately:
  - In essence they don't differ much, though approaches are different
  - Many are based on IFOAM and EU standards
  - IFOAM is working hard to encourage standardisation



# Organic Certification



- An absolute requirement for good retailers and exports
- Must be “third party” certified for long value chain and exports - independent verification
- To the organic standards of the importing country – and they all vary a little
- Most important standards for Southern Africa are EU, COR, US-NOP, especially for the export market
- IFOAM constantly strives for the improvement of standards and leads the way through innovation of different assurance systems

# Participatory Guarantee Scheme - PGS



- For short value chain, domestic markets only
- Annual peer group assessment
- Assessments can incorporate teaching and consultation (unlike 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification)
- Low cost – except in terms of time and organisation
- Must do annual training
- Must have notices explaining the system at points of sale – *transparency* is the key
- Increasingly recognised by Governments

# Elements of a certification system

- Standards
- Contracts
- Annual inspection / assessment
- Certification / approval
- Labelling
- Management
- Information updates
- Export documentation



# Organic farm certification



1. Farmer draws up a description of the farm indicating organic practices and implementation of the requirements of the standards – the Organic Management Plan
2. Auditor goes over the farm, checking
  - the description,
  - adherence to the organic standards
  - And record-keeping (vital!)
3. Auditor writes a report
4. The Certifying Body (CB) reviews the report.
5. The CB sets conditions for organic certification
6. After the conditions have been met, a 12 month certificate is awarded

**On condition that any change in the production system is reported to the CB during the year, and the client continues to stick to the standards**

# So you want to go organic – what are the steps?



- Start at the end – identify your
  - Market
  - Distribution channels
- These determine the
  - Certification system – Third party or PGS?
  - Thus the standards you need to consider
- Acquaint yourself with the standards
- Read, talk, look, listen, experiment – often conversion of the mind is the most challenging aspect

# Going organic ...

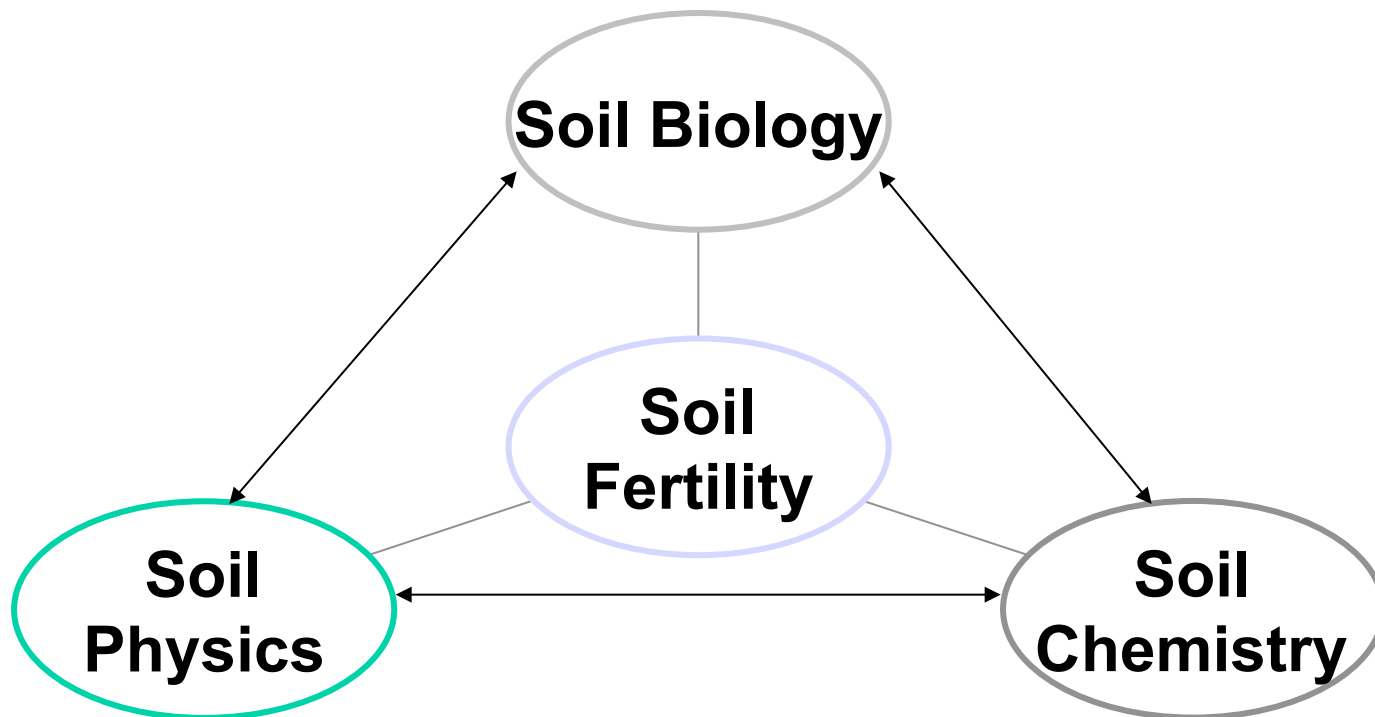
## Principles



- Gain an appreciation of the principles of organics:
  - Difference between
    - Input substitution  
= chemicals out, “organic substitutes” in
    - **Management** of the soil’s *quality, health* and *nutrition* = a healthy, productive system
    - Pests and diseases are indicators of problems in the soil or other system stresses => reach for the solutions, not a “bottle of spray” (a pill for every ill)

# Going organic ...

## Soil Fertility – the three legged pot



# Going organic ...

## Preparing for certification



- Gain an appreciation of the principles of organics certification:
  - Difference between organic by: default / neglect / claim / verification = certification
  - Need for conversion
    - “Working out” chemical residues
    - Implementation of organic management practices and systems
    - Documentation and record **keeping**



# Going organic ... Certification



- “Playing by the rules”
- Risk assessment exercise
- Verification process –
  - What the producer says they do
  - What the producer actually does
  - Compliance with the standards

# Crop audits

## what we look at



- Farmer's knowledge and commitment
- Production system – what's happening in the fields
- Soil management practices
- Crop management practices
- Pest, weed & disease control
- Use of off farm inputs - fertility, seeds, pest control
- Environment, contamination
- Packing, processing, storage, distribution, marketing
- Documentation
- Traceability
- Sales

# Plant material issues



- No GMOs
  - Obtain letters from suppliers of plant material
- Seeds –
  - You MUST try to get organic seeds
  - If not, get letters from seed suppliers saying why you can't
  - You may not use treated seed unless there is a government law to that effect

# Inputs



## Best to make your own compost

- No manure from factory farming (depends on animal conditions)
- Assess potential contamination of materials
- Make sure it's composted properly
- If buying, be careful of labels and claims
  - Remember – NO synthetic chemicals make be added

# Commercial inputs



- Act 36 “organic” has no bearing on organic certification
- Beware of manufacturer’s claims
  - Products should display CB logo and statement to the effect that is an acceptable input into certified organic agriculture
- Difference between mined materials and synthetic “equivalents”
- Always check with the Certification Body

# Where to get help

- Afrisco Certified Organic

[www.afrisco.net](http://www.afrisco.net)

[diana@afrisco.net](mailto:diana@afrisco.net)

[stephen@afrisco.net](mailto:stephen@afrisco.net)



## Namibian Organic Association

[www.noa.org.na](http://www.noa.org.na)

[info@noa.org.na](mailto:info@noa.org.na)



Namibian  
Organic  
Association



## PGS Pioneers

- Krumhuk - dairy, beef, veg, fruit
- Greenspot Organics - veg, herbs, eggs
- Eichenbach - maize, sorghum, sunflowers
- Farm Belissima - vegetables, herbs, eggs
- Farm Rogers - beef, dairy



**Questions?  
Answers!  
More questions!**

**Thank you**