



Country: South Africa
Sector: Agriculture
Project: Awareness creation and capacity building in eco-labelling in the agricultural sector.
Grantee: Proudly South African (Proudly SA)

Acknowledgements

The SWITCH Africa Green programme was developed by the European Commission to support African countries in their transition to an inclusive green economy, the main objective being to promote sustainable development. This is based on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, while generating growth, creating decent jobs and reducing poverty.

This impact sheet on 'Awareness creation and capacity building in eco-labelling in the agricultural sector' provides a snapshot of results and achievements of the project under the Green Business Development Component of Phase I (2014-2019) of the SWITCH Africa Green programme. This component supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in applying and adopting SCP practices within their business operations.

The project was implemented by Proudly South African (Proudly SA) with the support of the SWITCH Africa Green National Focal Point, Dr. Jenitha Badul - Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and National Coordinator, Wakhile Mkhonza, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), South Africa. The grants were managed by the United Nations Office for Project Support (UNOPS) and coordinated by Celia Marquez with support from Mercy Gatobu.

Supervision and coordination for development of the impact sheet was carried out by Rhoda Wachira and Patrick Mwesigye and programme support was provided by Carolyn Kilel and Sylvia Munuhe, Africa Office, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The impact sheet was compiled by Sheila Karue, consultant, UNEP. Editing, layout and design was coordinated by the communication division, UNEP.

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Background

Population growth leads to the increased consumption of food and subsequently a higher demand for sustainable food production. Critically, food security is directly linked to the social and economic viability of society: without reliable food sources, people – and thus society as a whole – simply cannot function.

Allied to this, human activities are having an increasingly detrimental effect on both the planet and human health through, for example, the burning of fossil fuels, the depletion of natural resources, the contamination of freshwater systems and the pollution of natural environments. To mitigate this, the public and private sectors are increasingly developing tools to promote a shift towards responsible socioeconomic and environmental practices and systems that promote social and environmental wellness, and economic sustainability.

Through the support of the SWITCH Africa Green programme, Proudly SA implemented the

project to facilitate a transition to SCP in the agricultural sector with a focus on small-scale farming, as well as to promote awareness around eco-labelling, both within the agricultural sector and among public and private sector consumers. The project aimed to promote market access for the eco-labelled products produced by the small-scale farmers involved.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of the project were mainly MSMEs involved in agribusiness, as well as policy makers. Sustainability standards and eco-labelling practices were initiated with 9 farmers. Coaches were provided to assist the farms satisfy the standards.

Objectives

- Create awareness and build capacity on eco-labelling for Proudly SA stakeholders in the agriculture and agro-processing sector.
- Evaluate gaps in sustainability standards and eco-labelling practices in South Africa in collaboration with the National Cleaner Production Centre (NCPC-SA), the African Eco-labelling Mechanism, South Africa National Standards body and Proudly SA stakeholders.
- Develop sustainability standards for eco-labelling of agricultural products in South Africa.

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- Develop a market promotion policy and strategy to promote market access for South Africa's eco-labelled agro products

Outputs

Improved institutional coordination to promote certification of green agricultural products

While developing the standards, Proudly SA established a multi-stakeholder committee of experts – the technical committee – to review the draft standards ensuring that they were locally relevant for adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

Through SWITCH Africa Green support, relevant partnerships were established with:

- policy institutions
- farming organizations
- consumer organizations
- other SCP/ecolabelling-promoting organizations
- the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- the Consumer Goods Council of SA
- the African Farmers Association of SA

- the National African Farmers Union
- Fairtrade
- Conservation SA
- NCPC-SA
- Ecolabel South Africa
- the African Organization for Standardization (ARSO), and others

Improved capacities of Business Development Services (BDS) to promote SCP practices by MSMEs

Three draft sustainability standards were developed to guide South African farmers to adopt and incorporate sustainability practices that are environmentally friendly and socioeconomically viable into their production systems, namely:

- Proudly South African Standard: Sustainable farming
- Proudly South African Standard: Unprocessed fruits and vegetables
- Proudly South African Standard: Unprocessed red meat – ruminants



The standards were then piloted in nine farms selected from three provinces – KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Western Cape.

The standards were developed to provide guidance regarding sustainable agriculture practices during the coaching phase and through the certification process give incentives to the small-scale farmers to transition to sustainable agriculture.

Improved capacities of workers in green sectors

Training modules were developed on eco-labelling covering the following – sustainable farming standards implementation guidelines, unprocessed fruits and vegetables implementation guidelines and unprocessed red meat (ruminants) implementation guidelines.

The project facilitated training of trainers where nine youths were coached on how to guide farmers through the process of obtaining certification for their produce.

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Four assessors were also trained on auditing the respective farms to facilitate certification of farm produce found to be compliant with the Proudly SA standard.

Outcomes

Enabling frameworks for green business development

To promote market penetration of eco-friendly products, a strategy to promote market access for South Africa's agricultural products with the eco-label was developed.

Uptake of SCP practices by MSMEs

In the nine farms where the project was piloted the farmers adopted environmentally friendly and economically viable practices, life cycle assessment and SCP practices.

Enhanced market links for smallholder farmers' products

With support from the project, compliant products of the smallholder farmers were certified and marketed. Proudly SA secured contracts with the farmers for uptake of their products which met the certification criteria. This enabled farmers to sell these goods in markets they could not previously access.

Impacts

Environmental impacts

The smallholder farmers involved in the project reported that there was a reduction in the amount spent on fertilizers owing to project intervention, as they were now applying improved waste management methods such as recycling. The smallholder farmers also reported a significant improvement in their water management practices after following the guidelines in the standards.



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Economic impacts

An improved water reticulation system resulted in savings on overhead costs, thereby increasing the net income of the farming businesses.

The smallholder farmers reported a significant increase in their profit margins due to the reduced number of intermediaries involved when supplying bigger retailers. They attributed this to training on pricing strategy.

Social impacts

With the demand from retailers for products produced according to the sustainability standards, production was increased by diversifying planting. This has automatically ignited a need for increasing the number of employees employed for most of the year.

Lessons learnt

- Key role-players in the agricultural sector, especially government departments, need to be encouraged to support enterprise development programmes linked to eco-labelled products. This will increase production and consumption, thereby increasing involvement in sustainable agriculture
- Through the engagement of key industry players in agriculture, it was possible to obtain relevant input to the draft standards developed
- High cost is a barrier to smallholder farmers seeking to obtain certification of their products

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“During the Proudly SA Buy Local & Expo Summit, the SWITCH Africa Green stand attracted a lot of individuals who were interested in information about locally produced sustainable produce. The call to buy local produce will support the local businesses to grow, thereby encouraging economic growth and job creation,”

Vusi Sithole, project manager at Proudly South African.



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