

LONG-TERM SYSTEM COMPARISON IN KENYA: WHAT CAN ORGANIC AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?



Project

The declared aim of this scientifically qualified project is to **promote organic farming** as an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional agricultural methods in East Africa. In order to increase awareness of organic farming among the rural population, regular features are planned in the monthly newspaper for farmers „*The Organic Farmer*“ TOF as well as a programme on „TOF Radio“, (see *Biovision Project Farmers' newspaper „The Organic Farmer“ and Radio*).

The different methods of cultivation (conventional and organic) are compared in a **field trial**. Of particular interest is the relationship between organic farming methods and yield, as well as quality and shelf-life of produce. First scientifically proven results showed that with good soil, especially good soil fertility, and sufficient rainfall, crop yields after converting to organic cultivation from conventional methods were equal. In areas where soil quality was not as good, organic cultivation produced half the crop yield of conventional methods, and the use of more fertilisers did not lead to higher crop yield. Under such conditions, the use of expensive fertilisers is not worthwhile for farmers. It is more important to increase soil fertility in a sustainable way.

Locations in Kenya; Thika and Chuka in different agro-ecological zones were selected along with areas in Bolivia and India. At both locations a **field day** is carried out, where interested farmers can inform themselves on organic farming and the field trials.

Relevance

The concept of organic farming opens up new possibilities for sustainable development in the South, since organic agriculture has the potential to maintain yield at a constant level, which is particularly important in risk-prone tropical areas. With certification of their produce, farmers also gain access to attractive markets. What and how organic agriculture can contribute to the availability of nutrition and sustainable development in tropical countries has not been scientifically investigated until now. A systematic, long-term comparison of different cultivation systems shall deliver the first findings.

Project number:
BV PH-03

Project active since:
July 2005

Project duration:
until December 2010

Budget for 2009:
49'600 USD

Project coordinator:
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Program responsibility:
Verena Albertin



Field trials shall show the effects the different cultivation methods have on crop yield.



The results achieved are passed on directly to the farmers.

Development Goal

Practice-oriented, scientific clarification of the significance of organic agriculture for sustainable development (long-term comparison between conventional and organic farming).

Beneficiaries

The research community and development co-operation profit from the project, as do local and national authorities and NGOs, as well as farmers and agricultural extension workers in the project areas.

Goals

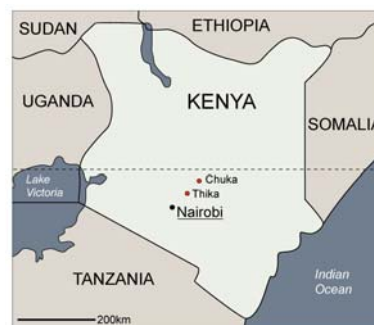
1. **Promotion and creation of awareness of organic farming** as a viable option for agricultural policy, and the promotion of public awareness of organic products through publication of articles in the farmers' newspaper and radio programmes.
2. Finding solutions to problems specific to organic farmers through development of locally adapted technologies and **innovations in organic agriculture**.
3. To deliver reliable information on the **chances and risks** of organic farming in comparison to traditional methods.

Partner Organisations

Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL www.fibl.org;
International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology *icipe* www.icipe.org;
Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute of CIAT (TSBF-CIAT) www.ciat.cgiar.org;
Coop Switzerland www.coop.ch;
Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation SDC www.deza.admin.ch

Sustainability

Sustainability calls for a holistic vision: healthy people, animals and plants in a healthy environment. (4x Health, 4-H Strategy). Every project supported by Biovision effects considerable improvements in at least one of the four health areas. The key to effectively replicating the success of the project is the availability of specific information on the methods applied and the results achieved. With this approach and its 'helix of effects', living conditions are improved and the poverty of the people is gradually overcome while the environment is protected.



Research fields for the system comparison in Thika and Chuka.

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