

# Support for Institutional Development of Organic Sector Associations

**Pacific Organic Policy Toolkit**  
<http://www.organicpasifika.com/poetcom>

## **Support for institutional development of organic sector associations**

### ***Political Justification***

A committed government and a well-organized, collaborative organic sector association constitute a mutual support network wherein each can fulfil important roles. It is good for governments to have a structure wherein the sector can speak with one voice and serve as a main contact and collaboration partner for government. Not all countries have a unified organic sector or movement; sometimes there are even apparent conflicts between organic groups. This obviously reduces the sector's own ability to work towards joint objectives, and hampers, or example, government initiatives to consult with the organic sector. The organisation and efforts to unify the sector in goals and policies is first of all the sector's own responsibility. However, there are examples where resources from governments and from international development agencies are appropriated to support the development and maintenance of an organic association. Sector associations often first emerge as producer groups that focus mainly on information sharing and capacity development. At later stages these associations often expand their membership scope or they found separate new organizations with diverse members including organic traders, retailers, certification bodies, consultants and academics.

### ***Suitable contexts***

Regardless of the stage of development of the sector, of the regulatory framework or even of the policy objectives, supporting the institutional development of organic associations will be a suitable and relevant measure. The only case in which this measure might not be realistic to obtain is in cultures of no government intervention on the agricultural sector, as supporting a sector organization may be considered a market distortion.

### ***Possible implementation modalities***

Supports can range from informal and modest where the sector is just beginning e.g. provision of meeting or office space and equipment, to formalized and substantial as in the case where the sector organization is a significant partner for implementing a government's policy measures. A regional example in the Pacific is the relationship of the the Pacific Community (SPC) and POETCom. SPC provides office space, an administrative infrastructure and opportunities for joint project funding for POETCom.

### ***Countries examples***

Niue: The Niue Island Organic Farmers Association (NIOFA) is an NGO founded in 2004 by dedicated farmers who agreed to adopt and promote the concept of organic farming in Niue. NIOFA members are mostly retired civil servants & some current senior civil servants. In addition to training and capacity development, NIOFA founded an organic inspection service, which facilitates certification through BioGro, a New Zealand certification body.

The Government of Niue has agreed that all future farming activities must be focused on sustainable organic agriculture. Niue National Strategic Plan and Halavaka ke he Monuina plan, the Niue Environment Act 2004 refer to Organic Agriculture and all agriculture development projects are focusing on organic agriculture. The Government and NIOFA have a shared goal to create a Niue Eco-Nation. The objective under this goal is to facilitate the development and adoption of organic production management strategies, certification, and business and marketing programme, promote organic farming principles, and the underlying benefits such as economic gains, healthy living, green environment, and ultimately to achieve Niue's goal.

For this reason, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between NIOFA and the Niue Government with provisions for Government assistance in supplying NIOFA with office space at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. (DAFF). The DAFF office also acts as technical advisers for some NIOFA projects.

Both Niue and NZ governments provide financial assistance for the NIOFA Organic Facilitator, and for annual audit visits and certification fees by BioGro NZ. Together with NIOFA, the Government is also implementing campaigns and educational activities: promotion and awareness programmes through radio and TV; educational programmes targeting Primary Schools. The main result is that Organic Agriculture is now included as a major component in the Primary School curriculum.

Denmark: In this country with a mature organic sector, at least eight NGOs were focused to a high degree on the development of organic agriculture and trade. In 2002 the eight organizations merged to form a consolidated national organic organisation, Organic Denmark, to serve as a single organic sector counterpart in collaboration with the government on organic policy and program implementation. Project support for consumer information and marketing, development of organic farm practices and export promotion build critical capacities in Organic Denmark so it could be utilized as a driver for market development, farm conversion and innovation in organic farm practices.

The development of Organic Denmark was made possible by substantial investments by various Danish government ministries in policy measures on organic agriculture and markets implemented by Organic Denmark. These ministries have recognized

the value of investing in organic agriculture and markets to achieve goals. In parallel organic certification was designated as a function of the national government in order to provide space for the new work. Policy measures have included establishing public procurement programs, technical support for organic product innovations, and local and novel national consumer campaigns. The results of this strategic investment have been positive. For example, in 2012 organic grocery sales were 8% of total grocery sales, the highest market share of any country worldwide. In Copenhagen, 80% of the food served in public canteens is organic

Brazil: In 2014, as part of the PLANAPO (the government plan for organic agriculture development) Brazil launched a program named ECOFORTE (Program to strengthen and increase the networks on agroecology, wild collection and organic agriculture). The program allocated € 70 million to support 30 organic agriculture, agroecology and wild collection networks of organizations (grouping at least three organizations such as producer cooperatives or associations). This was done through a call for projects where each network could request up to € 504,000 to implement their activities within two years.

