A Practical Guide to

Organic Certification for Smallholder Groups in Namibia

May 2007

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With funding from: **USAID (through the NNF/Life Plus Programme)**

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank USAID through the NNF/Life Plus Programme for the main funding of the pilot project for organic certification in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy and the development of this manual, Phytotrade Africa for co-funding of the project, the internal inspectors, the management and organic committee of the Okahulo Association (EWC) and their members, as well as Saara Haawi, Len Le Roux, and Timo Nambambi of the Rossing Foundation for their hard work and cooperation, and my colleagues at CRIAA SA-DC for their assistance and support.

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May 2007

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
DDT	**d**ichloro-**d**iphenyl-**t**richloroethane
ICS	Internal Control System
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
EU	European Union
EWC	Eudafano Women Cooperative
KMS	Kalahari Melon Seed
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
NOP	National Organic Program (USA)
OC	Organic certification
OMP	Organic Management Plan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This practical guide is intended for NGOs and trainers assisting groups of smallholder producers that are interested in obtaining organic certification for their natural products. The manual draws from the experiences of a pilot project for organic certification in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy, where an existing producer group traded marula kernels and Kalahari melon seeds to the Eudafano Women Cooperative, and baobab pulp and seed for processing trials at the Katutura Artisans' Project. There are different requirements and costs involved for the organic certification of different groups with different products in different areas. However, the manual intends to be as general as possible with regard to organic certification for smallholder groups in Namibia that trade natural products collected and processed at peoples farms. Organic Certification of wild harvested (off-farm) products such as Devil's Claw or Ximenia will be relatively easier, and a manual for organic certification of wild harvesting will be developed at a later stage.

1.2 What is organic agriculture?

Organic agriculture is a natural way of farming. The simplest way to say it is that in organic farming no inorganic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and other unnatural substances are allowed to be used, but organic farming is more than that. Basic principles guiding organic farming are:

- *Recycling of nutrients*, making sure that all nutrients in the farm are kept and re-used as much as possible, for example through animal manuring, green manuring, composting, and mulching.
- *Protection and improvement of the soil fertility*, by managing soil fertility through the application of organic manures and crop rotation, as well as preventing soil erosion in natural ways, for example though the use of mulching, cover crops, and minimum soil tillage.
- *Promoting crop diversity*, rotation of crops and/or intercropping, including the cultivation of trees.
- *Bio-control*, controlling pests and diseases by supporting crop health and by using natural enemies and herbal remedies, instead of pesticides and other poisonous substances.

The organic agriculture movement headed by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements) started in response to the so-called "Green Revolution", an approach whereby mono-cropping, extensive soil tillage, and agro-chemicals were intensely used to increase yields. Although the Green Revolution initially was very successful, the approach also proved to have a lot of unwanted side-effects, both on natural resources (soil, water & bio-diversity) and human health. Organic agriculture was seen as an ecological, social, and economical sustainable alternative to conventional farming.

The traditional farming systems that are found in most of Namibia, cannot be described as fully organic, since more could be done to improve soil fertility and plant health in natural ways, but they do meet the most important criteria of organic agriculture, because chemical fertilizers, pesticides and genetically modified organisms (GMO) are traditionally not used, although in recent years some farmers have been using chemical fertilizers. A problem for organic farming in Northern Namibia is that DDT is sprayed by the government as part of the malaria eradication programme. This insecticide is effective against mosquitoes, but is an agrochemical that has been abandoned in most of the world, because of its negative effects on the environment. For the natural products that we are trying to get organically certified, it is important that they have not been in touch with insecticides, inorganic fertilizers, or any other inorganic substances.

More about organic agriculture and practical ways to make farming systems more organic can be found in Annex 1, which is a shortened and adapted version of the IFOAM training manual for Organic Agriculture in the Tropics. This background document can be used in the training of trainers on organic agriculture and certification.

1.3 What is Organic Certification?

There is a worldwide trend of consumers getting more interested in products that are produced using organic methods. Many people feel organic products are good for their own health and for the health of the planet. So if a group of farmers wants to sell a product like marula oil into the export market, it helps if they can say the marula oil is organic. Organic marula oil will reach a wider market, and people are willing to pay a higher price for the product. However, consumers need to have some kind of proof that the product they are buying at a higher price really is organic. For this reason organic certification is needed. Products can only reach an organic market with higher prices if they are *certified* organic. Organic certification can only be done by certifying organizations that are accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM). That means that IFOAM checks whether these organizations are competent to inspect if farmers or groups of farmers are following the international organic standards and make decisions based on those inspections.

1.4 Organic certification for smallholder groups

Historically, only large commercial farms mostly in the Western world would request a certifying organization to certify their farm and farm products as organic. The procedure is that these farms are inspected once every year, and an inspection report and certification decision is made for every farm. This procedure is expensive, but the higher price for the variety of organic products sold justifies the costs. The high costs of certification however excluded farmers that have smaller farms with fewer commercial products from getting their products organically certified. More so because smaller farmers that are mostly focused on subsistence farming are based in non-Western countries, while certifying organizations are mostly based in Western countries. A farmer in North central Namibia for example, farming mostly for subsistence but also selling relatively small amounts of marula kernels, melon seeds, and mahangu, would never be able to afford paying for the time, transport and other expenses of a foreign inspector.

For these reasons the organic agriculture movements came up with the concept of smallholder group certification. Smallholder group certification makes it possible for farmers with similar farming methods to get certified as a group, thereby reducing the costs of certification.

However, in order for the consumer to still be 100% sure that the final product they buy at a higher price is produced using organic methods, the group has to design and implement an Internal Control System (ICS), in order to make sure that all the farmers who participate in the organic program are following the rules (more details on ICS are shown in section 2.1). A certification organization will still send an inspector once every year, but the inspector will not inspect each and every farm, but instead check if the ICS is well in place and properly functioning, as well as doing spot checks on a number of farms that are part of the group. A well-functioning Internal Control System is therefore very important. If the external inspector finds that some farmers are not following the rules, and the ICS had not picked that up, the whole group can loose their organic certificate.

The main advantage of smallholder group certification is that it strongly reduces the costs of certification, thereby making it possible for smaller farmers to sell their products as certified organic. The disadvantages are that:

1) The certificate can only be used to sell organically certified products through the group scheme, which means that individual farmers can not use the certificate to individually sell their products as certified organic to other buyers
2) Setting up and maintaining an ICS implies a lot of time, efforts, and costs.
3) The whole group runs a risk by the careless behaviour of a few members. If some group members are found to be not complying with the organic standards, the whole group may receive a sanction, which can be as severe as losing the group certificate.

1.5 Who can certify products as organic?

A certificate of conformity, which is a proof that you are conforming to international organic standards and your products are therefore certified organic, can only be given by organizations accredited to carry out inspection and certification by authorized bodies that regularly evaluate these certifying organizations.

There are many certifying organizations, the Soil Association, Ecocert, and BCS Öko-Garantie are a few of them. Most of these organizations are based in Europe, Asia and the US.

In our pilot project we chose to work with Ecocert for a number of reasons:

1) Although their head office is in Europe, Ecocert has several offices and inspectors in Africa. This means that inspections can be done cheaper. It was also seen as positive because they may be less biased towards European farming systems, and have a better understanding of African smallholder farmers.

2) Ecocert furthermore indicated that they would train a Namibian inspector, if the Namibian market for organic certification would justify that. This would both reduce the costs of inspections and build Namibian capacity.
3) Ecocert proved to be very cooperative and helpful when we initially approached a number of certifying organizations for information and advice.
4) Ecocert was identified as a well known and respected certifying organization in the countries where the products we initially focused on are sold.

Although any producer group trying to obtain organic certification can obviously choose independently with which certifying organization they would like to work with, Ecocert is advised to be the preferred organization, not in the least because the more work they have in Namibia, the more the costs can be shared and therefore reduced.

1.6 Why Organic Certification?

The main reason for obtaining organic certification is that it can enable people to find wider or niche markets and get better prices for their products. At the moment this is mostly the case for export markets, but local and regional markets for organic products are growing as well.

In North central Namibia, CRIAA SA-DC and several producer organizations have worked for years towards the commercialization of natural resources. Marula oil, KMS (Kalahari melon seed) oil, and Ximenia oil are 3 products that have successfully entered the export market for cosmetic ingredients, and thousands of producers, mostly women, and their households are getting an extra cash income from selling these products to this market. The organic certification pilot project was initiated in response to the existing market indicating that organic certification was going to be pertinent in the near future, and the realization that the non-organic market for KMS and marula oil was not going to support all the producers currently organized and those that have shown interest in getting involved.

On the downside, obtaining organic certification requires a lot of time, costs, and efforts, both initially and continuously. If the market for your organic product is small, or certain volumes can not be attained, the advantages of organic certification may be outweighed by the disadvantages. The next chapter intends to give some more information that can assist a conservancy, producer group, or CBO in a careful consideration of all the advantages and disadvantages of organic certification and help them decide whether to get involved or not.

2. Getting involved in Organic Certification?

2.1 Requirements for organic certification for smallholders groups

For smallholder groups to be organically certified, an Internal Control System or ICS needs to be in place and functioning. An ICS consists of the following elements:

- **Annual internal inspections** of all participating farms. Internal inspectors have to be trained, and they have to visit each farm once a year, making sure that the farmers follow the rules of organic certification. All inspections have to be properly planned, documented and filed. Extra inspections need to be done if non-compliance of the rules is suspected, or if a farmer has sold much more products than what they can produce. (3.9)
- An **organic committee** has to be in place. An organic committee is responsible for the proper functioning of the ICS, for making sure that the producer group management and the internal inspectors are doing their jobs properly, and that sanctions are given to non-complying farmers. The committee is also responsible for writing an annual report, and for keeping all the necessary records and files. (3.10)
- All participating farmers have to sign a **producer contract,** stating that they will adhere to the organic rules and regulations as set by the ICS. The contract should preferably be in the local language, and both the farmer and the producer group should keep a signed copy. (3.7)
- Similarly, the producer group management has to sign a **producer group contract**, stating that they too will adhere to the organic rule and regulations (3.7)
- The producer group management and the organic committee have to develop a set of **internal rules**, including acceptance and termination of membership, sanctions taken against non-complying members, production standards, conversion rules, and annual inspection protocols (3.10)
- **Social / community control.** Members should be made aware of the fact that if a neighbour is not complying with the rules, the whole group can loose their organic certificate. With that awareness, which has to be raised in community meetings and training sessions, community control can be a powerful ICS mechanism.
- A proper **record keeping system** should be kept by the producer group, including records of purchase and sales, inspection records, and a sanction list. An important concept in organic certification is traceability, which means that every product that is sold at the other side of the market can be traced back to the producer. (3.8)
- **Maps and field records** of all the participating farms should be available (3.5 & 3.6)
- An updated **membership list** should be available (3.8)
- **A documented management structure**. The producer group should have a constitution or by-laws and work accordingly (3.2)
- **A documented description of the ICS.** All of the above should be clear and backed up with documentation
- **The ICS should be understood** by all involved

Apart from the ICS being in place and properly functioning, organic certification also requires:

- **Training** of the producers on organic farming and certification to take place on a regular basis (3.14)
- **Possible sources of contamination being examined** and described and strategies being developed to deal with them as is the case with the malaria eradication program in North central Namibia (3.11, 3.13)
- An **Organic Management Plan (OMP)** to be annually updated (3.15)
- **Relevant information about the area** being collected (3.13)

2.2 Costs involved in organic certification for smallholder groups

The costs involved in organic certification for smallholder groups can be broadly divided into two categories;

1) The costs involved at the initial stage of the organic certification project, i.e. for: developing the ICS, assistance in setting up a proper recordkeeping system, providing training to the fieldworkers, the internal inspectors, the producer group management, the organic committee, and the producers, payment of fieldworkers to collect the field and mapping data, assistance to produce maps and a database from the collected data, costs of transport for field activities, first payment to the certifying organization, etc. These initial costs can be referred to as development costs. As the producer group will not have any additional income from the sales of organic products at this stage, funding will have to be sourced to pay for these costs.

2) Recurrent annual costs. The main recurrent annual cost will be the fee that has to be paid to the certification organization every year for inspection and certification, but there are also other costs that the producer group will have to bear on an ongoing basis. These include payment of internal inspectors for the work that they do, administrative costs associated with the proper recordkeeping system like stationary, computer maintenance, and possibly labour, transport costs for meetings of the organic committee and/or the internal inspectors, costs of training, and possibly production costs like the buying of new and clean bags.

Donors can only be asked to fund the development costs, and possibly the first year(s) of the recurrent annual costs. Initial funding could also be obtained through a partnership with the private sector, which may have an interest in organic certification of the group, because they have a good market for organically certified products. In the long term however, all projects should be financially sustainable, which means that the extra income gained through the sales of organic products should cover at least the recurrent annual costs.

2.3 Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of organic certification for smallholders groups

From sections 2.1 & 2.2 it is clear that both the work and costs involved in organic certification for smallholder groups is quite substantial.

As a practical example of the real costs involved in organic certification, for the pilot project in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy, where 300 farmers participated, N$ 26'600 had to be paid to the certifying organization for inspection and certification of the producer group and the factory processing their products in 2006. In addition, internal inspectors will have to be paid for the annual internal inspections, the price of which is currently (2007) set at N$ 15 per farm, and extra recurrent administrative, transport, training and production costs can easily add up to N$ 5'000 per year. Prices will probably inflate in later years.

That is a lot of money, and producer groups have to determine whether organic certification will be financially sustainable for them. In the case of the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy it is. It is estimated that the producer group will grow to 400 producers in the near future, annually producing 10 kg of marula kernels each. 4000 kg of organic marula kernels will produce 1000 kg of organic marula oil. Organic marula oil currently sells for Euro 22.50 per kg as compared to Euro 15.00 per kg for non-organic oil. This means that an extra income of (1000 kg x Euro 7.50 =) Euro 7500 can be gained through organic certification. That is between N$ 63'000 and N$ 71'000 as an extra income, depending on exchange rates. From this extra income the producer group can easily pay the certifying organization (N$ 30'000), the internal inspections (N$ 6'000), the extra administrative and production costs (N$ 5'000), ánd pay a substantially higher price to the producers for their products. Furthermore, as more producer groups will join in similar schemes, the costs for inspection and certification will become considerably lower, making organic certification even more attractive for the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy.

However, organic certification may not be financially sustainable for other producer groups. In some cases the premium for organic products may not be quite as high, or the volumes that the group can produce will not justify the costs and efforts associated with organic certification. In other cases organic certification may be a pre-requisite for the marketing of products. Before embarking upon organic certification, a thorough discussion with the producer group and marketing experts is needed, taking into consideration the market situation, the existing or expected premium for organic products, the (recurrent) costs of certification, a realistic volume of production, and the potential benefits and disadvantages.

3. Organic certification for smallholder groups step by step

The first step in the organic certification process is of course making the decision to do so. Once the producer group has decided to strive for organic certification and funding for the initial phase has been secured, one has to make sure that all the requirements as described in 2.1 are met. This chapter gives some more practical information on how to meet those requirements. There is some logical order in the paragraphs, but it should be noted that many of the aspects have to be worked at simultaneously.

3.1 Inform and involve producers, community leaders, CBOs, NGOs, and government departments

The first thing that has to be done is to fully inform existing and potential members of the producer group that haven't been fully involved in the decision making process about what organic certification is and what it entails. If the area you want to organically certify is large, it is advisable to have several community meetings in different parts of the area, so that each member will be able to attend a meeting.

It is important to inform and explain other people and institutions in the area that are not directly involved as producers about the organic certification program as well:

1) There may be a potential for cooperation, for example agricultural extension workers or an NGO promoting vegetable gardens could help explain people about organic farming principles. Other institutions like the church or CBOs may be instrumental in getting important information to community members.
2) It is important that people know and understand what you are doing and are cooperative to your efforts, this will make the work for the fieldworkers easier and may also prevent problems. For example, community leaders may be upset with the fieldworkers for mapping farms and asking questions if they don't know about or understand the purpose of the work.
3) It may be possible to get needed information that is already available, for example maps of the area. It is also important to find out if inorganic fertilizers and pesticides were ever promoted in the area; you will need to know which product was promoted in what area in what quantities and in what timeframe.
4) By informing people about the organic project, you can also make sure other organizations are not working against your goals, for example by promoting inorganic fertilizers in your project area. The Ministry of Health can allow you to talk to the people that are employed as part of the malaria eradication program, in order for them to understand the organic ban to spray in peoples' storage rooms.

3.2 Producer group management

It is important that the producer group is structured according to its constitution or by-laws and properly functioning. Organic certification of smallholders requires the smallholders to be organized in a group with a documented management structure. If the producer group has been dormant or not well-functioning, one has to make sure that the

group goes through, and if necessary adapt the by-laws, and that all the office bearers know, understand, and are willing and able to carry out their functions. If the producer group has not been formed yet, designing a constitution or by-laws, and electing a management group and office bearers are the first things that have to be concentrated on. Other manuals can be used to assist in this process.

3.3 Identify and train fieldworkers

Having good fieldworkers is very important. Fieldworkers will have to be employed full time at the initial stages of the project, and can have several functions:

- They will be collecting all the necessary farm and mapping information from the producer group members (3.5 & 3.6),
- They will be explaining the producers the rules and regulations for organic certification by going through the contract that producers have to sign (3.7)
- They can be instrumental in the training of farmers (3.14).
- They are likely candidates to be trained as internal inspectors at a later stage (3.9),
- They can assist the producer group management in its administrative duties (3.8) because of their full involvement and understanding of the organic program.

In our pilot program we experienced that motivation rather than educational background was important in the selection of fieldworkers. We found 4 young people with grade 10-12 and little or no working experience that were eager to work and eager to learn, and they did an excellent job throughout the project period. Apart from being motivated and literate, it is important that the fieldworkers enjoy and are good in working with people.

Training of the fieldworkers should take place throughout the project period. It includes:

1) a thorough understanding of the basic concepts of organic certification
2) working with a GPS and collecting and recording mapping information
3) understanding the "field sheet" that they have to use to collect basic farm and production information from the members of the producer group
4) understanding the producer contract, and how to explain the rules and regulations to the members of the producer group

At a later stage the fieldworkers should also be trained in:

5) basic computer skills, and entering the collected data in the database, membership list, and purchase lists
6) training communities

And if they will continue participating in the project as internal inspectors after the initial phase of the project, they should be trained to:

7) carry out internal inspections
8) update all the information in the computer on an annual basis
9) assist the producer group management with the administration

The training should be as much as possible practical in nature. Apart from the first initial induction in the basic concepts of organic certification, the fieldworkers can best be trained by being assisted while doing the work.

3.4 Sorting out the practicalities for the fieldwork

The community meetings (3.1) have to be done before the fieldwork can start, so that the members of the producer group understand why the fieldworkers come to their homes and are cooperative. The producer group management will have to provide the fieldworkers with a list of members that want to participate in the organic program.

All the participants will be given a 'farmers code', that will appear on the membership list, the contract, the field sheet, and the mapping information. Names are not practical, since people often use different names, and confusion can also be caused by using the name of the member at one occasion, and the name of the head of the household at other times. 'Farmers codes' can be made up. In our pilot project in the Uukolonkadhi conservancy we used the codes: UUK 01, UUK 02, etc. Whatever codes you use, what is important is that it allows you to work systematically. It is best to allocate the codes before you start the fieldwork, to make sure that the same code is not used for 2 different members.

Another problem that has to be solved is transport. In most areas you will find that farms are far apart. Providing all the fieldworkers with a car is very expensive, but they can also not be expected to walk to all the farms in a large area. In our pilot project, we provided the fieldworkers with bicycles, sent them on bicycle repair training, and supplied them with a toolkit. In the more remote areas they went camping for a few days, in order to save on travelling time.

As for the training of the fieldworkers it proved practical to do all the work on the first farms collectively, as a group, together with the trainers. When they became more comfortable and skilled they split up in smaller groups, and at a later stage they managed to do the interviews, the mapping, and the explaining of the contract on their own.

3.5 Getting farming information from the participating producers

One of the requirements for organic certification is that field history and production data is collected from all the participating farms. This includes information about what crops are grown, what methods are used to fertilise the soil and combat pests, and the estimated volumes of organic production. In the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy, we also had to establish when the government had last sprayed against mosquitoes in what parts of which homestead, because that presented a possible cause of contamination of the organic products.

The questionnaire that is used to collect all this data is called a '**field sheet**'. It is advisable to keep the field sheet as short as possible, while capturing all the necessary information. The field sheet that we used in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy is shown on the next page:

Farmers Code: …….

Field sheet

Name of the head of the household: …… Date: ……..……..
Name of Okahulo member: …….
Village: ……

What crops do you grow? [ ] mahangu …% of field [ ] maize …% of field
[ ] sorghum …% of field [ ] beans … % of field
[ ] others, namely…….

What products grow wild on your farm? [ ] spinach [ ] wild melons
[ ] other, namely……

Do you have a vegetable garden? [ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, what do you grow there? .....

Which fruiting trees do you have on your farm?
[ ] Marula, ….. trees [ ] Baobab, ….. trees
[ ] other indigenous trees: ……..
[ ] other exotic trees: ……

How do you maintain or improve the soil condition of your farm (i.e. fertilization, crop rotation, shallow periods, etc)?
.....

Have you ever used inorganic fertilizers on your farm? [ ] Yes [ ] No
- If no, why not? ……
- If yes, what product did you use? ……..
Where did you get it? …….
When did you last use them? ……..
On which part of your farm did you use them? ……
For which crops?.....
Is the fertilizer still stored at your farm? Where?.....
Why is the fertilizer not used anymore / still used? …….....

When did the government last spray for mosquitoes on your farm?.....
Where did they spray? [ ] sleeping / living rooms [ ] kitchen area
[ ] storage rooms [ ] other: ……

How do you control weeds on your farm? ……..

How do you control pests and plant diseases on your farms? ……..

Have you ever used pesticides on your farm? [ ] yes [ ] No
- If no, why not? …….
- If yes, what product did you use? .....
Where did you get it? .....
On which plants / trees? ……..
Are the pesticides still stored at your farm? Where? ……...
Why are the pesticides not used anymore / still used? …….

Have your farming practices changed in the last 10 years? [ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, explain in what way, and when the changes took place …….
…….

How much marula kernels did you produce last year? ……..
How much marula kernels do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, why? …….

How much melon seeds did you produce last year? ……..
How much melon seeds do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, why? ……

How much Baobab pulp did you produce last year? ……..
How much Baobab pulp do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, why? …… ……

Do you harvest marula, KMS or Baobab in communal areas? [ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, where, what products, and in what quantities? ……..

It is important that the fieldworkers collecting the information fully understand the field sheet, understand how to ask the questions, and know how to record the answers.

3.6 Mapping of farms

According to the organic rules and regulations both maps of the whole area and maps of all farms participating in the organic program should be available. Maps of the area are usually available from other sources, but maps of the individual farms are generally not.

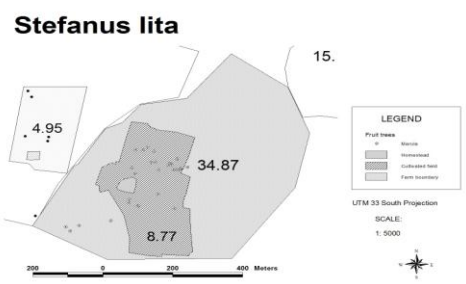
The farm maps should at least show:

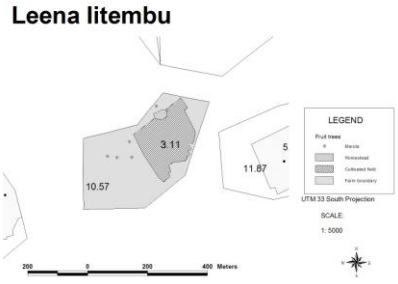
- the farm boundaries
- the field boundaries
- the trees from which organic products are collected (if you are working with tree products)
- the areas of production and storage.

If possible you should also show the surrounding area, and if there are rivers and slopes, these should also be indicated on the maps, because they show possible points of erosion and contamination. In our pilot project this was not an issue.

The maps should have the same farmers' codes as indicated on the field sheets and contracts in order to avoid confusion. In principle all the maps can be drawn by hand, but one should make sure the right proportions are maintained. If you have the means to do so, it is advised to map all the farms with GPS and process them in a computer program.

Below you can see 2 examples of what the maps in the Uukolonkadhi pilot project looked like, using GPS and a computer program. The maps indicate the farm boundaries, the field boundaries, the homesteads where the products are stored and processed, the scale of the map, the farm and field hectares, the location of fruiting marula and baobab trees, and some neighbouring farms in case they were also mapped as part of the organic program:





3.7 Signing of contracts

Both producers and producer groups have to sign contracts stating that they will adhere to the organic rules and regulations and make sure that no contamination of organic products will take place. It is advisable that the contracts are written in the local language.

Producer contracts should be signed in duplicate, the producer group keeps a copy as a proof that the producer has signed to follow the rules, and the producer should have a copy of the contract in order for them to read at any stage what they have signed for. The organic producers in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy all had to sign the following contract:

Farmers Code:……

Producer Contract

We hereby declare that our household agrees to farm organically, understands the basic requirements of organic farming, will abide to the rules and regulations of organic certification, and accepts sanctions enforced by the Internal Control System or the certifying agency if rules are not properly followed. In particular:

1. We will adhere to natural soil conservation practices, and will not use inorganic fertilizers on our farm
2. We will not use pesticides, but take organic measures against pests if necessary
3. We will not make use of inorganic seeding material or genetically modified (GMO) seeds.
4. We will avoid contamination of our farming products with insecticides or other chemicals, by following the mosquito spraying guidelines (i.e. no spraying in storage areas)
5. We will store our organic produce in a clean and safe place. Our storage containers will be thoroughly washed with water and soap, avoiding contamination
6. We will pack the organic produce in clean bags, and write on them 'organic' and our members code. If bags are not new, they should be thoroughly washed with water and soap, avoiding contamination
7. We will handle and process the organic produce in areas free from insecticides, fertilizers, pesticides, or other chemicals
8. We will not transport our organic produce in vehicles that carry insecticides, fertilizers, pesticides, or other chemicals
9. We understand and accept the functioning of the Internal Control System, and will provide both the internal and external inspector with any information deemed necessary, as well as full access to our farm during inspection
10. We understand the concept and importance of traceability in organic production
11. We will not sell products that originate from farms that are not participating in the organic programme as organic (i.e. marula nuts)
12. We understand that not following the rules and regulations for organic production can have serious consequences, including the possibility that the license for the whole producer group will be withdrawn. We will therefore report to the Internal Control System if we suspect that contamination may have taken place, and comply with the measures taken by the ICS

Signed in …… on this …… day of ……., 2006,

---------- ----------

Head of the household Okahulo member

Before the producers sign this contract, the fieldworkers have to thoroughly explain all the rules in it. If producers cannot adhere to these rules, they will have to be excluded from the organic programme. In most cases that means that they can still sell their products, but not as *certified organic*.

The management of the producer group also has to sign a contract saying they will adhere to the organic rules and regulations. This contract should be signed in English and the local language, so that both the producer group management and the certifying

organization can fully understand what has been signed. The producer group in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy (Okahulo Association) signed the following contract:

Organic rules and regulations for the Okahulo Producer Association

We hereby declare that the Okahulo Association undertakes to weigh, record, repack, store, and trade organically certified produce on behalf of its members. The Okahulo management understands the basic organic principles, will abide to the rules and regulations of organic certification, and accepts sanctions enforced by the certifying agency if rules are not properly followed. In particular:

1. The association will keep in good order all field sheets, producers' contracts, inspection checklists and investigation records, an updated members list, purchase and sale records, and a sanctions list. All organic records have to be kept for at least 5 years
2. The association will set up and maintain an organic committee, which regularly checks the reports of the internal inspectors, and deals with sanctions and new membership. All sanctions taken should be recorded and kept
3. The association will make sure that all participating farms are inspected at least once every year between the annual external inspections by trained internal inspectors. Discrepancies in quantities or suspected non-compliance of members should be reported to the organic committee immediately. The association will also be responsible for the mapping of farms of new members, recording field history information of new members, and updating the database and membership list.
4. The association will facilitate visits of external inspectors and organic trainers, and cooperate with them in every way they can
5. The association will extend important information with regard to organic certification to their members and other stakeholders.
6. The association will make sure there will be a clear separation of organic and non-organic products both in recordkeeping and storage at all times
7. When the association suspects that a product is not in compliance with the regulations, the product will be separated from the organic produce until that doubt is eliminated
8. The association will make sure that the premises where trading, weighing, repacking, and storage takes place is clean and free of any inorganic substances. No insecticides may be sprayed in areas where organic products are handled and stored
9. The association will use clean and new bags for repacking the organic produce, code all bags, and clearly mark them as organic
10. Purchase of organic products will be announced in advance and will take place on different days than the purchase of conventional products. Members selling their organic produce should show their organic membership card, and only products in good condition will be accepted.
11. Transport of organic products to the processing facility will take place in cleaned trucks or bakkies that do not carry any inorganic substances

Signed in …… on this ..… Day of ……..……., 2006

…….
Chairlady Okahulo

…….
Secretary Okahulo

Lastly, the company processing or handling your organic products also have to sign a contract. More on this in chapter 4

3.8 Producer group administration

In organic certification, the concept of traceability is very important. Traceability means that if someone buys a product containing an organic ingredient like marula oil, it should be possible to completely trace back where the organic ingredient comes from.

Traceability is needed as proof that the product is truly organic, and it is also important to be able to trace back where the product originates from in case some form of contamination is found. Traceability can only exist if the whole process from the producer to the end product is properly recorded. This obviously has consequences for the producer group administration. There is a strict set of rules with regard to what needs to be in place:

- An **updated membership list**. Membership lists should at least include the names and farmer codes of the members. In the pilot project we also included the name

of the head of the household, the village, and the sub-group. The membership list should indicate in which year the members joined the group as well, and if membership is terminated, the reason for the cancellation has to be stated. The membership list should furthermore indicate whether the member is fully organic or has to adhere to a conversion period (more on conversion periods in section 3.18). Lastly, if annual fees are paid for membership, it is advisable to add one or more columns for that as well. The membership list has to be updated at least once a year, preferably before the external inspection takes place.

- A **bag numbering system**. All bags that are sold from the producer group to the processing facility have to be properly numbered. No two bags are allowed to have the same number. Apart from a number, other information has to be indicated on the bag as well, like the name of the producer group, the product, the month and year of purchase, and the fact that it is an organically certified product. The easiest way to get all this information on a bag is by using abbreviations or codes. In the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy we used the following coding system for numbering the bags:

[Name of the association] – [product] – [month and year of purchase] – [number] -[Organically certified]

Name of the association:	Okahulo = OK	
Product:	Marula kernels = MK	Baobab pulp = BP
	Melon Seeds = MS	Baobab Fruit = BF
Date of purchase:	January = 01	2006 = 06
	February = 02	2007 = 07
	March = 03	2008 =08
	Etc, So if a product is purchased in April 2006, the code will be 0406	
Number	Numbers should follow each other per product 01, 02, 03, etc. You can only start again with 01 at the beginning of each season	

Summarised, for the first bag of organic marula kernels, purchased by the Okahulo Association in July 2006, the bag number will be:

OK-MK-0606-01

This number has to be written on the sales record that accompanies the products to the processing or export facility.

On the bag, this number has to be written together with some other information. The producer group has to clearly indicate on the bag the product, the weight, the producer, the fact that the product is certified organic, and the name and code of the certifying organization. As in the following example:

ORGANIC Marula kernels
14.2 kg
OK-MK-0606-01
Producer: Emilia Petrus (or UUK01)
Certified by Ecocert SA F-32600

Furthermore, it should be indicated on the purchase list who the producer(s) is (are) of the products in each

bag. Only then can the product that is further processed or exported be fully traced back to the producer.

- **Purchase lists**. Purchase lists have to be kept to prove that the producer group has purchased the products from their members, have weighed the products, and have paid the producers.

  Separate purchase lists have to be made for different products that are bought, and all purchase lists have to be prepared before the season for buying the products starts.

  It is important that estimated production is indicated on the purchase list, and members should not exceed the estimated production. If members for example have indicated during their first interview or subsequent internal inspections that they can produce 20 kg of marula kernels, and they bring 200 kg to the producer group, that means that there is a possibility that the extra production does not come from their own farm, but from another, possibly non-organic place, and this has to be investigated. Printed on the purchase lists should be all the members, their farmers' code, whether they have paid their membership fee, and their estimated production:

Marula purchase list Okahulo Association 2006								
Farmers code	Name of member	Fees paid 2007	Estimated production	Date of purchase 1	kg	Bag number	N$ received	Signature
UUK 01	Emilia Petrus	Yes	25 kg	*10/06/06*	*14.2*	*OK-MK-0606-01*		
UUK 02	Maria Iitenge	Yes	15 kg					
UUK 03	Marta Kalilo	No	20 kg					
UUK 04	Olivia Kamati	Yes	10 kg					
UUK 05	Ester Iipinge	Yes	10 kg					
UUK 06	Linda Junias	Yes	30 kg					

  In cases where products are purchased more than once per season or year, longer purchase lists have to be prepared, allowing for more purchases to be recorded on the same list.

  When the members come to the producer group to sell their products, the producer group has to check if the weight of the bag falls within the limit of their total estimated production for the year. Furthermore, the quality is checked, the bag is weighed, and a number is given. The producer group management then fills in the rest of the purchase list, recording the date, the weight of the bag, and the bag number.

  If money is given to the producer directly, the amount has to be recorded and the member has to sign that they have received the money. In most cases the producer group will only pay the producer after they have received the money for it though. In that case, the producer has to be given a receipt for the products brought and only sign on the purchase list when they have come back to receive the money.

- **Receipts**. When members bring their products to the producer group, but don't get paid for it directly, the members have to be given a receipt as a documented proof of their sales. The receipt should indicate
- The date of purchase *(10/06/06)*
- The name of the member *(Emilia Petrus)*
- The farmers code *(UUK 01)*
- The amount (kg) and type of product brought *(14.2 kg of marula kernels or MK)*
- Signature of the association secretary or chairperson

- **Sales records**. When enough produce is collected to transport it to an exporting agent or processing facility to which the products are sold, a sales or sales-delivery record has to be filled in. This record has to accompany the products during all transport, has to be given to the company that buys the products, and a copy of all sales records has to be kept by the producer group.

  The sales-delivery record has to indicate:
  - The name of the producer group *(i.e. Okahulo Association)*
  - The product sold *(i.e. organic marula kernels)*
  - To whom the products are sold *(i.e. EWC factory)*
  - The date of the sale *(i.e. 30/06/06)*
  - The name and code of the certifying organization *(i.e. certified by Ecocert SA F-32600)*

Then, for every bag that is brought for sale, the bag number has to be filled in as well the weight of each bag. The factory that receives the products has to weigh the bags again, and fill in what they have measured. Some of the products may have been lost during transport or were not weighed properly during the intake. Finally, the total number of bags and the total KGs for each bag are calculated, and both the factory and the producer group will keep a copy of the sales-delivery record.

Bag number	KG	Kg received
OK-MK-0606-01	*14.2*	*14.2*
OK-MK-0606-03	*4.8*	*4.8*
OK-MK-0606-06	*11.4*	*11.2*
OK-MK-0606-04	*10.1*	*10.1*
OK-MK-0606-02	*6.4*	*6.4*
OK-MK-0606-05	*7.2*	*7.2*
Total KGs	*54.1*	*53.9*
Total number of bags	*6*	

The administrative duties of the producer group described above are all related to purchase, sales and traceability of products. The producer group however has to make and keep other records as well.

They should for example have **detailed maps** of the areas where the producer group handles and stores the organic produce. If the producer group handles and stores organic as well as non-organic products in the same areas, the products have to be separated either in space or time. It is possible to store both organic and non-organic products in the same room, but the organic products have then to be stored in a clearly signed different

part of the room, making sure that they stay separated from the non-organic products. The organic storage and handling areas have to be indicated on the map.

Furthermore, the producer group has to make sure that maps, field and production information gathered from the members is kept in a systematic order and regularly updated. We found that the best way to keep and update this information is by developing and maintaining a **database** in a computer. When a computer is used new information can easily replace the outdated data after every annual internal inspection. So although it takes some cost and effort initially to install a computer, develop proper programs, and train people to work with it, in the long run working with a computer becomes quite essential.

Finally, the producer group has to make sure that records of a well-functioning internal inspection system are kept. The internal inspection system and its administrative requirements are explained in more detail in the next section (3.9).

3.9 Design and implement internal inspection system

Apart from the first year where all data is collected through the field sheets, all farms have to be inspected by trained internal inspectors at least once a year. The internal inspectors have to make sure that all the participating farmers are still following all the rules and regulations of organic certification, and collect updated information on field use, estimated production of organic products, government spraying against mosquitoes, use of fertilizers, storage of organic products, etc.

Before the internal inspections can take place, an **annual inspection plan** has to be made, indicating which internal inspectors will inspect which farms at what time period. It is advised to carry out the internal inspections during the harvesting or production season, so that harvesting, production and storage practices can be observed. The annual inspection plan should include all participating members and indicate their farmer codes.

When preparing the annual inspection plan, one has to make sure that **conflict of interest situations** are avoided. Internal inspectors should be explained what conflict of interests means, and how it can negatively affect the organic certification program. During the design of the annual inspection plan, the internal inspectors have to indicate which households they are closely related to. Close relations include relatives, neighbours, and friends. The annual inspection plan will then be designed in such a way that the internal inspectors will not inspect the households they are closely related to.

After it has been established which households can be inspected by which inspector, all inspectors will have a file with contract, map, field sheets of members that they are responsible for.

Internal inspection forms can have different forms, depending on the type of farms and products and the risks of contamination of those products. The internal inspection form that was used in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy is shown on the next page:

Okahulo Association – Organic certification
Internal inspection form

Name of the head of the household: …… *(NB note if there is a change*
Name of Okahulo member: …… *in names and why)*
Village: …….
Name of internal inspector: …….
Farmers code: ……..…….. Date: ……

1. Has the size of the farm or cultivated field changed since the last inspection?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, how? …….
……..

2. Are there more or less fruiting trees than indicated on the map?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, what has changed?.....

NB if anything has changed (yes to 1. and/or 2.), the map has to be adapted, trees can either be added or crossed out, if the size of the land has changed, the farm will have to be re-mapped

3. Has the household started to grow any new crops since the last inspection?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, what? ……

4. What organic fertiliser(s) have been used since the last inspection?
……..

5. Has the government sprayed for mosquitoes at your farm since the last inspection?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, where? ……
Have they sprayed where?
- the marula kernels are stored? [ ] yes [ ] no
- the marula nuts are stored? [ ] yes [ ] no
- the melon seeds are stored? [ ] yes [ ] no
- the baobab is stored? [ ] yes [ ] no
- Any of the above products are processed? [ ] yes [ ] no

Are you aware that organic products cannot be stored or processed in places where the government has sprayed against the mosquitoes? [ ] yes [ ] no

NB let the farmers / members show you where the government has sprayed for mosquitoes and where the organic products are stored and processed, and indicate what products may have been in contact with the insecticide (risk of contamination)
…… ……
……..

6. Has any pesticide or herbicide been used since the last inspection?
[ ] yes [ ]no
If yes, give details: ……...

7. Has the household used any inorganic fertilizers since the last inspection?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If no, why not? …….
If yes, what product did you use? ……..
Where did you get it? …….
On which part of your farm did you use them? ……
For which crops?.....
Where was / is the fertilizer still stored at your farm? .....

NB let the farmers / members show you where fertilizers have been used and where they are stored, and indicate what products may have been in contact with the fertilizers (risk of contamination)……
……

8. How much marula kernels did you produce last year? ……..
How much marula kernels do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, how come? ……
……

9. How much melon seeds did you produce last year? ……..
How much melon seeds do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, how come? ……
……

10. How much Baobab pulp did you produce last year? ……..
How much Baobab pulp do you expect to produce this year? ……
If there is a big difference between the two estimates, how come? …… ……
……

11. Did you ever get any training on the standards for organic farming and certification?
[ ] yes [ ] no
If yes, when did you last attend a training? ……
Do you think you have a good understanding of the standards and the possible consequences of not following the rules?…….....
If not through training, how do you know the rules? ……..
Would you like additional training? In what?**.....**

Any comments / observations of the farmer/member and/or the internal inspector:
……
……
……

The undersigned member agrees with and understands the contents of this form and declares to have truthfully answered all questions

…….…… ……... …….
Place and date member and/or household head internal inspector

After the internal inspections, the inspection forms have to be properly filed, and will be used to update information in the database, the purchase lists, and the membership list. When the certifying organization comes to inspect, the producer group has to show the inspection plan and all the forms as proof that annual inspections of all farms have been conducted.

In some cases extra inspections are needed in addition to the annual internal inspections. This is the case for example when a producer tries to sell much more than their indicated estimated production. In such an instance it might be the case that members try to sell products that are coming from other, non-organic farms. An internal inspector will then have to be send to the producer to investigate the situation, and fill in a **quantities discrepancy report:**

Okahulo Association Organic certification
Quantities discrepancies investigation report

Date: ……
Farmers Code: ……..
Members Name: ……..

Product: Marula kernels / Melon seeds / Baobab pulp

Actual sold quantity: …. kg

Estimated production quantity: …. kg
Discrepancy: …. kg

Member's explanation of discrepancy:
……
……
…….

Sanction taken: YES / NO

If no, why not? ……..
……
……

If yes, what sanction was taken and why?
……
……
……
…….....

……. ……. ……..
member internal inspector chairperson
Organic committee

Apart from discrepancies in produced quantities, there can be other reasons to conduct extra inspections. If it is suspected that a product or procedure is not in compliance with the organic rules and regulations as described in the organic producer and producer group contracts that the producers and the producer group have signed, the product should be separated until that doubt is eliminated. For example, it may be suspected that the produce has been stored with inorganic fertilizers or other chemical substances, or that the bag in which the produce is brought has contained such substances. In such cases an internal inspector is send to investigate the case, and has to fill in a **non-compliance investigation report,** which can look like this:

Okahulo Association Organic certification
Non-compliance investigation report

Date: ……
Farmers Code: ……..
Members Name: ……..

Non-compliance suspected: ……
……

Why was this suspected: ……
……..

Investigation report: ……
……
……..
……..
……..
……..

Sanction taken: YES / NO

If no, why not? ……..
……
……

If yes, what sanction was taken and why?
……
……
……..

……. ……. ……..
member internal inspector chairperson
Organic committee

If farmers are found not following the rules, either during the annual internal inspections or the additional inspections, sanctions have to be given and recorded in the **annual organic sanctions list**. Sanctions can vary from a verbal warning to being expelled from the organic producer group, depending on the severity of the transgression. What sanctions are taken in what cases have to be described in the *internal rules* of the producer group (see 3.10).

Quantities discrepancy reports, non-compliance reports, and the annual organic sanctions list all have to be filed in a **complaints logbook**, kept in good order and updated by the producer group or the organic committee. A complaints logbook is kept to make sure that complaints are filed, and that corrective actions are taken and recorded.

On the side of the producer group, there are a lot of things that could go wrong as well. It could be that the recording is not done properly, or that the annual inspections have not all taken place, or that the organic products are not stored separately from non-organic products or handled in a place where insecticides are sprayed or chemical substances are stored. In all such cases the risks for organic production have to be assessed and corrective actions taken, recorded and filed in the complaints logbook. Whatever it is that is not 100% compliant with the regulations, it has to be recorded, investigated, determined whether the product or production can still be labelled as organic, and corrective (and preferably preventive) measures have to be taken and recorded.

It is advisable to train the fieldworkers that were trained in the first part of the program as internal inspectors, since they will be more knowledgeable and skilled with regard to the organic certification program than any other community member. They should be trained to fully understand the internal inspection procedures and the possible implications for the whole group if the internal inspections are not done correctly. The producer organization should properly pay the internal inspectors for the important work that they do. Since it is not a full time job, but takes place only a few months every year, it is advised that internal inspectors get paid per farm that they inspect. In the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy a payment of N$15 per inspected farm was decided on in 2007.

3.10 Organic Committee

The organic committee is responsible for the proper functioning of the Internal Control System (ICS). The specific functions of the organic committee include:

- Making sure that the internal inspectors are doing their jobs (check their reports and files on a regular basis)
- Making sure that the producer group adheres to the organic rules and regulations in their management and administration (check files and records, investigate complaints).
- Deciding on the application of new members and the termination of membership
- Giving sanctions to non-complying farmers
- Writing an annual report on the functioning of the ICS, on sanctions given, problems experienced, and corrective actions taken
- Keeping all the necessary organic records and files

In the initial stage of the organic program the organic committee has to develop a set of **internal rules** that describe acceptance and termination of membership, and a list of sanctions for different forms of non-compliance that may be experienced.

The organic committee could either be an existing committee, or a (sub-) committee should be set up. It should ideally consist of people that show a particular interest to the organic program. It is advisable to have at least one internal inspector in the committee, and at least one member of the producer group management. One could also ask an outsider, like an agricultural extension worker, to join the committee. Since the organic committee will need to meet on a regular basis, and make urgent, ad hoc decisions at other times, it is best to keep the committee relatively small, and have actively involved people only.

Needless to say, the organic committee should fully understand the requirements of the ICS and the organic program, and a lot of training throughout the initial stages of the organic program is needed in order for the committee to properly carry out their functions.

3.11 Strategy to prevent DDT contamination

DDT is a substance that was used on a large scale as an agricultural pesticide, and as an insecticide combating insect-borne diseases like Malaria in Western countries from the 1940s. It proved effective as an agricultural pesticide and successfully eradicated malaria in Europe and North-America. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, it was banned in all Western countries, because of its negative impact on the environment and human health. Although the negative impact on human health is debatable, DDT is the most well-known banned pesticide, and especially consumers who are interested in buying organic products, will not accept any traces of this pesticide in those products.

In some countries, including Namibia, DDT is still allowed to be used as part of their malaria eradication program. Few alternatives are available. Other insecticides that could be sprayed against mosquitoes carrying malaria are often less effective, more expensive, and not necessarily better for the environment and human health. And not spraying anything may result in serious health problems and loss of life through malaria and other insect-borne diseases.

For these reasons, and because the organic agriculture movement cannot change countries' policies, products that come from countries where the insecticide is sprayed can still be certified as organic, provided that the organic program designs a strategy making sure that organic products will not be contaminated with DDT.

The main strategy for preventing DDT contaminating organic products is awareness creation. Members of the organic producer group should understand:

- What DDT is, that it is important as a measure against mosquitoes and malaria, but that it may have a negative effect on the environment and human health, and that they risk loosing their organic market if traces of the insecticide are found in their products.

- What the government policy on spraying as part of the malaria eradication program is. The policy states that the insecticide may only be sprayed in the eves of the sleeping and living rooms, and not in the storage rooms. People furthermore have to vacate the rooms that are sprayed for at least an hour. Both the people who have their houses sprayed, and the government employees that spray, are often not aware of these rules.
- How to avoid getting traces of DDT in their organic products: by storing their organic products in a room which has never been sprayed or building a separate storage for their organic products, by using tools that have not been stored in a room that has been sprayed, or cleaning them thoroughly with water and soap, by processing in areas that have not been sprayed, and by using bags that have not in any way been in contact with the substance. In the producer contract, all of this is mentioned and signed for.

There are different ways to create awareness about DDT and the prevention of contamination:

- The rules in the producer contract should be thoroughly explained before the producers sign the contract.
- The issue should be discussed in training and meetings with communities.
- The Ministry of Health, and in particularly those employed in the malaria eradication program should be informed and trained.
- Other forms of communication like leaflets or radio can be used.

3.12 gender

Gender is to be considered especially when the producers of the products you want to organically certify are mainly women. In the natural products trade in Namibia, mostly women are involved. However, if farms are to be certified organic, it is important that the whole household is following the rules. In many cases the head of the household, that is often a man, makes decisions with regard to the farm and field use. If you only concentrate on the female producers, this may create problems, and it is therefore imperative to include men in the program as well.

In our pilot project we made sure that both the head of the household and the member of the producer group were made to understand the rules and regulations of organic certification, and both had to sign a contract saying they will adhere to the rules. It is important to include men in community meetings and training sessions as well.

3.13 Collecting information about the area

Information about the area where you want to start an organic program needs to be collected in order to establish what the risks for contamination of your product are. One needs to establish how easy or difficult it is for people to get pesticides or inorganic fertilizers, or see if there are any other sources of possible contamination, for example because of a factory that is disposing of a lot of toxic waste in the environment. One also needs to collect maps that can show how far or how close the potential organic farms are

to possible sources of contamination, and whether the farms are at risk because of rivers and slopes leading to the farms.

Collecting all the necessary information about your area is part of the **risk assessment** that has to be made. Because north central Namibia is not industrialized, and people do not use pesticides, herbicides, and very little inorganic fertilizers, the risk of contamination is relatively low. This, however, has to be proved.

In the pilot project in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy we found that inorganic fertilizers had been promoted by agricultural extension workers on a limited scale, and that they had stopped promoting and selling the fertilizers in 1996. As a proof of that, we asked officials of the Ministry of Agriculture in the area to write **affidavits**, which are sworn statements of the truth, in which they stated that they have not promoted or sold inorganic fertilizers since 1996.

We furthermore investigated other ways of obtaining agrochemicals, but no shops in the region were found selling pesticides and fertilizers. This does not mean that farmers are not able to get hold of fertilizers and pesticides through family members or other sources, but it greatly reduces the risk of people using them. We also managed to get more information on the malaria eradication program in the area through interviews with community members, and a local department of the Ministry of Health. Lastly, detailed maps of the area were obtained.

As part of the risk assessment, it is also important to gather information about production systems. In North central Namibia for example, it is a custom to make omaongo (marula wine) together with friends and neighbours, and to take all or part of the nuts of the fruits you have processed home. Kernels from nuts that come from farms that are not organically certified, however, cannot be sold as organic, and should therefore be separated from the nuts/kernels that are certified organic. Practices like this should be recorded, and the Internal Control System has to make sure participants of the organic program are aware of and will adhere to such rules, through adding the rule in the contract, and by discussing the issue during training sessions.

3.14 Training of communities

All members of the producer group should have a good understanding of what organic agriculture and organic certification are all about, and what the requirements and consequences for them are if they want to participate in the organic program.

At the first stage of our pilot project, we held general informative community meetings, addressing members, potential members, and other interested parties, explaining our intentions, and getting their feedback. At a later stage we held more detailed training sessions for smaller groups in more places. We tried to include male heads of households as much as possible as well. A training of trainers session was organised for a group of potential community trainers. In practice, mainly the fieldworkers / internal inspectors conducted the training sessions in the communities. The first training session in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy consisted of the following topics:

Community training session

1. Welcome, introduction
2. Attendance list
All participating farmers should attend a training, so make a list of the farmers present and their farmers' codes
3. Organic farming
- What is organic farming?
- Why organic farming?
- More practical training in conservation farming program
- Some practical organic farming tips

4. Organic certification
- What is organic certification?
- Why organic certification?
- How to get organically certified?
- Conversion period

5. Rules and regulation for the producers / farmers
- farmers contract
- DDT guidelines
- marula nuts exchange
- gender issues

6. Rules and regulations for the producer group
- producer group contract

7. Internal Control Systems (ICS)
- What are internal control systems?
- Why are Internal Control Systems needed?
- The importance of following the rules
- Sanctions

6. External inspection
- What does an external inspector do?
- Why do we need external inspection?
- What do we have to do for the external inspector?
- Why is it important to cooperate with the internal inspector?
- When does she come?

7. After the external inspection
- Organically certified or conversion period?
- Recommendations for improvements
- License
- Purchase of marula kernels and melon seeds (Baobab not yet clear)
- Keep on following the rules and keep the ICS functioning

Materials used for the training consisted of a background document on organic farming and certification extracted and adapted from the IFOAM training manual for Organic Agriculture in the Tropics (Annex 1), the producer and producer group contracts, and a paper describing the ICS in Oshiwambo. It is advisable to have as many as possible training materials translated in the local language. In the future, this manual should be used for training purposes as well.

One also has to think of a more practical training on organic farming methods. For example a few members in all areas could be send for a working visit to fully organic farms, and teach their fellow members how they can improve on their farming using organic methods for soil fertilization and pest control, or introduce certain beneficial species to their farming system. In the first year of our pilot project we did not have the time or resources to do this, but training should be part of the organic program on a continuous basis.

3.15 Organic Management Plan (OMP)

Before the certifying agency considers sending an inspector, you have to make sure the Organic management Plan or OMP is finalized. The OMP is sometimes also called "application form and unit description", and a format for this is send by the certification organization. The OMP is a questionnaire consisting of open questions and checklists.

The OMP consists of 3 compulsory sections:

1) General information: Name and contact details of your organization, certification history and type of activities you are involved in.
2) Product list: Detailed description of what products you want to certify and how they are processed.
3) Unit description: Detailed description of the production, processing and handling units.

Additional sections will have to be filled in, depending on the type of products and activities you are engaged in. Available checklists are:

a) Plant and mushroom production, for farmed plant products
b) Wild collection, for wild products harvested in natural (non-farm) areas
c) Grower group organization, for cooperatives or small scale farmers organizations
d) Processing, storage and handling, for factories, storage facilities and exporters
e) Bee products
f) Animal products
g) NOP certification, for products that are exported to the USA
h) Multi ingredients products

Apart from the fact that finalising the OMP is a requirement for your application for certification to be considered, the checklists in the OMP can be very useful in deciding for yourself whether you are ready for an inspection. The OMP has to be updated annually before every inspection from the certifying organization. The application form and unit description can be found in Annex 2

3.16 Costing and pricing

For smallholder groups the aim will be to maximize the income for the smallholder producers. However, it is necessary to develop a sustainable costing and pricing structure for your organic products and production, and several factors have to be considered:

- The organic and non-organic price of the end product that is going to be sold (in the case of the pilot project that was marula oil, not marula kernels)
- A realistic volume of expected production
- The extra income from selling the expected volume as certified organic as opposed to conventional
- The estimated costs that have to be paid to the certifying organization
- The estimated costs for the processing facility needed to adhere to the organic rules and regulations
- The estimated costs for the producer group needed to adhere to the organic rules and regulations

Taking all these factors into consideration a sustainable price structure has to be calculated and developed. When larger volumes can be sustained at a later stage, the costs of certification will be relatively lower per kg of product, and the costing and pricing structure will have to be revised. When you export products, and the exchange rate changes significantly or the price paid for the products is adapted, the pricing structure will need to be revised as well. It is advisable to check the price structure and establish whether major revisions should be made once per year.

3.17 External inspection

When your ICS is at least 80% in place, the OMP has been sent to the certifying organization and they have favourably considered your application, and 70% of the fees to the certification organization have been paid, the certifying agent will send an inspector to check the functioning of the ICS, and to re-inspect a small number of farms (15-30, depending on the size of the group and the risks involved).

The group can get certified only if they can prove that the ICS is functioning well, that all farms are inspected and the producers comply with the rules, and that therefore there is no need for the external inspector to visit all the farms. All participating producers are obliged to welcome the inspector on any part of their farm or homestead and to provide him or her with any information requested. The producer group management and the organic committee have to show all the records and maps and contracts, and will have to answer to all the questions of the inspector. After the inspection visit, the inspector will write a report about his or her findings and send it to the certifying organization. The findings of the inspector will determine whether your group can get an organic certificate or not.

External inspections need to take place on an annual basis. If the organic certificate is granted, it will only be valid for 1 year. That means that after that year you cannot sell your products as certified organic anymore, unless you pay for another inspection of your ICS, and the certification organization grant you a certificate for another year.

3.18 After the external inspection

A committee of the certification organization investigates the report of their inspector, and sends a **certification decision** based on their findings. The certification decision will describe deviations to the organic rules and regulations, and improvement actions that are needed to rectify the deviations. Deviations can vary from:

- minor, in which case just a remark is given, to
- medium, in which case the certificate is not granted until it can be proven that improvements have taken place, to
- very serious, in which case certification will be denied.

In our pilot project in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy, the observed deviations were minor to medium, and improvements could be shown within a month after the certification decision was received. Our improvement actions included the opening of a complaints logbook, describing how we would avoid conflict of interest situations with

the internal inspections, and the inclusion of estimated quantities on the purchase list. Immediately after the improvement actions were put in place, the organic certificate, also called "**certificate of conformity**" was granted.

According to international organic standards, farmers will have to go through a **conversion period** before the certificate of conformity is granted. The conversion period refers to the period of time between the farmers' decision to start producing organically, apply to the certification body, and commit themselves to following the organic rules and regulations, to the time when they can be considered as fully organic, and the agro-chemicals used in the previous years cannot be found in the products anymore.

In most cases, a certificate of conformity cannot be granted, and products can therefore not be sold as certified organic, until the farm has finished a conversion period. Conversion periods vary considerably from standard to standard. The EU regulation, for example, demands a conversion period of 2 years for annual plants and 3 years for perennials.

In some cases, a full conversion period is not required where de facto full standards requirements have been met for several years and where this can be verified through various means and sources. This was established in our pilot project in the Uukolonkadhi Conservancy. Because most producers had not used inorganic fertilisers and pesticides in the 3 years prior to inspection, the certificate of conformity was granted to the producer group as a whole. However, producers that had used inorganic fertilisers in recent years were required to go through a conversion period, and will therefore not be able to sell organically certified Kalahari Melon Seeds until the fields where these melons grow are free of inorganic fertilisers for at least 3 years.

After the certificate of conformity is granted, improvement actions are followed up and required conversion periods are respected, the producer group can sell products as certified organic for 1 year. It is important though that the group as well as the individual farmers all keep on following the rules and regulations, and that the ICS in all its aspects is kept well functioning. Only then can the future annual inspections result in a continued organic status of the group and its products.

4. Organic Certification of Processing Facility

4.1 Introduction

If your natural products need further handling or processing before they will be sold or exported as final products, as is the case with melon seeds and marula kernels that are processed into oil, the company doing the further processing or handling should be organically certified as well. Only if the processing facility is following the organic rules and regulations and has received an organic certificate from a certifying organisation can the final product (i.e. marula oil) be sold as organic for a higher price. This means that if a processing facility is not organically certified, they are probably not willing to pay a higher price for your organically certified products, since they will not be able to sell their final products at a higher price.

4.2 Organic Contract

Like the producers and the producer groups, processing facilities also have to sign an organic contract, indicating that they will adhere to the organic rules and regulations that are set for companies that process and/or sell organic products. For the Eudafano Women Cooperative factory, that currently processes Marula and Kalahari Melon Seed oil and received an organic certificate at the beginning of 2007, the following contract was signed:

Organic Processor Contract for EWC Factory

We hereby declare that the Eudafano Women Cooperative (EWC) Factory undertakes to process, store, and trade organically certified products on behalf of its members. The EWC management understands the basic organic principles, will abide to the rules and regulations of organic certification, and accepts sanctions enforced by the certifying agency if rules are not properly followed. In particular:

12. EWC factory will keep in good order proper records for purchase, processing, packing, and export / sales of organically certified products. The EWC factory will make sure there is a separate record keeping system for organically certified and non-organically certified products, that a batch numbering system is in place, and that all the records are clearly marked as organic. All organic records will to be kept for at least 5 years
13. EWC factory will make sure there will be a clear separation of storage of organic and non-organic products both before and after processing
14. EWC factory will make sure that there will be a clear separation in time for processing organic and conventional products. Before processing the organic products, the processing space and equipment will be thoroughly cleaned.
15. EWC factory will take necessary measures to ensure identification of lots and to avoid mixtures or exchanges with the non-certified products. (mainly through separate storage and clear labelling).
16. When the EWC factory suspects that a product is not in compliance with the regulations, the product will be separated from the organic produce until that doubt is eliminated.
17. The EWC factory will make sure that the premises where trading, weighing, processing, repacking, and storage takes place is clean and free of any chemical substances.
18. The EWC factory will use clean and new containers for packing the organic products, preferably food-grade drums
19. EWC factory will make sure that the drums containing organic products are clearly labelled, indicating producer, product, inspection body, container number, batch number, and that it concerns an organically certified product
20. EWC factory will make sure that the factory workers are aware of the organic certification processing standards and properly follow the hygiene, cleaning, processing and recording guidelines and procedures.
21. EWC factory will make sure that transport of organic products to the buyer or exporting agent will take place in trucks that do not carry any chemical substances
22. EWC factory will facilitate visits of external inspectors, and cooperate with them in every way they can. The inspector will be given full access to the premises and all the relevant documents and records.

Signed in …… on this ..… Day of ……..……., 2006

……. …….

Chairlady EWC factory Secretary EWC factory

4.3 Practicalities of processing and storage of organic products

The company that processes or handles organic products will have to make sure that the premises where trading, weighing, processing, repacking, and storage takes place is clean and free of any chemical substances. It is possible to have both organic and non-organic processing and storage at the same processing facility, provided certain procedures are followed.

The organic raw material and finished products have to be stored either in a separate room, or in a specific corner of the same room that is clearly marked with a sign stating "ORGANIC". The raw material and the finished products also have to be clearly labelled and marked as ORGANIC. Measures must be taken to make 100% sure that mixing of organic and non-organic products is avoided at all times. When mixture does take place or for some reason it is suspected that a product is not in compliance with the regulations, the product will have to be separated from the organic produce until that doubt is eliminated.

The same counts for organic processing. Organic processing must be clearly separated from non-organic processing, either in space or time. Before organic processing can take place, the processing room and all equipment in it has to be thoroughly cleaned and flushed with clean water, making sure that no contamination of any kind can take place. The processors have to adhere to proper hygienic standards as well.

After processing clean and new packaging has to be used to pack the final product, and the products have to be marked and labelled according to the standards. Subsequent transport of organic products to the buyer or exporting agent will have to take place in trucks that do not carry any chemical substances

All employees of the processing facility should understand what organic certification means, and what guidelines need to be followed in order to produce certified organic products. The processing facility therefore has to make sure that the factory workers are aware of the organic certification processing standards and follow the proper hygiene, cleaning, processing and recording guidelines and procedures.

The processing facility will have to be inspected once a year as well, and the factory staff and management have to give full cooperation to the inspectors that come to check whether the organic standards are respected. The inspector should have full access to the factory premises and all the relevant documents and records.

4.4 Administration of organic processing

In the administration of organic processing, traceability is the key concept. It has to be clear which raw materials from which producer belonging to which producer group is used to process which batch of oil (or other product). So a proper recording system is required for each step of the process. For marula oil forms were developed for recording the intake of kernels, the rebagging of kernels, the processing of kernels into oil, the

packing of the oil, and the export of the oil. In this way, every bag that comes in from the producer group can be ‘followed’ on paper, up to the time it leaves the premises of the processing facility in the form of oil.

Furthermore, the processing facility needs to:

- Produce a detailed map of its premises, indicating organic storage of both the raw material and the finished products.
- Develop and use a batch numbering system.
- Develop and use a labelling system for the final products, indicating producer, product, product number, batch number, certification organization and code, and that it concerns an organically certified product.
- Design processing flow diagrams for all organic products, indicating all processing steps.
- Use cleaning forms, signed by the production manager, as a proof that the production area and all the equipment is thoroughly cleaned before processing takes place.
- Open a complaints logbook, and making sure that anything that goes against the organic rules and regulations as described in the organic processor contract is investigated, filed, and that corrective actions are taken and recorded.