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**An Evaluation of Organic Certification System on Agro-ecosystems Interactions and Smallholder Farmers' Livelihoods: A Case Study of Smallholder Organic Farming Agro-ecosystems in Luwero District in Central Uganda**

This research was carried out within the months of April, May, June and July 2012 in Kyampisi, Lusanja and Bwaziba villages found in the central district of Luwero, where certified Organic farming has been modified to suit the small holder farmer's conditions. The research looked at the suitability of organic certification for the livelihood improvement of the resource poor smallholder farmers of Uganda as a learning process. The resource poor smallholder farmers are those with neither adequate financial resources, labour nor land. The purpose of this research was to assess the impacts of organic standards and their resultant certification on both the on-farm Agro-ecosystems interactions and livelihoods of rural smallholder organic farmers in Luweero. In each village certified organic farmers and those in conversion were sampled. Certified organic exporting company staff and other key stakeholders were interviewed on agro-ecosystems interaction aspects such as environmental conservation, natural resource management, social capital vis-à-vis organic standards and certification issues. Random sampling from the list of farmers provided was used; comparisons were also made for certified farmers before and after actively being involved in certification of organic projects. In addition, five certifying bodies (Bureau VERITAS, IMO, Ugocert, UNBS and Ceres) currently actively involved in certification and monitoring of certified projects in Uganda, were also interviewed. The data collected were analysed and assessed with the help of statistical tests to evaluate the significant differences in agro-ecosystems interactions on certified organic and non-organic certified smallholder farmer livelihoods. Results of the research indicated that, there were significant differences in the Agro-ecosystems interactions and livelihood components of organic smallholder farmers that are not yet certified and those that are certified organic. The research confirmed that the alternative hypothesis was true that organic smallholder farmers have a dynamic traditional knowledge that has constantly been changing and being updated with time. This is the knowledge that they have been using to grow their traditional crops. If this knowledge is re-activated, and updated by incorporating it with scientific lessons learnt from the organic certification and used to grow crops organically, this resultant farming system can lead farmers out of dependency on chemicals result in livelihood improvement, and better Agro ecosystems interactions. The study also concluded that organic certification had increased market accessibility and income of certified households. Furthermore, that organic farming had improved household skills and knowledge about farming practices at household level and that traditional farming knowledge played a key role in organic agriculture and could complement scientific knowledge. It also showed that organic agriculture certification promoted a farming system that brought back crops that were getting extinct and helped to restore food and nutritional security. Lastly, the study concluded that organic agriculture increased the farmers' networking and social capital in their communities.

Key words: Organic, Livelihoods, Certification, Farming