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East African Organic Standard soon completed

The second draft of an East African Organic Standard was presented to the public on 13 December 2006, in Nairobi, at the first Organic Standards Forum organised in Africa. The Forum attracted 80 participants from 18 countries.

Following the Forum the technical working group responsible for the Standard held a meeting in which the East African Organic Standard was finalised. After editing, the Standard will be submitted to the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) who will move for its formal approval as an East African Community Standard. The East African Community is expected to approve the Standard in April 2007. With the recent inclusion of Rwanda and Burundi in the East African Community, the Standard will be directly applicable in five countries.

Evah Oduor, Head of Standards Development in KEBS, opened the meeting of the working group by stating that the process to develop the East Africa Organic Standards was exemplary in terms of participation and consultation. She went on to say that it showed an innovative way of developing standards in a private-public partnership, and that this should inspire similar developments for other sectors. The East African Organic Standard will become the sec-

ond regional organic standard in the world after the European Union's, and the first ever to have been developed in cooperation between the organic movements and the National Standards Bodies.

The standard will boost organic trade and market development in the region, define a common vision of organic agriculture in East Africa, raise awareness about organic produce among farmers and consumers, enable economies of scale in training materials and certification, and create a unified negotiating position that should help organic farmers win access to export markets. It is also expected to influence international organic standard setting processes, says Sophia Twarog, UNCTAD.

A consumer survey conducted by IFOAM and the national organic movement in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, spearheaded by the Kenya Organic Agriculture Networks, showed that 49% of 600 respondents in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have consumed organic food and that consumers appreciate the safety, health and taste of organic products. ■

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The draft EAOS is available at the following websites: www.ifoam.org/partners/projects/osea.html and www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf/projecteastfrica.asp.

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