

Sustainability Begins at Home

Moving into Best Practice

ORC Annual Conference

Closing Plenary

23 January, 2013

The Dominant Global Agriculture Supply Chain Paradigm

- Relies on cheap energy
- Is a top-down approach
- Based on a first-world-starves-last outcome
 - Changing with emergence of developing world superpowers (Brazil, Russia, India, China - “BRIC” countries)
- Is not working; is showing signs of imminent failure:
 - Hunger increasing
 - Poverty increasing
 - Health problems increasing
 - Fresh water quantity and quality declining
 - Biodiversity loss
 - Fertility and erosion problems
 - Energy scarcity and rising cost

A Paradigm Shift is Needed: Organic Agriculture!

Fundamental differences between organic and non-organic:

- Promotes life; does not depend on biocides; harnesses the power of nature to work for us, as opposed to us working against it.
- Takes a precautionary approach to technology
- Is based on closed-loop systems
- Promotes and is favored by diversity

But the organic sector faces challenges:

- Impression of an elitist/niche/specialty/expensive market
 - Seen as not scalable
 - Organic certification not seen as covering a broad enough spectrum of sustainability topics – not relevant enough.
- Reputation of lower yield, actually true in some cases.
- Market channels can be onerous – costly and bureaucratic

Repositioning Organic

The organic market faces growing competition from other “sustainability” initiatives:



RSPO

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil



Organic should be seen as the base, not the top – the foundation on which true sustainability can be built.

Organic practices must continuously improve and innovate.

Mainstreaming Organic

At the 2011 Organic World Congress in Korea, the IFOAM General Assembly gave a mandate to IFOAM and the organic movement:

- Identify the shortcomings the movement currently has with respect to sustainability, and propose solutions.
- Reposition organic practices as *the* mainstream approach to sustainability in agriculture and its value chains.
- Create an action network to assume this work.

Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network (SOAAN)



Rainman
Landcare
Foundation



Navdanya



AGRO ECO
LOUIS BOLK
INSTITUTE



SOCLA



International Association
for Partnership



Leading Organic
Alliance



UNITING THE ORGANIC WORLD

SOAAN Objectives

***“The green economy is going to come...
by wisdom, or by crisis.”***

– Helmy Abouleish, Managing Director, SEKEM, Egypt

- ✧ **Manifest the Principles of Organic Agriculture - everywhere.**
- ✧ **Be inclusive of *geographical* and *cultural* diversity.**
- ✧ **Expand the network; share knowledge and learning.**

Going forward: Basic changes

- Address energy needs.
 - Innovate new sources
 - Prepare for crisis
 - Innovate production methods
 - Including input sources (feed, mineral fertilizer, etc.)
 - Innovate marketing methods
- Diversify products and market outlets.
 - Economic stability
 - Food security & Food sovereignty
- Shorten supply chains
- Revitalize rural development and culture.
 - Integration with urban areas
 - Cultural intensification



The Organic Approach: Intentions and Strategies

Intentions

- ***Inspire and enable*** farmers and the *value chain*, educate policy makers and consumers.
- ***Demonstrate leadership*** by organic farmers and value chains.
- ***Provide aspirational guidance*** for improving practices.
- ***Show measurable steps*** toward sustainability.

SOAAN Strategies

- **Develop a Best Practice Reference** as a foundational guideline.
- **Revitalize organic's political positioning** and (financial) resource mobilization.
- **Provide a platform for interaction** and information exchange.

Sustainability Dimensions & Objectives

Societal: *People live in equality and equity.*

Ecological: *Common resources are used sustainably.*

Economic: *Trading leads to prosperity.*

Cultural: *Inspiration, innovation, leadership, and altruism are enabled. Communities are stable and thrive.*

Communication: *People are accountable for their actions, are transparent about them, and encourage participation from stakeholders.*

Sustainability requires addressing all 5 dimensions!

Dimensional Aspects

Societal

- Equity and gender
- Right livelihood
- Labor and human rights
- Safety and hygiene

Ecological

- Water
- Soil
- Biodiversity
- Animal production
- Atmosphere
- Energy

Economic

- Investment
- Local economy and economic resilience
- Selling products and services
- Materials/contaminants/waste

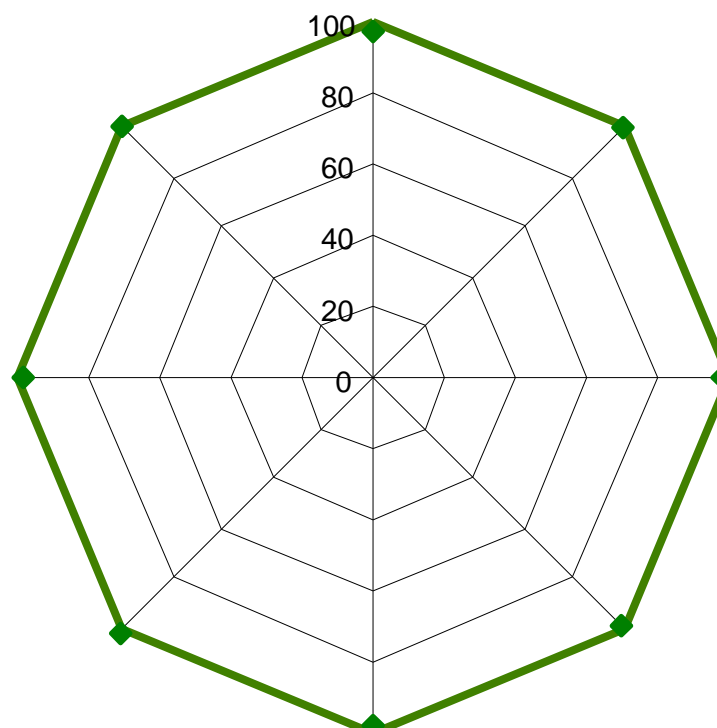
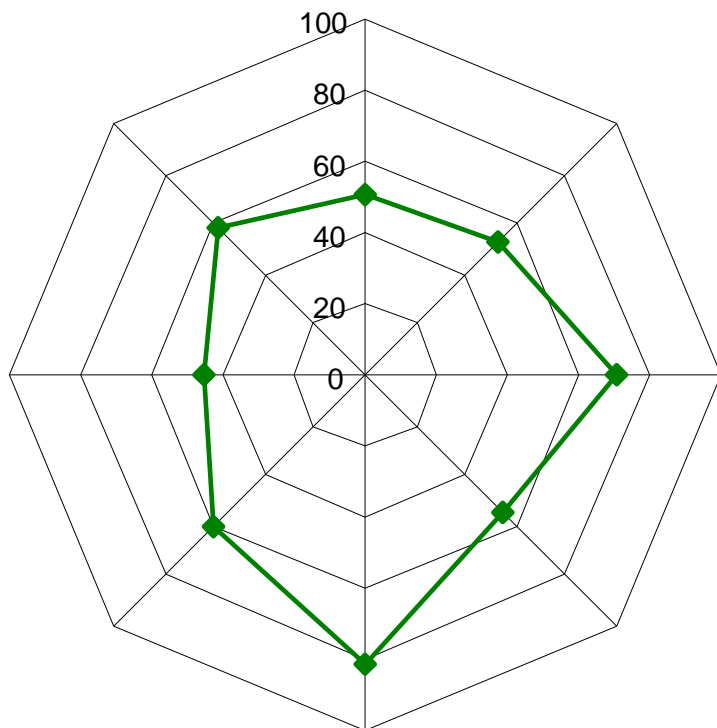
Cultural

- Personal growth and community development
- Food security and food sovereignty
- Product quality

Communication

- Holistic management and governance
- Accountability and reporting
- Stakeholder participation

Best Practice Leads to Sustainability.



Uses of a Best Practice Reference

Formative, not normative - not intended as a compliance document per se.

- Core reference point; consolidation of ideas and approach
- Guidelines for sustainability of farms and businesses
- Set research agendas
- Benchmarking programs, operations, and sustainability assessment tools
- Development of sets of indicators and metrics
- Enable impacts assessment across sectors and globally
- Inform and influence policy
- Resource for capacity building, education, and raising awareness about sustainability issues.

Think Globally, Act Locally.

- Demonstrate performance and progress on each of our operations.
- Link to others doing similar work, share knowledge and adopt useful methods – Locally and globally.
- Engage the market.
- Engage policy makers.
 - Spell out the present and future scenarios and show solutions.

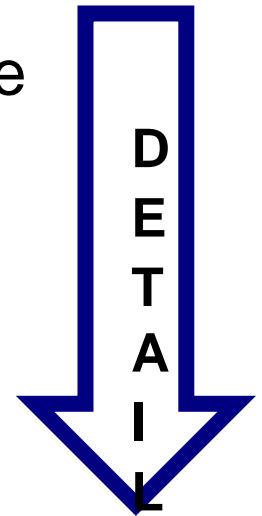
How do we minimise waste?

How do we affect consumer behavior??

PROVING OUR CASE

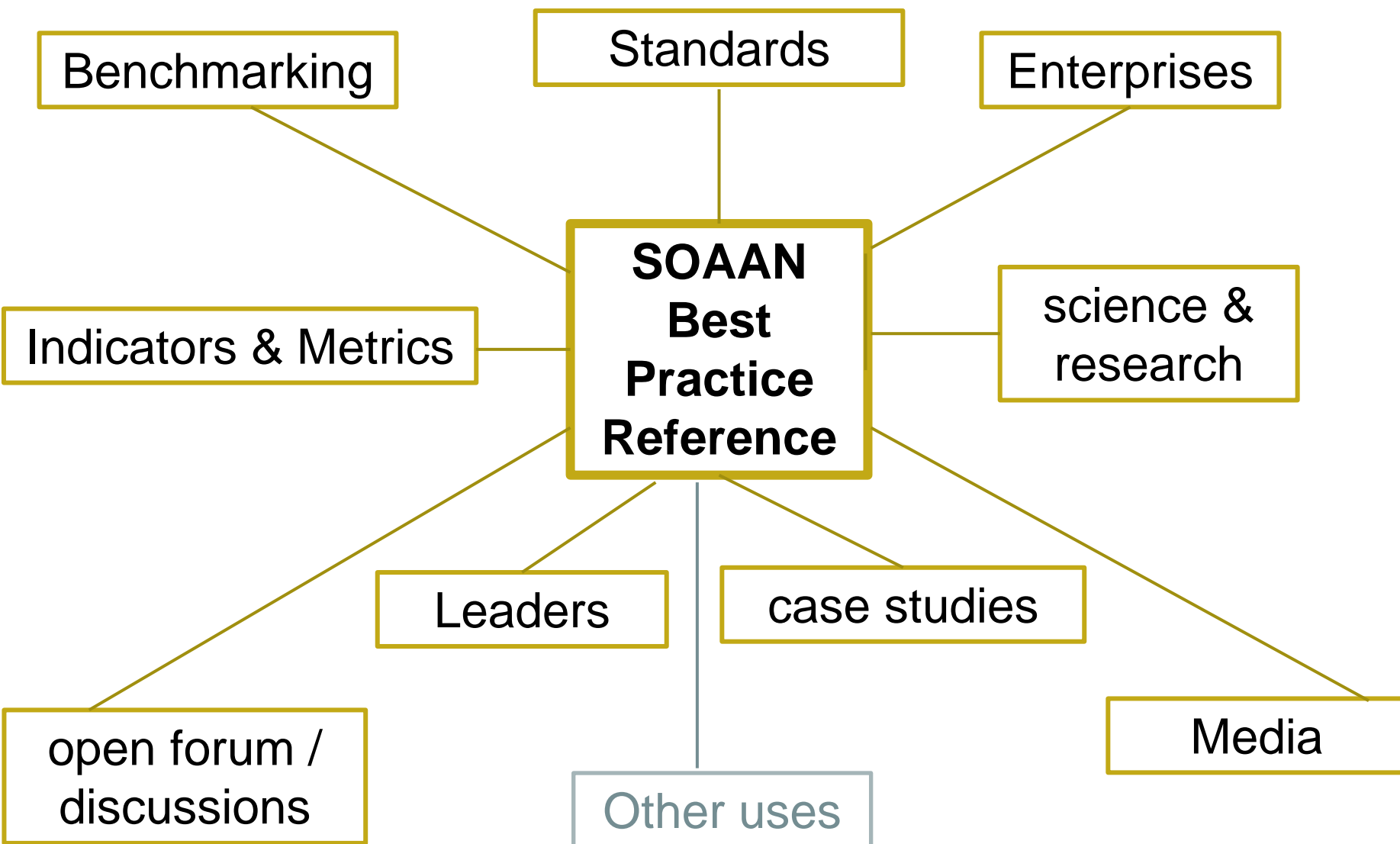
How do we know what our performance is? Who cares?

- Distinguish performance from improvement.
- Choose metrics and indicators that are fit for purpose (and are not necessarily the same for different purposes):
 - Site-specific (or self) evaluation - troubleshooting, improvement
 - Internal evaluation versus external reporting
 - Aggregated affects



There are many sets of indicators, but fewer objectives.
They should all converge into common ground.

A Community of Best Practice



Thank You

David Gould

IFOAM Value Chain Facilitator

d.gould@ifoam.org www.ifoam.org

SOAAN Secretariat

http://www.ifoam.org/growing_organic/Best_Practice_Program/index.php