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## Commercialising Organic Agriculture. Does it Improve Household Food Security? A Case Study from South-Western Uganda

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### Abstract

The debate about the impact of commercial organic agriculture on food security in developing countries is controversial. While some authors argue that the premium price allows farmers to purchase food, other authors are of the opinion that commercialisation is at the cost of household food security. Sufficient empirical evidence that supports these propositions, however, is missing. This research addresses the lack of information in this area and was aimed at understanding how commercial organic agriculture influences food security at household level, whereas special emphasis was put on farmers' perceptions of changing food security.

Based on the sustainable livelihoods approach, the study operationalised the term food security by distinguishing three essential dimensions: availability of food, access to food and utilisation of food. An ex post evaluation following the conversion to organic agriculture was carried out in Rakai/Masaka district, south-western Uganda. The sample included certified and non-certified organic households which were contrasted with households carrying out traditional agriculture in neighbouring villages. Data were collected using structured household surveys in combination with PRA. Both qualitative and quantitative data were generated.

The results of the study reveal that organic agriculture interventions positively address several household food security dimensions, hence supporting farmers to improve their livelihoods. Higher income through premium prices, enhanced knowledge on natural resource management and higher diversity of crop and livestock production of organic farmers were identified as the main entry points for improved household food security. However, there are gaps in the household food security equation, notably because improved access and availability of food does not always translate into proper utilisation of food.

The results of this study suggest that more emphasis should be placed on the knowledge dimensions through holistic training guidelines for organic farmers. These guidelines shall integrate nutritional education with other important livelihood strategies for improving dietary diversity as cross-cutting themes.

**Keywords:** Commercialisation, household food security, organic agriculture, Uganda