



## ■ A new Farmer newspaper in Kenya “When will the next Organic Farmer be out?”

BioVision launches a newspaper for sustainable agriculture in Kenya, The Organic Farmer. The official publisher of the newspaper is the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, ICIPE in Nairobi. The paper was developed by the former Africa correspondent for the Swiss Tages-Anzeiger newspaper. As reported by our editor, the farmers' paper is very well received.

“I congratulate BioVision for supporting the “Organic Farmer“ newspaper” writes Joseph Kiruthi Kinyanjui from Kinangop

in Kenya. “It is a lively gazette which is useful to the Kenyan farmers”. Kinyanjui's letter is one of the dozens of such letters which we received after the paper was launched. More than 200 farmers have contacted the newspaper through their local farmer groups, while others have even communicated via email. The response to the first edition of The Organic Farmer newspaper in Kenya which is being financed by BioVision has been overwhelming. We could easily increase the monthly newspaper circulation from 10,000 to 14,000 copies.

In comparison to other Farmer newspapers in Zimbabwe, South Africa or in Europe, The Organic Farmer is rather a small publication with just eight pages for the time being. The paper is very informative, full of concrete advice and tips and is very easy to read. The paper is distributed free of charge. For the farmers in the rural areas, this is very important. The postage they spend in sending letters to us costs as much as a kilogram of maize meal used to make Ugali, which is one of the staple dishes in Kenya. A kilogram of maize meal could feed a small family for a few days.

However, the huge response we have received from the farmers explains why the newspaper is so important. The Kenyan farmers are lacking information on general agriculture and especially information on organic, sustainable farming methods. The big daily national newspapers focus on the cities and the three specialized newspapers for farmers are merely an accumulation of advertisements for agro-business-companies which also offer the supply information for their commodities.

### **The Organic Farmer takes a new path**

We consider the newspaper like a monthly portion of a manual which has been made easy to comprehend. In the newest edition, we have used illustrations to demonstrate how organic compost can be produced using precise tips.

We have also provided suggestions on where to buy seeds. We have recommended the sowing of molasses grass in order to keep the ticks away. We have also provided farmers with steps which

*Continued on side 2*



## Editorial



Editorial from 'The Organic Farmer', the newspaper for sustainable agriculture in Kenya, No. 1 from April 2005:

*All over the world, farmers have progressed through their own research by trial and error as well as through information exchange with their colleagues. Research also contributes its part in many places. This means that if one has a problem such as low soil fertility, a scientist would for example try out different methods. The scientist would experiment with different dosages of fertilizer in the lab and then test these in the field. The most successful results would then be interpreted and recommended for use. Thus, new knowledge becomes part of the production system and allows the increase of agricultural production, provided the new knowledge and recommendations reach the farmers. Unfortunately, this flow of information is often interrupted in the developing countries. In Kenya, BioVision wants to close this gap. The farmer newspaper, The Organic Farmer is a communication platform between practitioners and academics. It will bring knowledge to the farmers and considers their enquiries or concerns. Scientific solutions and farmers' opinions will be published. The team of editors ensures that the information provided to the farmers is in line with sustainable, ecological and economical acceptable standards. Useful suggestions, opinions and tips from readers are most welcome!*

Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren  
President, BioVision Foundation

*Continued from side 1*

can help them organise themselves so as to directly access the markets thus leaving out the scrupulous middle men. We have a lot of material to offer the farmers and the knowledge we provide is packed in a simple and understandable manner. This is exactly what is lacking in Kenya.

Access to relevant information by farmers is not easy and is in fact a logistic nightmare. For example, we have about 900 postal addresses which belong to farmer groups. Each of the farmer group is made up of about 25 members. Each group receives five copies of The Organic Farmer newspaper in the post whereby the paper is circulated among them for reading! Joseph Kinyanjui writes that in his rural community, at least 20 farmers in his group have read the copy of the Organic Farmer, some with the help of their children who can read better. Apart from our own distribution, a considerable number of copies is delivered by courier to Caritas Nyeri and the development offices of the Catholic diocese who attend to more than 1000 farmer groups. The copies are then further distributed. In addition, we also send half a dozen teachers directly to the important and popular market places where they also help with the distribution.

The day the second edition went to the press for printing, Stanley Kuura from Meru diocese, in the area of around Mount Kenya, telephoned our office

## Kakamega

### The benefit of medicinal plants – preservation of the forest

The Kakamega farmers' union operates as a small manufacturing plant under the guidance of ICIPE's specialists in the production of health products. The cultivation and the local processing of medical plants such as *Ocimum kilimandscharicum* provides farmers with an additional source of income. This prevents the farmers from clearing new fields in the endangered forests.



*Rich millet harvest: The Farmer newspaper further provides the small scale farmers with knowledge on how to increase their yields.*

and sounded somehow irritated. "When will the next Organic Farmer appear? The farmers come here everyday asking for the next edition!". That is indeed not a bad sign.

*BioVision project no. 5202-03*

BioVision supports the farmers in building a production house and installing a distillery. The extract from the plant is used to produce a natural healing balm, „Naturub", which helps alleviate colds, joint pains and is used against insect bites.

*BioVision-Project Nr. 5208-02*



## ■ A day in the life of **Shetaye Bekele (55), beggar in Keble 03, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

"I normally wake up very early in the morning at 5am. Half an hour later I am at the church working. I am a beggar. I don't have a choice because I am very sick and my husband abandoned me when I was pregnant with my third child. During the sermon, I earn about two to three Birr. After the service when the people have gone home, there is no point in begging and so I go home too. When there is no church service, the children have to look for money. We live on about 2 Birr per day (about 35 Swiss Rappen). This is enough for one meal. On my way home, I buy Injera which is round flat bread made from fermented flour. With the flat bread, one can eat it together with what one has. The rich people eat Injera together with meat. Here in the slums we are happy when we have some cabbage to accompany the Injera with.

A short while ago, we got a room in a dilapidated mansion. The room is for free but we must pay for the electricity and water. It costs 25 cents for 20 liters of water but unfortunately we are going to lose our room because the government wants to convert the mansion to the "Haile Selassie Museum". We don't know what will happen to us thereafter. My three children have taken the news in an easy manner. They are used to it...

However, I have lots of hope because I belong to the Yeka Kifle Ketema Kebele 03 Integrated Women Group cooperative. We are a group of 200 women who take part in the vegetable garden project started by BioVision. The city leased a big piece of barren land to the



cooperative. Then, the soil was very bad as there was a plantation of Eucalyptus tree which exhausted the soil. As the trees were chopped, the rain washed the soil away. Now, the area has changed completely for the better. We women were taught how to make hard ground fertile by using an axe, shovel and compost. After just half a year, we are able to harvest arrow roots, cabbage and tomatoes. This is new for me and my life has much improved. We purchase the vegetables from our garden but the price we pay is much lower than what we would otherwise pay in the market. We then sell the harvested vegetables within our area and the proceeds flow into the project. This benefits all of us. We have already started expanding: In our area, a small vegetable shop is being built. This project is also supported by BioVision. I am very hopeful that it will be a success because my occupation as a beggar is not good and I would rather make a living from selling vegetables. I spend most of my evenings with my teenage children. Sometimes there is coffee. I then tell them stories of my life. At around 9pm at night we switch off the light because it would otherwise be too expensive. We therefore go to sleep early".

*Recorded by Peter Lütthii*

## ■ Bees, Honey and wild silk **Income for the farmers in Mwea**

In the Mwea region, 20 people from the villages around the nature reserve were selected and taught how to become master trainers in modern bee keeping, honey production and marketing. They now pass on their newly acquired knowledge to about 500 farmers.

Francis Cacao Caku who is a father, farmer and beekeeper: „Today I am able to build modern bee hives myself and thus get much more honey than before." Through this project, other income generating possibilities within the community have also been evaluated such as wild silk. The local women groups are especially very interested

in the production and sale of wild silk. For them, the breeding of native wild silk on the acacia shrubs and the collection of wild silk cocoons are a good possibility to earn their own money with which they are able to gain more financial independence.

*BioVision Project No. 5206-02*

*ICIPE works with a type of silk larvae race from Asia and with wild types which are kept under nets on acacia trees.*





## Hans Rudolf Herren New challenge for BioVision president

For Dr Hans Rudolf Herren a new chapter begins in his untiring work for sustainable development in the third world. On May 14, 2005 he officially took over the presidency of the internationally active Millennium Institute in Washington DC. This institute supports governments in developing countries in their effort to use funds for sustainable development. "After 26 years in Africa, my new assignment takes me away from what has been like my second home", says Herren with mixed feelings. "I can apply the experiences which I have gained in the poorest countries to an international level".

Hans Rudolf Herren has handed over the running of ICIPE in Nairobi to his former colleague in West Africa, Prof. Dr. Christian Borgemeister who will ensure the continuation of the important research work at ICIPE and will be in-charge of the more than 300 employees.

In his new position, Herren himself wants to facilitate the representatives of developing countries to be recognized as equal negotiating partners and integrate them into economic, social and environmental development plans. „When one has spent a quarter of a century in different African countries, one knows exactly what potential these people have”, says Herren. This knowledge of the renowned scientist will be of use in his collaboration with governments of developing countries on all continents. The Millennium-Institute will also be active in the industrialised nations - particularly in the planning of sustainable development. "As the President of BioVision", according to Herren, "my biggest wish is to continue to develop projects for self-help in Africa. My new position will not alter this commitment."



Erika Studer-Wehren (left) and Käthi Laville of the ecumenical third world group in Niedergösgen.

## Women help Women Three events in Niedergösgen

Nine women from the ecumenical third world group in Niedergösgen support two hundred Ethiopian single mothers who belong to a women cooperative from the slums of Addis Ababa. They collect donations for a small shop where the Ethiopians sell vegetables and earn money which they desperately need. At a traditional singing event in January in Niedergösgen, school children collected CH 2,420 for the project in Addis. On March 5, together with BioVision, the women organised a short presentation on the project. During the event, a delicious rice dish was served. At this occasion, another CH 1,037 was donated. On June 11, a brunch was held at the Claro shop in Niedergösgen. "For us it is important to support small projects so that we and our supporters know exactly how the money is being spent", emphasises Erika Studer-Wehren, Head of the group. BioVision thanks you for your confidence and commitment!

## Hope for Africa BioVision at Afro-Pfingsten

In mid May, BioVisison organised a stand in Winterthur at the renown Afro-Pfingsten-Festival. We informed the public about the malaria projects in Kenya and we distributed a non-alcoholic free drink, 'bloody mosquito'. That drink together with the information was a real crowd-puller. Cordial thanks go to the drum group Saf Sap from Senegal and the Batá Ceiba from Switzerland for their musical support!

Help for  
Self Help!



PC-Konto 87-193093-4



BIOVISION

Am Wasser 55, CH-8049 Zürich  
Tel. +41 44 341 97 18  
info@biovision.ch  
www.biovision.ch



News Letter 9 / June 05: **Editing, Production:** Peter Lüthi, BioVision • **Text:** Peter Baumgartner, Stephan Gisi, Peter Lüthi, Andreas Schriber  
**Translations:** Sylvia Lyall, **Picture credit:** ©: Peter Lüthi, Andreas Schriber, Richard Bolli, Andreas Zurbuchen, ICIPE  
**Design:** Fortunat Anhorn, Malans/GK, Anne Godäger