

INTRODUCTION – HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide draws on the lessons learned in the framework of the project “*Increasing incomes and food security of small farmers in West and Central Africa through exports of organic and fair-trade tropical products*”, implemented by FAO in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone from September 2005 to September 2009, with funds provided by the German Government. For more information on this project, consult its website at www.fao.org/organicag/organicexports/organicexports-home/it/.

This guide was developed for farmer organizations and companies wishing to export organic and fair-trade certified products, as well as for organizations providing them with support services.

Although the guide may be read in its entirety, it was rather meant to be used fragmentarily, depending upon the user's needs of the moment. Indeed, every farmer organization, exporter or business support organization will be at a different stage in its

development. Some tools may be too advanced for some users, while other tools may be too basic for others. You are thus encouraged to pick those tools that may be useful to you at your particular stage of development, while ignoring the others.

To avoid duplication, the guide frequently refers to other guides and manuals. Most of these have been used in the framework of the project and have proven to be useful.

Most of the information contained in this guide is relevant to farmer organizations, exporters and business support organizations alike. Where certain information is specifically aimed at one of these three subgroups, this is clearly indicated.

Although we have minimized the technical jargon in this guide, you may encounter some key words that you are not familiar with. Definitions of underlined terms can be found in the Terms and Definitions-section at the end of the guide.