

ISAN

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IFOAM Southern African Network
*Supporting the growth of food grower
networks in Southern Africa*

FINDING WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO EMBRACE FARMING IN GHANA

Kwasi Mensah Xematsri

FARMER TIPS

Busiswe Mgangxela

SEED GUARDIANSHIP & SOIL CURATORS

Siphiwe Sithole



ABOUT ISAN

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC MOVEMENTS (IFOAM) SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK

ISAN is a regional network of organisations and individuals actively supporting the development of a sustainable, ecological organic agricultural sector in southern Africa. Its values align with IFOAM–Organics International principles of Health, Fairness, Ecology and Care.

ISAN was formed during the second Africa Organic Conference held in Zambia in 2012 to represent Southern Africa Development Community countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Kingdom of Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe. To date, the following countries are active in ISAN: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

ISAN aims to develop and coordinate programmes and networks of common interest at the regional level working through National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs), the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations (INOFO) and the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), all of which have chapters in the region.

For more information, contact: chair@isan.ifoam.bio

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This publication is a collaboration between ISAN and the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa

EDITOR'S NOTES

by Fortunate Nyakanda, ISAN chair

We are proud to present our fourth edition of the ISAN magazine! And we want to thank you for your support in contributing, reading and sharing the publication – our readership is growing every month.

Our aim is to help build networks across the Southern African region and beyond that support the scaling up of authentic sustainable agriculture in Africa. We do this by profiling the incredible work done by many organisations and individuals, by sharing relevant information and highlighting the exciting activities that are taking place in the smallholder farming space. This includes amazing indigenous seed festivals, webinar series and innovative on-the-ground projects. Please feel free to share your news and updates with us.

In this issue, we look at an initiative in Namibia aimed at encouraging women to participate in organic agriculture, continue our focus on the role of youth in the future of farming in Africa – with some experiences shared from Ghana, share farmer tips from a leading South African woman farmer, and get the low-down on the international multilateral environmental agreements that are being domesticated in Southern African countries.

We explore the role of indigenous seed varieties in supporting dietary diversity and ecosystem health and invite you to attend the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa's (KHSA) September webinar series focused on the practicalities of sustainable smallholder farming. There are several seed and food festivals happening around the region – see details for those happening in Zimbabwe in September and Zambia in October this year.





As always, we have searched for good reads and resources that will support you in your work to help make our food and farming systems sustainable into the future. Keep sharing your stories of how and where you are building safe, affordable, innovative and creative food and farming systems of the future with us so that we can them with others.

This work of building sustainable, fair, equitable and inclusive food and farming systems is not easy, but it is so urgently needed. We applaud all those who are dedicating themselves to bring about the transition we need - in small and big ways.

Yours in organics,

Fortunate Nyakanda
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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY THROUGH INDIGENOUS SEED AND FOOD

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IN CHILANGA**

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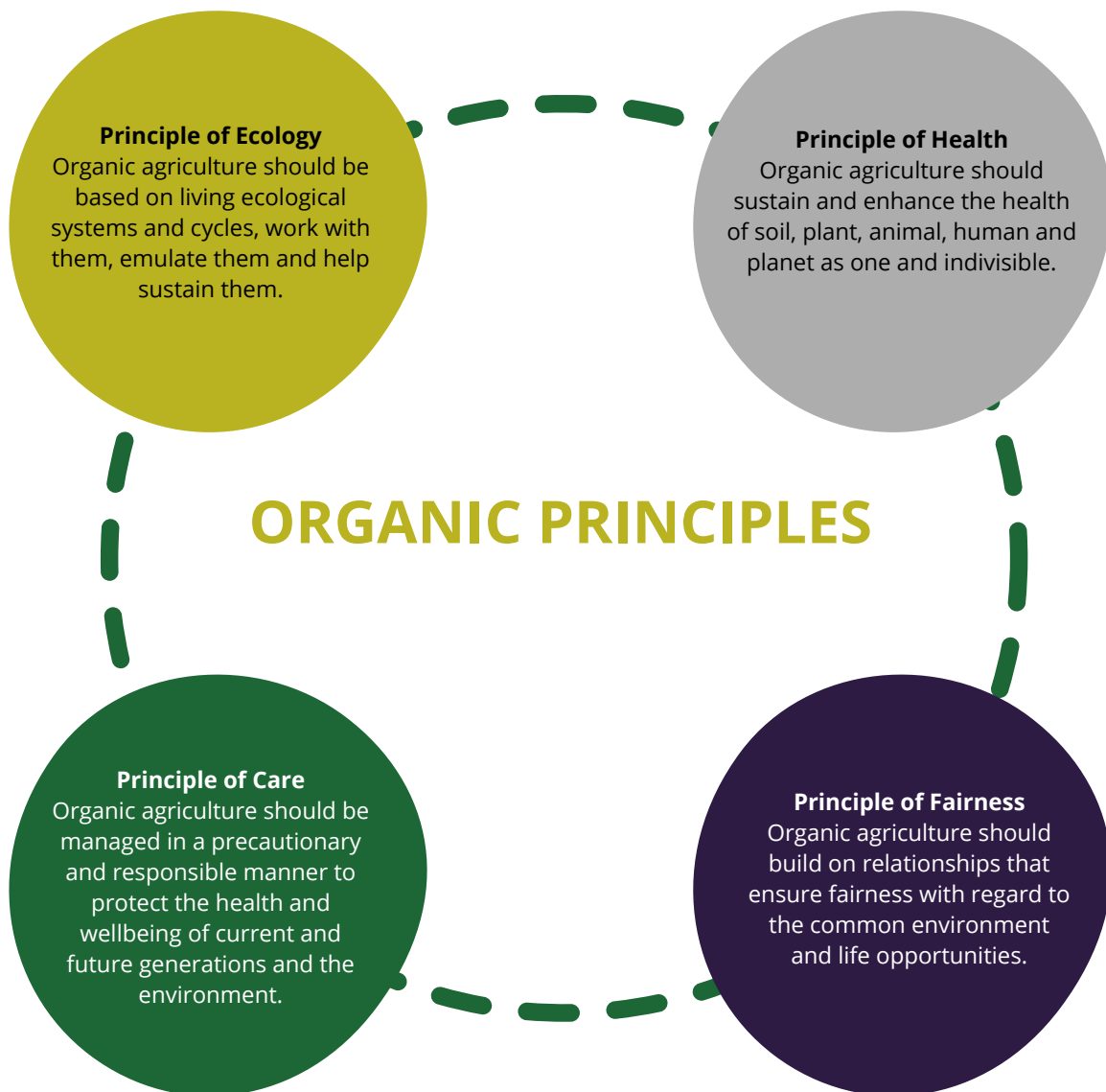
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Join us in celebrating our indigenous seed and foods at Mundawanga



ORGANIC 3.0

Organic agriculture is **a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people**. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and natural cycles to support production, rather than on the use of chemical inputs that have known negative effects on people and the environment. **Organic agriculture works according to four main principles: Health, Fairness, Care and Ecology.**



For statistics and trends in organics, visit [FiBL](https://www.fibl.ch/en).

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD & FARMING NETWORKS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

There are many organisations working to build and grow strong networks for sustainable food and farming systems in Southern Africa. We profile those working in larger-scale programmes/initiatives or acting as national organic agricultural movements (NOAMS).

Africa Cooperative Action Trust (ACAT), Eswatini

ACAT is an NGO working with rural communities in the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) to support them in producing food using sustainable, environmentally friendly methods.

ACAT is committed to this work, despite the strong push for conventional food production systems that use chemical external inputs. These are costly and deplete small-scale farmers' meagre financial resources and they damage soil fertility, which is so critical for food production.

ACAT's Sustainable Agriculture and Enterprise Development Programme uses an integrated approach to rural development.

For more info, visit:
acatlilima.com



Caption: These children supported their caregivers by bringing them firewood

The programme has achieved some impressive achievements over the past two years:

- **249 model farmers capacitated** to practice at least five different organic farming activities, including permaculture gardening, rainwater harvesting, compost production, raising indigenous small livestock, building food storage facilities and establishing orchards.
- **212 farmers harvesting their own water.**
- **86 new savings and credit groups** formed
- **239 new income-generating activities** initiated.

Namibia Organic Association (NOA), Namibia

NOA has been working to strengthen Namibia's organic beef value chain. It has held discussions with the commercial beef sector to explore ways in which farmers can transition towards organic production principles. NOA has approached abattoirs and explored the local and export market opportunities for organic beef. Eckhart Foertsch, chair of NOA, presented on these opportunities at a farmers' day in Windhoek, Namibia. Farmers noted that the environment they farmed in was unpredictable and that changing practices could be risky. A suggested way forward, however, was for existing organic beef farmers to develop a local value chain working with a small-scale abattoir and an interested local retail chain.

For more info, visit <https://noa.org.na>

South Africa Organic Sector (SAOSO) and PGS SA, South Africa

SAOSO and PGS SA's PGS Pollinator Programme is picking up speed. In June and July 2022, the organisations travelled to four South African provinces to conduct focus groups with farmers that had established PGS groups under the programme.

The aim was to better understand farmers' current organic practices and knowledge, their networks and key issues and trends around marketing, processing and consuming produce. The exercise also aimed to identify how farmers access information and how they learn, as well as any challenges around markets and technology.

The process was participatory and involved farmers from five to ten farms for each focus group. Key findings were that farmers needed accessible and relevant (to their context) information on organic pest management, green manures and cover crops, organic animal management and agroforestry.

This exercise also highlighted farmers' urgent need for farming infrastructure, such as water tanks, shade netting, nurseries and fencing. SAOSO and PGS will take the findings into consideration when designing knowledge products for the participants in their PGS Pollinator Programme.

For more info, visit www.saoso.org and www.pgssa.org.za



Caption: SAOSO/PGS SA's Daniel Moody conducting a focus group with members of the Klein Slangkoppie PGS, Cape Town, South Africa, July 2022

Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Promoters Association (ZOPPA), Zimbabwe

ZOPPA promotes organic agriculture as an alternative farming system that removes dependency on chemical and seed companies, improves people's health, balances the ecosystem while creating livelihoods.

ZOPPA lobbies for policy to support organic agriculture in Zimbabwe, it has established and monitors an agreed set of organic standards, it facilitates market linkages for organic produce and provides information on organic agriculture, among other objectives. In June 2022, ZOPPA undertook compliance checks against PGS farm assessments to ensure that the organic standards were met for PGS certification. Audited groups were Bambara nuts and chilli farmers in Umzingwane and Bubi districts in Matabeleland. Key assessment areas were soil preparation, source of planting materials, crop diversity, soil fertility management, pest and disease management, hygiene standards maintained, and that irrigation water was of good quality and protected from contamination, as set out in Zimbabwe's organic standards.

For more info, visit
<http://zoppatrust.wordpress.com>



Caption: ZOPPA inspector with farmer Mr Sibanda in Umzingwane district



Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) Leaders

In 2021, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)-Organics International in association with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH hosted an Ecological Organic Agriculture Leadership Program in Africa. The aim was to support agricultural leaders in broadening their networks, promoting ecological organic agriculture (including agroecology), honing their advocacy skills and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Participants in the training were drawn from 25 African countries. In Southern Africa, our EOA Leaders are Kanangwe Newlove and Wilfred Miga from Zambia, Peter Kunenye from Malawi, Busiswe Mgangxela from South Africa and Mareike Voigts from Namibia. All five are actively involved in building the networks and calling for policy change to support the growth of sustainable food and farming systems in Southern Africa.

In this issue, we profile the ongoing work of Peter Kunenya who works as a trainer at Never Ending Food in Malawi, a community-based initiative that uses permaculture design to address developmental issues of food/nutrition security, poverty reduction, climate change and sustainable agriculture.

Permaculture design: a living testimony

by Peter Kaniye

I live in Malawi and am certified permaculture trainer having completed a course in agriculture in the 2000s. I am blessed to be married to Eluby Gwala and have two children. One night, before I had found employment and a home that I could call my own, I had a dream of a beautiful garden designed around a house. It was so exciting that I told my wife and quickly put the design down on paper so that I would not forget. Soon after, I started implementing the garden design I had dreamt in the land around the house that I was renting. Dusty bare ground started taking shape as organic matter normally thrown away was incorporated into planting beds. Onlookers and my landlord were perplexed when they came past, but I was not deterred and would walk around my 'designs', observing and learning how water flowed through the space, for example, and how best to direct harvested rainwater. Mulching of the designed beds help to conserve water in the ground and to protect microorganisms from the heat of direct sunlight.

I planted a diversity of plants – local vegetables, fruit trees, cassava, pigeon peas, marize and more – and the space started to become very beautiful.



*Caption: Peter Kaniye
Source: Never Ending Foods*

In a short period of time, I had an abundance of diverse food crops grown in a space that had been bare. In the second year, I was able to share my abundance with my landlord who started to become excited at what I was doing. In the third year, he stopped charging me rent as he was benefitting from the 'gifts' of pawpaws, bananas, sweet potatoes and other vegetables. At that point, I started giving groups tours of the plot three times a week. People went from thinking I was mad to appreciate what I had done and want to learn and emulate the practices.

It is through the teaching and sharing that I met a white woman from the United States who came to learn from my work. She happened to be doing research on permaculture and food security. My work excited her and she asked was if I knew about permaculture, which I didn't. She linked me the NeverEndingFood NGO where I got formal training in permaculture. Since 2015, I have trained thousands of people in this sustainable agriculture technique.

When I was able to build my own house, I implemented the same design process and today it is a sustainable space that attracts both people and other living organisms. My family benefits through the healthy food produced and income generated. I am privileged to have been able to impact many lives through my passion and to have transformed many spaces.



Peter takes groups of smallholder farmers and other interested stakeholders through permaculture training.

This month, he worked with a group of small-scale farmers to teach them how to make manure and liquid fertilisers and how to design the land using ridges to allow water to seep into the soil and build up the underground water table.



FARMER TIPS

by Busisiwe Mgangxela

My name is Busisiwe Mgangxela and I am a farmer in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Our farm produces organic produce for sale into the local market and a range of medicinal plants. My passion is to revive the 'culture' of agriculture, which means acknowledging the benefits of the traditional way of farming using indigenous seeds and ways of soil preparation. Below are some of my top farming tips!

Build the health of your soils

It is very important to build up the health of your soils to support the production of nutrition-dense foods. You can do this by adding organic matter to the soil through compost. For those producing food at a small scale, you can easily make compost from kitchen scraps. It is cost effective, available and promotes the recycling of waste that otherwise ends up on landfills. How do you do it? Use a bucket to collect your kitchen waste – like vegetable peels, fruit peels, eggshells, teabags, etc. Add sawdust to the bucket, covering the kitchen waste as you collect it. This can turn into a rich compost. At a larger scale, you will need more sawdust to make sure that everything is fully covered to avoid bad smells that can happen through decomposition.

Harvest rainwater

A free resource is rainwater. You can either capture it in a bucket, pond, tank or dam or you can slow it down and channel it to where it is needed – in the garden or fields – using contours, raised beds and swales. These design methods redirect water to where it can soak into the fields and recharge underground water sources. This helps to prevent flooding and ensures distribution of the water throughout the field.



There are many benefits to water harvesting. It cuts costs because the water is free and if you use low-technology methods, the capturing or channelling of it does not require electricity. It also helps to reduce local flooding by making sure that the water goes to where it can be absorbed. And having water on hand can help you through drought periods, even if it is stored in the ground. But best of all, rainwater contains no harmful chemicals and so is good for your plants.

Focus on building diversity

If your soil is healthy, it will support good crop production and also support life in the soil, which makes for a healthy underground ecosystem, which also supports good crop production. Above ground, planting different crops – flowering crops, creeping crops, cover crops and fruits – means that you will have a diversity of foods for you, your family and community to eat.

There are many benefits to focusing on diversity. It increases availability of organic matter through use of cover crops, it increases productivity, it attracts beneficial insects, and it supports the health of the wider ecosystem, among many others.

SEED GUARDIANSHIP & SOIL CURATORS

by Siphwe Sithole



As the world and our continent in particular battles the effects of climate change, we must undertake a mammoth task to address the issues in our food and farming systems, including the type of food we are producing and how we produce it. We need to carefully select crops that are resilient, kind to our environment and that are indigenous. Each of us must join forces in seed guardianship as it is often the availability of seed that determines what we grow.

The more seed guardians there are, the better our chances for a wider food basket. Whoever controls the seed dictates what you eat.

We have somehow allowed the erosion of our indigenous food sources in this region and on the continent. Retail outlets do not reflect the diversity of food eaten in the different regions. Our own food is conspicuous by its absence or scarcity on the shelves or retail outlets. We must therefore link our advocacy and activism work to the question of why we grow what we see on the shelves instead of our own food. We must raise awareness of the ecological, cultural and health importance of our indigenous seeds.

The seeds that are being promoted by many companies are not good for ecosystem or human health. We need to scrutinise the introduction of some improved varieties. While some have value, we must ignore those that have been propelled to the forefront at the expense of our resilient local varieties. We need to be both vigilant and vocal on issues of seed and soil. If we take a back seat, we will be endangering ourselves, animals and the environment. There is only one planet Earth on which we all live. If we destroy it, we will destroy ourselves.

"When we abdicate our responsibilities of seed guardianship, we are indirectly condemning future generations to a world of scarcity, lack of authenticity, strong sense of identity, a disregard for heritage and a sense of pride."

In addition, our inability to promote our own seeds to produce crops that are turned into meals served at home and beyond the home is a hindrance to the development of the indigenous seed sector. All strong nations pride themselves on a sense of uniqueness created through distinct histories, music, art and cuisine. And people experiencing this uniqueness on holidays or work trips often return home to open businesses – like restaurants – to give others a taste of what they had. We need to celebrate and promote our uniqueness related to our indigenous seeds, crops and meals.

We need to look closely at what and how we are growing both edible and non-edible plants. Our approach must be sustainable, kind to the environment and to us. If we fail to create an ecological balance, we are bound to be punished, and punished severely. We must work with nature, edify and nourish the soil so that what we reap heals our bodies, boosts our minds and supports us in becoming good curators of the soil and of Mother Earth. At the heart of this is seed. We must ask ourselves what seed am I going to plant, where does it come from and is it good for the soil? Growers must have control over the seeds they grow. They must be seed guardians and we must support them in coming together to share seeds and related knowledge so that individually and collectively we can ensure that future generations will be able to eat the foods of their cultures.

Siphiwe Sithole is a trained journalist from Rhodes university who spends most of her time in advertising, marketing and public relations work. She found her passion in farming indigenous crops starting her African Marmalade business in 2015. African Marmalade, based in South Africa, produces indigenous foods and serves as a way to restore Africa's heritage through food.

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ADVANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MEAs IN ZIMBABWE

by Kudzai Kusena, Arnold Mashingaidze, Mazvita Chiduwa & Maria Goss

Policymakers in countries of the global South often perceive resource-intensive farming systems that heavily depend on synthetic pesticides and fertilisers as a panacea to food insecurity and underdevelopment despite growing evidence of the widespread negative impacts of such models. Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as those under the Convention on Biological Diversity, can help countries to develop policies and action plans to transition towards more sustainable systems.

Agricultural practices in resource-intensive farming systems – monocropping, consolidation of land parcels, conventional tillage and use of chemical inputs – threaten biodiversity for food and agriculture. These systems are unsustainable. The historical emphasis on high-external input agriculture in policies of many developing countries was motivated by the unbalanced promotion of Green Revolution technologies, pedantic and narrow perspectives of increasing productivity, safeguarding yields, and maximizing profits without taking due cognizance of sustainability and the collateral damage it causes to the environment, biodiversity, climate and the health and wellbeing of humans and other organisms. Agriculture, under a business-as-usual scenario, is estimated to contribute to 70% of the forecast loss of terrestrial biodiversity. MEAs, particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity, encourages its Contracting Parties to develop policies and action plans that solve the dilemma of achieving food security whilst ensuring sustainable and resilient agrifood systems. Moreover, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and its 17 Strategic Development Goals (SDGs) provide an overall “consensus” framework to achieve sustainable development and balance the competing needs for social, economic and environmental development.

The heavy dependence of high-input agriculture on pesticides puts more than 60% of global agricultural land (about 24.5 million km²) at risk of pesticide pollution.

More than a third of the areas that are at high-risk (about 3 million km²) are in high-biodiversity areas. Several studies attest that the indiscriminate use of pesticides in high-input-based agricultural systems has considerably contributed to the declining populations of pollinators, natural enemies and other beneficial organisms. Equally, the destruction of natural enemies of pests in agroecosystems has caused inverse patterns of pest resurgences and thus extensive use of pesticides. Such a phenomenon leads to increased incidences of pesticide resistance.

This, in turn, triggers the pesticide treadmill, increasing the use of pesticides and worsening the negative impacts of pesticides on agroecosystems and the environment.

The role of agriculture in driving climate change in Zimbabwe

According to the World Bank and FAOSTAT, Zimbabwe produces a total of 63.79 MT of greenhouse gases (GHG) annually. The agricultural sector is the third largest emitter in the country (16.3 % of national emissions) after land-use change and forestry (56.5 %), and energy (23.3%). High-input-based agricultural practices such as intensive animal production (enteric fermentation), burning crop residues and transport, and use of synthetic fertilisers constitute the main sources of GHG emissions from agriculture. Climate change is characterised by increasing incidences and severity of extreme weather events such as floods, heat waves and drought, which destroy crops, properties, infrastructure and livelihoods. The increasing frequency of wildfires erupting in various parts of the world is linked to increasingly dry conditions because of climate change.

Zimbabwe was among the leading countries in Africa to embrace the advent of high-input agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, it has a long history of promoting skewed agricultural development policies, practices, extension and marketing systems that sought to replace the traditional smallholder "nature-based" farming systems.

The success of adopting high-input agriculture was short-lived before a plethora of negative impacts began to emerge: pollution of land, air and water resources; pest resurgence and pesticide resistance; loss of biodiversity; erosion, soil fertility loss and land degradation; loss of ecosystem services; increased GHG emissions and climate change; loss of dietary diversity and increased incidence of morbidity and mortality caused by non-communicable diseases.

Nevertheless, Zimbabwe is now on a recovery path to achieve sustainable agricultural practices. In compliance with the Paris Agreement, Zimbabwe recently raised its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets to cut emissions, including methane emissions, and adapt to climate impacts from 33% to 44%. Zimbabwe is a party to several MEAs, but their domestication and implementation at the national level are inadequate. Domestication entails developing, strengthening, and implementing policies, strategies and practices in compliance with these global instruments. The thrust of domestication is to restore and promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture, ecosystem integrity and ecosystem services to sustain present and future agrifood production systems.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with the financial support of the European Union is assisting Zimbabwe to strengthen the implementation of MEAs through the third phase of a project titled: *Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in ACP Countries (ACP-MEAs 3)*. The project seeks to mainstream biodiversity into agricultural policies and to promote sound pesticide management and ecosystem-based approaches and practices to accelerate the transition to sustainable agriculture. The project focus countries in Africa are Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Bridging the sectoral divide: Effective coordination and implementation of MEAs

Governance issues related to biodiversity for food and agriculture and environmental sustainability are complex, crosscutting and interdisciplinary, often derailed by the paradoxes of the sectoral divide between line sectors, ministries and departments. The ACP-MEAs 3 bridges this divide by establishing coordinating mechanisms to strengthen collaboration between the different stakeholders, institutions, and various focal points responsible for and/or affected by the MEAs.

The project appointed two national coordinators from the ministries responsible for agriculture and environment, respectively. These two ministries co-chair the Project Technical Unit (PTU), a multi-stakeholder coordination platform that brings together interested parties from the agriculture and environment sectors to discuss cross-cutting, biodiversity for food and agriculture and environment-related policy issues and challenges. The PTU membership comprises government institutions, the private sector, civil society, academia and farmer organizations. Project activities are driven by four thematic working groups, namely: Policy, Research and Development, Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) and Farmer Field Schools (FFS).

The adopted institutional arrangements allow the project to be inclusive, promote dialogue and stimulate collective, integrated domestication and implementation of MEAs at the national level.

Policy framework to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture policies

The domestication of the MEAs requires Contracting Parties to create a more enabling policy environment. In Zimbabwe, the ACP-MEAs 3 project is working with the government to develop a framework to mainstream biodiversity into agriculture policies. The framework has factored in aspects of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework; the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm hazardous chemicals and wastes Conventions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD), including in the areas of sustainable biodiversity management in food and agriculture, HHPs, climate-smart agriculture and land degradation. The complex issues of governance, coordination, institutions, and financing of biodiversity for food and agriculture are dealt with under the proposed framework.

Creating evidence for policy development

The discourse of food security and sustainable agriculture development is sensitive and requires evidence to transform mindsets, policies and practices. The project commissioned a series of studies to provide the current state of knowledge on specific topics relevant to informing policy formulation.

These studies include the analysis of costs and benefits of adopting ecosystem-based practices, the impacts of pesticides on pollinators and livestock, the enablers and barriers to the adoption of bio-pesticides, bio-fertilisers and other bio-agents, the potential for organic agriculture production, and the integration of ecosystem-based approaches and practices in agriculture in higher education curricula. Preliminary findings indicate existing gaps that can be tackled in empirical research and agrobiodiversity policy research and development.

Supporting transformation to ecosystem-based agriculture through participatory action
Field demonstrations provide critical insights and practical illustrations to attest to the foregone value of adopting ecosystem-based agricultural approaches and practices. The project established FFS as incubation centres in the districts of Makoni, Mt Darwin and Gokwe South to promote the transformation of high-input agriculture to ecosystem-based farming practices.

These FFS focus on biodiversity restoration and promotion of sound pesticide management in agriculture through undertaking activities, such as crop diversification, rangeland management, integrated pest management, organic farming, and soil and water conservation. These FFS initiatives are coordinated by the national research and extension agencies, which is critical for institutionalisation and positioning of the approaches for future out-scaling at national and regional levels.

Mitigating and phasing out HHPs

Indiscriminate use and distribution of pesticides have far-reaching impacts on biodiversity and human and environmental health. It is estimated that most harms are caused by a relatively small number of pesticides, namely the HHPs. The project has identified and assessed the risks associated with HHPs in Zimbabwe. A national survey recorded rampant cases of poor pesticide handling, storage, application, as well as container and waste disposal.

A high risk of pesticide exposure exists among producers and consumers in Zimbabwe, with its associated effects of acute and chronic poisoning of humans and other organisms and contamination of land and water resources.

There is also evidence of a weak regulatory environment regarding pesticides that contributes to the current pesticide problems in Zimbabwe. Project achievements include the publication of a short list of the HHPs used in Zimbabwe and a draft HHP mitigation and phasing out plan. As part of efforts to mitigate the negative impacts caused by HHPs in Zimbabwe, the project is carrying out awareness and education campaigns on the dangers of indiscriminate use of HHPs, while promoting the use of safer pesticide alternatives.

Conclusion

The ACP MEAs 3 will go a long way in strengthening the effort to transition from high-input to ecosystem-based agriculture. Zimbabwe is set to improve on the implementation of MEAs, and the lessons learnt will have a far-reaching impact on countries that share similar agricultural backgrounds with Zimbabwe.

For more information on the project and activities, please email the national project coordinator at: Kudzai.Kusena@fao.org

YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE

Africa's youth have a key role to play in building the food and farming systems of the future – systems that are sustainable, inclusive and just. We need the energy, innovation and creativity of youth to see new ways of being in the world, to see past the blockages caused by the current systems that is failing us on all fronts. And youth are stepping up – in a diversity of spaces.

Youth gathered in South Africa in 2015 for the Youth in Agriculture Summit for Southern Africa. The event focused on how to use agriculture as a catalyst for economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa. The aim was to change the mindset of agriculture as subsistence livelihoods and reimagine it as one that can ensure food and nutritional security, build resilience to climate change and create decent livelihoods and support profitable businesses. Youth came from all over Africa to learn from their peers and share their experiences in starting rural businesses, practising sustainable agriculture and in building rural livelihoods, particularly for women.

As a result of this summit, the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa issues a declaration of commitments. These included:

- Commitment to mainstreaming youth programmes in agriculture at all policy levels. This declaration urges stakeholders to create development programmes for inclusive participation of youths, to organise platforms and fellowships for youth in agriculture and to dedicate funds to benefit youth in agriculture. These commitments included:

- To build the capacity of youth through knowledge management, learning and information sharing across the regions.
- To improving agribusiness infrastructure targeted at youth.
- To creating equitable access to markets and trade for youth.
- To advocating for appropriate financing packages for youth.

The summit was followed by a youth survey conducted in Africa to identify existing programmes involving youth in this sector. Findings showed that vocational training was the primary vehicle for youth inclusion, followed by exchange programmes and formal educational training. The survey showed that the proportion of youth involved in Africa's agricultural sector is growing.

In 2020, the Young Organics Global Network was launched in a virtual event attended by hundreds of youth from all over the world. Find out more about this initiative at www.yoglobalnetwork.com. There are lots of events, workshops and meetings popping up focused on youth. One such was the Organic Europe's Youth Event in August 2022 that aimed to create a platform for young farmers, entrepreneurs, start-up businesses and student to network and share knowledge on organic agriculture.

On the following page, we profile the work undertaken by the Africa Youth Agriculture Cooperative in Ghana.

BEYOND OUR REGION

FINDING WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO EMBRACE FARMING IN GHANA

by Kwasi Mensah Xematsri, vice-president of the AYAC Africa Project and country director for the AYAC Ghana Project, and Samuel Kofi Armstrong, technical advisor of the AYAC Ghana Managerial Board

In Ghana, an exciting youth cooperative works to encourage youth to become involved in agriculture by changing the negative perception that youth have of farming. It is working with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to support its Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP). Agriculture is important to the development of any nation. Ghana is no exception. The Africa Youth Agriculture Cooperative (AYAC) seeks to make youth aware that today agriculture offers career research, financial management, environmental conservation, engineering and other technical areas. It is working with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to support its Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP). Farmers are often regarded as uneducated and unskilled, practising an occupation that is labour intensive with a low economic return.

The Ghana chapter of the AYAC Africa project is supporting the government's YIAP to support the entry of more youth into the sector to support ongoing food and nutrition security. This is critical as Ghana's farmer population is ageing and there is an urgent need to attract new people to the sector. This requires changing the image of the farmer.



The youth are the ideal catalyst for this change given their willingness to adopt new ideas, concepts and technology, which are all critical factors in changing the way that agriculture is practised and perceived. Ghana must attain food security. The current import bill for rice, cooking oil, frozen chicken and meat continues to rise. If this trend continues, Ghana will become dependent on imports for basic food stuffs, making the country vulnerable to catastrophic events and other external shocks that negatively impact on food production.

The AYAC Africa Project aims to encourage youth to accept farming as a commercial business venture in which they can generate an income enough to meet their needs and improve their standard of living. This, in turn, will motivate youth to stay in rural areas. A core part of YIAP is training in processing, marketing and consultancy in various areas of agricultural production over a year. After a year, participants will be weaned off the programme. Those going into processing will be provided with simple processing equipment on a credit basis and they will be introduced to appropriate financial institutions to gain working capital. Those who are able to maintain their payment status will be supported for three years by YIAP in crop production training before leaving the programme to become fully fledged farmers. The programme also offers one year's training in aquaculture. The cost-benefit analysis of this training programme shows that after two production cycles, the young farmers should be able to save enough to construct their own cages.

AYAC Africa Project makes the following recommendations to encourage youth to participate in agriculture:

- Agriculture should be a stand-alone subject starting at the basic school level.
- Farming or working in the garden should not be used as a means of discipline in primary, junior high and senior schools.
- The uniforms of agricultural officers could be reconsidered – a survey conducted with youth notes that this style of dressing is considered 'uncool'.
- Agricultural workers must be given value for money for their products and services, and this should be transparent so that people know what they will gain from their labour.
- Science and technology must be embraced at the smallholder farming level in appropriate ways. This will help to attract modern youth to the sector.



WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Women in Agriculture Namibia Awards

by Helvi Shindume

Helvi Shindume is a Namibian farmer and entrepreneur who holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture and honours degree in Agribusiness. As a woman aspiring to build a career in agriculture, Helvi is known for instigating and devising original, thought-provoking concepts. In October 2019, she created the Women in Agriculture Namibia organisation (WIAN), which aims to strengthen the recognition of women's efforts in agriculture.

The organisation has 200 members who are proactively dynamic in their communities, most being small-scale farmers that produce for their households and local communities, with some being qualified agriculturalists. WIAN aims to enhance the capacity of women in agriculture to efficiently produce high-quality agricultural products to increase their income and improve their livelihoods. In this regard, WIAN launched the first ever Female Farmer of the Year competition. The competition was open to all Namibian female farmers in all 14 regions of the country and the call for participation in the competition was via social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The competition campaign reached about 4 500 women farmers who participated in the competition.

WIAN partnered with organisations such as Feedmaster, Agra and Namibia Organic Association to recognise the achievements of exceptional women excelling in agriculture in poultry and livestock production, business innovation and sustainable organic farming. Feed Master sponsored a prize of chicken feed to the value of N\$5 000.00, Agra sponsored prize money to the value of N\$6 000 and NOA offered a mentorship programme and training on organic farming. The competition also attracted overwhelming support from a number of stakeholders in the public and private sectors including media houses such as the Namibia Broadcasting Cooperation and New Era newspaper that aired and published the award ceremony and The Namibian sun and Agriforum Magazine that documented the event.

Winners of the 2022 competition were Agnes Mundia Limbo from the Zambezi region for her strawberries and pawpaws, Yolanda Metjua Kavetuna for livestock in the Omaheke region and Chantelle Mouton, a small livestock farmer in the Otjozondjupa Region.

The event was a success, and it is hoped that this will be an annual event to recognise female farmers. The intent is to grow the number of entrants in future competitions.

KNOWLEDGE HUB SOUTHERN AFRICA (KHSA)

The Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSA) is part of the 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) GmbH and non-governmental organisations across Africa. The KCOA aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa.

The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports project implementation in southern Africa. Activities are focused in Zambia, led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia; in Namibia led by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association (NOA); and in South Africa led by the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO). The project extended to Malawi in 2022 working with Kusamala and Soils, Food and Healthy Communities. The other hubs are implemented by GIZ in North, West and Eastern and Central Africa.

KHSA uses two approaches to supporting the uptake of organic agriculture in the region. The first is a sector-wide approach in which it works with groups of stakeholders, such as farmer organisations, policymakers, media and other groups to identify knowledge gaps. It also works through multiplier support programmes in each country working with lead farmers over a longer period of time to support them in identifying what knowledge is needed, in what form (videos, printed, etc.) and languages.

For more info about the KHSA, visit www.khsa.online



UPCOMING EVENTS

1. #IGrowYourFood

14th September #IGrowYourFood Action This is an international action day when organic and Agroecology farmers around the world share their work, challenges and how they can be assisted.

18th August, join a webinar to learn how to participate in this action. Follow this link to register for the webinar:
<https://www.ifoam.bio/news/igrowyourfood-sign-webinar-august-18>

2. Organics Europe Youth Event

This is an event aiming at creating a platform for young agents active in the organic sector. Participating will be young farmers, young entrepreneurs, start-ups, students, and (young) interested actors from the value chain to network, discuss and develop knowledge and awareness on organic amongst youth.

31 August -1 September

To learn more visit:
<https://www.organicseurope.bio/events/organics-europe-youth-event/>

3. Organic and Natural Products Expo Africa Sandom

Dates 21-23 October 2022

Register to exhibit:
<https://www.organicandnaturalportal.com/expo/>

4. 2022 IFOAM-GOESAN International organic expo

Dates: 30th September – 10th October 2022

Where: Goesan Republic of South Korea

The opening ceremony of the Expo will include the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of IFOAM - Organics International and will be one of the largest gatherings of organic leaders in the world in 2022.

The Expo program features international and local conferences, thematic workshops and seminars covering a diverse range of topics from across the organic sector.

For more information visit:
<https://www.ifoam-organicevents.com/>

RESOURCES

1. Why we cannot blame Sri Lanka crisis on organic farming; As Sri Lanka faces a lot of challenges that pesticide advocates blame on organic agriculture.

As Sri Lankan government backtracks in its ambitious nationwide transition to organics, what lessons that can be drawn from their experience? From the discussion between IFOAM Organics International and the president of Lanka Organic Agriculture Movement (LOAM), lessons can be drawn on the right way to transition to organics.

Click the link to learn more:

<https://www.organicwithoutboundaries.bio/2022/06/02/why-we-cannot-blame-the-sri-lankan-crisis-on-organic-farming/>

2. Sound fertilization for food security in the context of the current crisis. An FAO Webinar addressing global fertilizer crisis

The recording can be found at: <https://www.ifoam.bio/news/fao-webinar-addressed-global-fertiliser-crisis>

Of relevance to organic agriculture are presentations from the following:

- Professor Manish Raisanda 1:00-1:19 The presentation is about biofertilizers as a solution to improve soil fertility in Africa.
- Professor Laurie Drinkwater: 1:20-1:37 addressed the importance to improve the soil organic matter to increase fertiliser efficiency and the alternative approaches to chemical fertilisers to enhance food security.
- Farmer Janet Maro: 1:38-1:44 highlighted that organic practices such as the use of compost, recycling organic matter, green manure and cover crops, build healthy soils to grow healthy plants. She added that mineral fertilisers are responsible for soil pollution, land degradation and climate change.
- Farmer Gabriella Soto: 1:44-1:52 underlined that “productivity cannot be achieved at any cost” and that organic farmers are aware that they have to feed the world but also that they cannot destroy the world in the process.



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