



Bonn Symposium 2009

Sustainable Development
in Times of Crises
Opposition or Opportunity?



Workshop G

Certification of Agricultural Products to Overcome Crises in the Developing World?

Organised by: Center for Development Research (ZEF) / Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) /
Faculty of Agriculture, University of Bonn

Chair: Dr Alan Smith (FSC)

Report: **Paulius Masteika**, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

The workshop discussed certification as a marketing instrument with regard to sustainable development.

Key questions were:

- What are the core challenges and prospects of certification with regards to smallholder agriculture in developing countries?
- How do multiple crises affect certification of agricultural products in developing countries?
- How can actors concerned contribute to overcome challenges related to those crises?

Anna Kiemen (University of Bonn) presented results of her case study on the use of certification schemes by small coffee farmers in Nicaragua. According to her the export business and certification scheme for “organic coffee” is based on personal and direct links between producers and trading companies generating high trust relationships. She identified problems such as the lack of consistent quality of supply and limited involvement of the farmers in marketing schemes. Ms Kiemen traced back these problems to the farmers’ lack of technological knowledge as well as their business attitude. However, in the end costs of certification turned out to be the biggest problem, as farmers often cannot afford it or are unwilling to invest revenues for it which they could use for directly improving their situation.

Dr **Till Stellmacher** (ZEF) spoke about coffee certification in Ethiopia focusing on traditional forest coffee production by rural communities in an agro-silvopastoral production system. As stated by Dr Stellmacher, Ethiopian coffee forests witnessed high rates of depletion and deforestation, resulting in scarcity of valuable forest products, land degradation, and erosion, each one enhancing poverty, as well as irreversible loss of biodiversity and the forest coffee gene-pool. Dr Stellmacher asked whether and how certification of forest coffee could lead to more economic benefits for the coffee farmers while at the same time providing incentives for sustainable use and conservation of the unique forest eco-system. Forest coffee certification, he said, aimed at higher prices and more forest management. Based on his research results, he concluded that forest coffee certification indeed contributed to a more intensive management of forests as well as to a higher income for coffee farmers.

Dr **Marion Karman** (FSC) introduced the Forest Stewardship Council which provides certification to companies, organizations, and communities interested in responsible forestry. She described the problems related to the management of forests, including social conflicts, deforestation, and illegal timber trade. FSC offers a labelling system that rewards responsible forest management. It is a market-driven mechanism based on agreed principles for responsible forest management and backed by a monitoring system of FSC standards. Dr Karman identified barriers to certification such as the lack of documents indicating ownership, the lack of investment capital of small forest owners, as well as more technical problems. She stressed the importance of an internationally recognized standard. Dr. Karman mentioned that at present there were about 1.000 FSC-certified forest management systems. As FSC attempts not to involve governments, funds for certification are provided, among others, by European and American foundations and NGOs as well as several companies.

Robert Jordan (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, IFOAM) presented the experience of IFOAM focusing on the role of certification and small holders in the context of organic agriculture and the global crises. Being a Bonn-based organization IFOAM includes 750 members in more than 100 countries and based on the principles of organic agriculture and care of ecological fairness. In talking about the preconditions of organic farming Mr Jordan said that knowledge and capacity building was more important than capital. He added that IFOAM was offering suitable and affordable verification, which was ideal for smallholders, because of the marketing security they gain. This could also give local communities the possibility to take control of their food supply. IFOAM aims at linking producers and consumers more directly in order to make quality food more affordable. As Mr Jordan explained, IFOAM advocates “participatory guarantee systems”, i.e. organic farming certification developed by the farmers and consumers that they serve, taking into account the specifics of individual communities, geographies, politics and markets of origin. Mr Jordan concluded that IFOAM as the vehicle for the adoption of a sustainable climate resilient and productive farming system may deliver a potential verification model for payments to farmers on ecosystem services (e.g. carbon credits).

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