

## WEST AFRICA KEY STAKEHOLDERS WORKSHOP ON ECOLOGICAL ORGANIC AGRICULTURE–INITIATIVE IN AFRICA

Executing Agency of Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative in Africa, Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT), organised a five-day workshop on the Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) in West Africa after a similar programme in Machakos, Kenya in East Africa which had in attendance stakeholders from; Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania). The workshop took place between 13th and 17th of August 2018 at Riviera Hotel, Cotonou, Republic of Benin. This exercise brought together 40 participants from Nigeria, Mali, Senegal and Benin.

Welcoming the gathering to the workshop, Professor Simplicie Davo Vodouhe, from the University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Cotonou, thanked the participants for gracing the occasion and hoped the opportunity would provide a fruitful and engaging session. That this will afford them the platform to share experiences and learn from each other. Mr Aimé Bokonon-Ganta, the Chair of the Benin EOA National Steering Committee welcomed the participants to Benin and to the workshop and looked forward to having successful deliberations. In his opening remarks, Dr David Amudavi, the Executive Director of Biovision Africa Trust was glad to have a good number of participants from implementing West African countries (Mali, Senegal, Nigeria and Benin) of the Initiative. He highlighted the importance of the workshop, as an opportunity for the stakeholders to validate two major findings of Phase 1; the Organizational and partner Capacity Assessment report and the External Evaluation Report.

During this planning workshop, the stakeholders shared their success stories, achievements, weaknesses and way-forward for EOA-I' 1st phase. Afterwards, the participants at the programme considered strategic areas that could be addressed to help achieve the Initiative' aims and objectives.

Furthermore, the gathering considered two (2) general salient points considered critical to the success of the Initiative in the region: robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and Effective grant Management.

The workshop enabled stakeholders to provide vital information which would serve as basis inputs for planning for the preparation of the grand proposal for support by the Swiss Government through its agency, the Swiss Development Cooperation, in the next phase of four years.

In his closing remarks, the Beninese minister of Agriculture ably represented by Mr Kwakanou Bonaventure, the permanent secretary of the ministry, lauded the Initiative and reaffirmed the support of the government to organic agriculture. Pointing at the fact that agriculture is the bedrock for sustainable development, Mr Bonaventure stated that the emergence of Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative paves ways for a sound food security system in the region in particular and in Africa in general. Thereafter bidding the participants safe journey back to their various destinations.