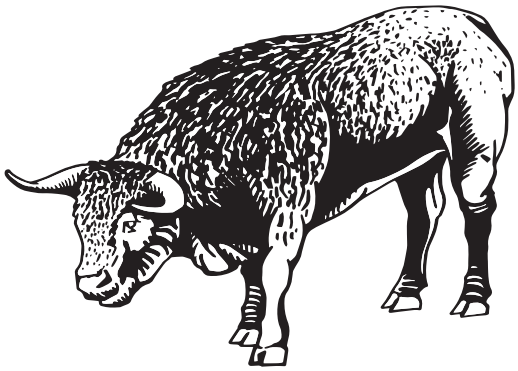
# FACTSHEET NO 1:
# ORGANIC MEAT PRODUCTION IN NAMIBIA



## The Namibian advantage

Namibian beef has an excellent reputation in international markets with export status. Compared to major beef suppliers, for example Argentina or Brazil, Namibia's beef industry needs to exploit niche markets such as organic. Namibian grass-fed beef production already complies with organic standards in many aspects; often just minor changes are needed to align existing production with organic principles and standards.

## Organic livestock production

Organic agriculture is a production system that "sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people". It uses ecological processes and environmentally friendly practices and products to benefit the "shared environment". Organic livestock production is based on the principles of respect for the physical and behavioural needs of animals, the provision of superior quality and organically grown feed, and the desire for a harmonious relationships between land, plants and livestock.

- **Animal welfare:** Organic livestock production upholds the 'five freedoms' of animal welfare: freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury or disease; freedom to express normal behaviour; and freedom from fear and distress. Organic management aims to sustainably produce high-quality animal products and meat. Organic animals are born to organically managed mothers. Predator conflict requires a targeted approach and prohibits the use of poison.

- **Sustainable grazing practices:** Rotational grazing practices build vigorous quantities of veld of high nutritious quality, preventing soil erosion. Should natural grazing be encroached by bush or weeds, these cannot be eliminated by using chemicals.

- **Focus on the principles of health and care:** Animals are allowed to live out their natural instincts according to species' specific needs. The humane treatment of livestock does not allow painful mutilations. Animals must be provided with a natural organic diet, except in extreme circumstances where an exception can be granted.
  - Licks and Feeds: Licks may not contain Urea (NPN). Phosphate licks have to comply with the standards. Some commercially available phosphate licks in Namibia may be used in organic production.[1] Organic feeds may never contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Details for allowed substances can be found in the respective standards' annexes.
  - Castration and dehorning: The Namibian standards allow for castration and dehorning without anaesthetics until six weeks of age, but the European Union standard does not allow for such mutilations unless an exception is granted by the certifier. This must then be performed with anaesthesia and/or analgesia where appropriate.

- **Prevention rather than cure.** Livestock must be robust and adapted to thrive in their environment, without preventative veterinary interventions. Parasites are prevented by breaking their lifecycles. Treatment of a sick animal is required to prevent suffering, but the withdrawal period before use of animal products is doubled. Vaccines are allowed according to national legislation. Repeated use of antibiotics makes an affected animal lose organic status.

## Certification of organic production

There are two primary approaches to certification. Export, for example to the Europe Union (EU) or the United States (US), requires certification by an accredited third-party certifier. Producers need to comply with the respective organic standards, which are part of official legislation.

The Namibian Organic Association (NOA) provides detailed guidelines and standards for certification of organic livestock production, which is split between land/crop (veld) and livestock production.

[1] Please contact NOA for an updated list of products available info@noa.org.na or 0816633224

To market domestically, the NOA uses a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) approach according to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) – Organics International guidelines. This community-based assurance mechanism is a locally focused quality assurance system built on a foundation of trust, social networks and knowledge exchange. Successful verification allows the use of the "Namibian Organic" mark, which gives credibility to the organic claim on the domestic market and enables access to the organic retail market in Namibia. The abattoir and/or processors must also have certification to market meat and animal products as organic.

## Steps to organic certification

The first step is for the producer to identify the country or region market for the product and contact the relevant certifier-entity. The differences between the Namibian verification and certification for export to the European Union or United States are outlined in the following table:

| | Namibian Standard | EU/US Standards |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Producer becomes a NOA member (fee: 350 N$/year) | Producer fills in an application form |
| 2 | Producer can participate in PGS assessments of other producers to get an idea of the process. This is not a requirement | Producer receives an offer for the certification process according to complexity/size of operation |
| 3 | Producer completes PGS-application with required information on the operation and pays the assessment fee (currently N$3200) | Producer accepts offer, signs a contract with the certifier and receives a questionnaire to fill in with information on the organic operation |
| 4 | NOA conducts pre-assessment internally and possibly reverts with questions to better prepare for on-site assessment | Inspector conducts pre-evaluation of questionnaire and possibly reverts with clarifying questions |
| 5 | On-site assessment is scheduled and NOA members are invited | On-site inspection is scheduled (usually just one inspector) |
| 6 | All participants at the on-site assessment contribute ideas, experiences, questions, concerns, etc. It is a learning experience for all, including the producer | On-site inspection takes place. Inspector is not allowed to give advice; therefore, technical questions cannot be discussed |
| 7 | Follow up on outstanding issues | Follow up on outstanding issues |
| 8 | Certification decision is issued | Certification decision is issued |
| 9 | Conversion period to full organic is no less than 2 years (retrospective recognition can be granted) | Conversion period to full organic is no less than 3 years for land and 2 years (EU) or 3 years (NOP) for animals (retrospective recognition can be granted) |

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### About the Namibian Organic Association (NOA)

NOA is a membership-based association established in 2009 by a group of dynamic farmers and consumers with the common interest of developing the organic sector in Namibia.

### About the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSA)

KHSA is part of the project Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA), a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and non-governmental organisations. The project aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa over a four-year period. In the Southern African Knowledge Hub (KHSA), project activities are focused in Zambia, in Namibia (led by the Namibia Nature Foundation and NOA), and in South Africa and Malawi. For more information contact the KHSA Project Manager for Namibia: noa@nnf.org.na.

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