



ORGANIC NEWS

ISSUE 3 | JANUARY 2024

Greetings and welcome to our first newsletter for 2024 for the organic sector.

In this issue:

- The year ahead – Matthew Purkis, SAOSO Foundation
- SAOSO Standard for Organic Production and Processing Version 2 published
- COP28 – From hope to discontent
- The 5th African Organic Congress in Rwanda
- INOFO's Farmers' Track at the AOC
- News from the sector
- The Organic & Natural Product Expo in Cape Town



REFLECTIONS ON THE OUTLOOK FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S ORGANIC SECTOR IN 2024

"The year of 2024 is set up to be the most productive year yet for the emerging agroecological sector and the work of SAOSO and PGS SA. The last 5 years have been about building foundations, good governance, trust within core partnerships, prototyping programmes and gaining further traction within the South African ecosystem. The dedication and persistence of the core team has been exemplary, racking up many wins along the way, which have resulted in significant progress toward our mandate as SAOSO. With that said, not all the successes have been broadcast to the public as we have been

immersed in doing, rather than talking about doing.

"The massive job of food system transformation and sustainable development is certainly one that



calls for radical collaboration. A clear call to action to mobilise. Over 2023, the main thrust within SAOSO was to envision the best vehicle for collaboration and to further develop the PGS network at a grassroots level nationally through the KHSA Programme with GIZ and the Sustainability Institute. Both of those objectives we managed to achieve with the birth of the SAOSO Foundation last year, and the successful inception of 18 PGS groups with a pipeline of over 500 farmers.

The role of SAOSO Foundation is to develop strong sector partnerships to



programmatically execute the mandate that the Government gave SAOSO in 2008. The launch of the Heal the Planet Programme under the SAOSO Foundation is the first big step in delivering that mandate. Heal the Planet is the primary programme that will take full focus over the next five years that will develop youth capacity nationally, incubate PGS groups with technical services and usher in grassroots participation in the agroecology value chain at scale. The SAOSO Foundation is aiming

to formally launch in March of 2024 with a strong board of directors, strategic and operational partnerships. Supported by a core team of dedicated souls that will combine the best innovation, green technologies, aggregated funding and programmes to address the failing food system in Southern Africa.

We look forward to the next phase of our journey with you all, our valued members and supporters who have witnessed this journey

thus far. We are grateful for your continued support and will strive to make Mzansi a safer, cleaner and more powerful country through the scaling of agroecology."

In commitment,
Matthew Purkis
Head of Joint Operations –
SAOSO Foundation
Ecosystem Architect – Project
Biome

SAOSO STANDARD FOR ORGANIC PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING VERSION 2 IS PUBLISHED

SAOSO has published Version 2 of their standard for organic agricultural production and processing of organic products. This is a significant review of Version 1.7 aimed at helping producers and certifiers alike. The SAOSO Standards Committee members who participated in the review are Alan Rosenberg (Chairman), Stephen Barrow (Editor), Colleen Anderson, Audrey Wainwright and Hans Klink (formerly Agro Organics).



The standard has been accepted into the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movement's (IFOAM) Family of Standards. The revision of Version 1.7 from June 2020 was undertaken in conjunction with the review of the "South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) SANS 1369:2016 South African National Standard, Organic agriculture - Production and Processing" aimed at updating both and harmonising them with each other as well as the IFOAM norms. Currently, the SABS aspect of this work still has yet to be finalised.

What's new, what's different?

- Section A.3, "Minimum Inspection Requirements and Precautionary Measures" focuses on maintaining the integrity of certified produce through supply chains.
- Section B.9, "Aquaculture". This opens a new certified organic enterprise for South African producers.
- Rabbits have been included in the Animal Husbandry sub-section as a new livestock enterprise.



You can read or download the standards [here](#).

The United Nations Climate Change Conference - COP28 - took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30 November until 12 December 2023. The [Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa \(AFSA\)](#) representing 37 African networks and organisations attended and had the following feedback:



particularly the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food Security (SSJW). While AFSA appreciated initial actions like the loss and damage deal and the focus on food systems

transformation, we are concerned about the deadlock in negotiations and the postponement of discussions until June 2024. This delay significantly impacts the potential for effective climate action in African agriculture. AFSA also noted with alarm the omission of food systems transformation

from the recent draft of the Global Stocktake, a critical element in climate mitigation and adaptation. In response, AFSA urges immediate action to resolve the SSJW impasse, inclusion of food systems in the Global Stocktake, continued emphasis on agroecology, prioritization of community-focused climate solutions, and targeted climate finance for agroecology. AFSA remains committed to advocating for agroecology in climate policies and decisions, emphasizing the urgent need for decisive action to secure the future of food systems and the well-being of millions."

"At the conclusion of COP28, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) expressed deep disappointment with the stalled negotiations on agriculture,

THE 5TH AFRICAN ORGANIC CONGRESS IN RWANDA

The 5th African Organic Congress (AOC) was held in Kigali, Rwanda from 12 - 15 December 2023. The event was organised by the African Organic Network (AfrONet), an umbrella body of organic agriculture actors in Africa representing the National and Regional Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs/ROAMs) in collaboration other stakeholders, with the theme: Strengthening Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems in Africa through Organic Agriculture.



Organic Agriculture Movement (ROAM) with advice on building a supportive policy environment. It was heartening to meet the ROAM staff and to work with Konrad Hauptfleisch and Jean Marie Irakabaho "The conference had the blessing of both the African Union and the Rwanda Department of Agriculture, and we had good supportive speeches from them. Li Feng spoke about the work in China, and Tanveer Hossain spoke about progress in the Asian organic sector and local "Organic Zones" in several Asian countries supported by politicians, which are seeing organics accepted more broadly. David Amudavi (Kenya) and Bob George (Uganda) spoke well about progress in African policy development. I had the feeling that Africa and the world are beginning to take organic research seriously. The next conference is scheduled to come to Southern Africa in 2026. We should submit a bid as I believe that South Africa has a lot to showcase.

Extraordinary Professor Raymond Auerbach, Chair of the Network of Organic Agricultural Researchers in Africa (NOARA) and President of the Technology and Innovation Platform of IFOAM/ Organics International (TIPI), reports back:

"I attended the conference in Kigali, as well as the AGM of AfrONet. I was flown to Rwanda by Naturland, who had contracted me to assist the Rwanda

The AfrONet AGM saw major changes in the Board, which I believe will make a very positive difference in the future, as we hope for a more open and communicative AfrONet! I believe it is now time for SAOSO to join AfrONet. The workshop with ROAM was excellent, with a commitment to communication, training, marketing and policy work. I am helping them to develop position papers for the future. Konrad sends his regards to all South African associates!"

The Inter-Continental Network of Organic Farmer Organisations (INOFO) invited organic farmers from within Africa, representing their Organic Farmers' Organisations (OFOs), to submit presentations for the Farmers' Track at the African Organic Congress with the aim of sharing experiences and breakthroughs within the existing agro-food systems and to exhibit

pathways of how organic farmers can address challenges to achieve resilient and sustainable food systems in Africa.

Busisiwe Mgangxela was a moderator representing INOFO South Africa at the 5th African Organic Congress Farmers' Track.

"In total, 16 farmers from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia made representations on a range of topics including healthy vegetables, sustainability, livelihoods, seeds, agroecology, soil building using local weeds in avocado farming, resilience strengthening, controlling pests on organic cocoa farms, bio input use, organic mildew prevention using baking soda, biodiversity, climate change, community empowerment and PGS. The Farmers' Track overall was a success however it was a lost opportunity that no farmers from South Africa gave presentations."



NEWS FROM THE SECTOR

Game-changer for regulation of genome editing

The African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) welcomes the final decision taken by the South African Minister of Agriculture in terms of section 19 of the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) Act of 1997, to uphold the October 2021 decision of the Executive Council that the risk assessment framework existing for GMOs will also apply to new breeding techniques (NBTs). These NBTs make up a host of new genetic engineering technologies.

The South African decision is a significant game changer on the continent, which is facing a strong push to adopt novel GM technologies, such as cisgenesis and intragenesis; RNAi-mediated DNA methylation; agroinfiltration; reverse breeding; and genome editing techniques (CRISPR and gene drives; TALENS; and oligonucleotide-directed mutagenesis). In contrast, Kenya, Ghana, Malawi, and Nigeria have already adopted approaches not to regulate these technologies in terms of biosafety legislation. The positions taken by these countries will face stronger pushback from civil society on the continent, perhaps even leading to reversals.

According to Mariam Mayet, director of the ACB:

"The Minister's decision translates into a precautionary approach and adherence to biosafety due process regarding the regulation of new technologies.

It inherently accepts that these technologies alter the genetic material of plants, animals, and microbes, using synthetic guides, with the express goal of changing organisms' DNA. Since these novel technologies create new risks and uncertainties, with possibly far-reaching consequences, they must therefore be robustly regulated. Such regulation also encompasses the right to say no based on the precautionary principle. Further, traceability and the labeling of all GMOs are prerequisites for the freedom of choice for both consumers and farmers, and their exclusion from regulation would accelerate the privatisation of seed and its ownership, to the cost of consumers and farmers."



**AFRICAN CENTRE
FOR BIODIVERSITY**

ISAN magazine edition 9 released

The 9th issue of IFOAM Southern Africa Network (ISAN) magazine has been published. This edition covers the recent Project Biome's Youth Perspectives on Ancient Wisdom webinar, as well as unpacking if organics can really feed the world, celebrating African food and seed, earthworm power in the soil, and the New EU Organic Regulations.

You can read the online version [here](#).



Honouring the fundamentals of PGS

During the course of 2023, PGS South Africa and Grow West Africa, under the auspices of the Organic Knowledge Hub for Southern Africa (KHSA), co-hosted a series of webinars addressing pertinent themes for PGS farmer groups. Afronet will be publishing the outcome of

each webinar throughout 2024. The inaugural webinar focussed on the challenge of upholding the core fundamentals of PGS, prompting questions and presenting solutions derived from best practices and challenges observed globally.

Presentations were made by PGS and organic farming experts: Audrey Wainwright, Konrad Hauptfleisch and Olawumi Benedict.

You can read the article [here](#).

Elements of PGS



SHARED VISION



TRUST



HORIZONTALITY



TRANSPARENCY



PARTICIPATORY



LEARNING PROCESS

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Organic & Natural Product Expo in Cape Town in April

The Organic & Natural Product Expo Africa, now in its 3rd year in Joburg, is adding a Cape Town leg to the event in April 2024. To be held at the CTICC on the 26th to 28th April, the event promises to be a welcome addition to the Cape Town expo landscape, in a sector that was

born in the Cape. Visitors to the event will be a mix of trade and consumers. Companies interested in exhibiting can apply at www.organicandnaturalportal.com/expo or mail Warren directly at warren@axesshealth.org



"We are extremely excited to be launching in Cape Town, after so many requests from companies based in this richly organic province."

–Warren Hickinbotham

Future Newsletters: We would like to hear what kind of news you would like to see in our newsletter. Drop us a line at info@saoso.org.

**The Principle
Of Health.**

**The Principle
Of Ecology.**

**The Principle
Of Fairness.**

**The Principle
Of Care.**