



■ Organic Farming **Organic Farmers on the Search for a Market**

Elijah Koinanges small shamba could plainly serve as the demonstration farm of an organic agriculture school. The fields of the circa 9000 m² farm are divided by hedges of Tithoria shrubs, whose pale yellow flowers shine in this softly undulating countryside near to Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. In the plant beds next

to a field of maize and soya beans Elijah cultivates spinach, leeks, peppers, potatoes and sukumi wiki – the local name for curly kale (borecole). Elijah learned this method of mixing vegetables together in planting from an organic farming handbook, and by observing a neighbour.

Elijah is an organic farmer, he practices organic farming, as organic agriculture is called in Kenya, and he does so with success. Elijah sums up his experiences: „Organic farming means more work, but also a higher yield of better quality, healthier vegetables.“ Only one thing distresses him: his vegetables go to the same markets as conventionally grown products – and are sold at the same price.

Small farmers are well aware of the higher value of organic products, this is shown by the survey of 500 small

farmers conducted by the *Organic Farmer* newspaper, which is financed by BioVision. But the awareness of the higher value of healthy food (better quality translates into higher price), is still not widespread among the Kenyan public at large, and is concentrated in the capital Nairobi among the small minority of white foreigners. The Kenya Organic Agriculture Network, formed with great impetus in spring of 2004, is still not fully established and official policy on agriculture still mainly factors out organic agriculture.

Certification as an obstacle

Yet the market is growing. Sue Kahumbu, organic farmer and adviser to farmers through the *Organic Farmer* newspaper, already offers her

Continued on side 2



Editorial



Nature and development. – These two concepts are BioVision's core. Our projects in East Africa are geared towards bringing the local people into harmony with these concepts. If only one side has the advantage, everything becomes unbalanced. When people clear forests or overuse leached soil in the battle for food they not only destroy intact habitat, but also their own means for existence. A large proportion of African people are directly dependent on the use of natural resources. In the future too. This is the reason why sustainable use is the goal. However, as the saying goes; 'easier said than done'. In this newsletter we report on the BioVision projects which demonstrate that nature and development can come together. Kakamega: On the fringe of Kenya's last rainforest the people grow medicinal plants and so earn money. Organic farming: Our farmers' newspaper teaches Kenyan farmers organic methods of production. These are concrete approaches which circumvent and spare the existing resources. Unlike the North, where the term 'sustainability' has degenerated into an empty phrase, preservation of natural means for life is for the people of the South a question of daily survival.

*Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren
Resident of the BioVision Foundation*

Continued from side 1

organically grown vegetables to various outlets of the supermarket chain Nakumatt, and she could sell much much more.

The problem lies in certification. Consumers want to be sure that the vegetables bought were organically produced. Sue Kahumbu's experiences have shown that when they are assured of the organic origins, consumers are willing to pay more. But certification by a declared firm is expensive- it translates into 1400 CHF for the first year and 950 CHF each subsequent year. That is a lot, too much for the majority of small farmers. However, whole farmer groups can register as organic farmers as long as they command a strict internal control system and verifiable accounts. In the groups costs are made affordable for individual farmers through monthly rates which amount to roughly the price of 4kg of sugar.



Anniversary action

For its 1st anniversary the 'Organic Farmer' newspaper, with the support of BioVision, came up with a special celebration. TOF took over part of the certification costs for 10 farmers' groups, provided that they fulfill certain conditions. Moreover, quantity buyers who will buy from the farmers' groups at a higher price, were acquired after intensive negotiations even during the certification phase.

The difficult task of making a good selection from the hordes of applications which swamped the TOF editors and their chosen agricultural specialists also shows the great importance placed on organic agriculture by Kenyan small farmers. Many groups wrote that if they were not selected, they would scrape together the money for certification if they were only helped in gaining access to the market. It does suggest one thing: the Anniversary Action fulfilled its aim in helping around 100 farming families increase their income whilst at the same time engaging impulse and enthusiasm for natural and sustainable agriculture in the long term.

Elijah Koinanges, Organic farmer: "Organic farming means more work, but also a higher yield of better quality, healthier vegetables."



■ A Day in the Life of **Rahab Thairu from Kenya**

„My day begins at 5 o'clock in the morning. First I warm water to milk the four cows. I leave the milking and other physical labour to an employee since my strength is failing. We carry the milk to a collection point about 500 metres away. After breakfast of cooked beans and maize the garden work begins, I fight the vegetable pests with leaves and fruits of bitter herbs, which has long been used by my people the Kikuyu. I add the finely chopped plant mixture and sugar cane syrup and leave the mixture to mature in a closed container for a week. After seven days I stir the juice and then leave it for a further week. Then I sieve off the plant residue and fill a pitcher with the mixture. This measure is good at helping to keep off worms, blight and spider mites.

I still remember a morning in 1979, as I was fighting potato pests with a liquid chemical I suddenly lost my breath. At that time the use of chemicals was considered a step forward. We knew nothing of the side effects. I stopped spraying because of the chest pains and later began to experiment with traditional measures. At that time I had no clue about organic farming. But the chest pain disappeared, and so did the potato pests!

Now I am 65. My five children have flown the coop and I live with my husband in Kiahuria. The village is situated in a fertile strip of land about a thirty minute bus ride from Nairobi city centre. Since our marriage I have managed a shamba. That is a small vegetable garden, practically everyone in the countryside has one to supply themselves with vegetables. Since my retirement -i used to be a teacher- I have expanded my shamba and become an organic farmer. On 6000 metres squared I farm cabbage, potatoes, spinach, maize, beans, and the traditional vegetables sukuma wiki and terere. In addition I have a few banana and mango trees, as well as my greatest pride, my 100 avocado trees.



„With leaves and fruits of bitter herbs I fight vegetable pests.“

Mondays and Thursdays I go to market. My organic quality attracts only a few customers. Most people only see the price. Although I put in more work, I have to sell my wares at the same price as all the others, otherwise I sell nothing. Despite this I am convinced in organic farming. But the customers still need to be enlightened. IT happens again and again that customers get stomachache and heartburn after they have eaten vegetables from the other stands, the ones that were treated with chemicals. Yet they still buy from these stands. If my vegetables were organically certified I could sell them at a higher price to supermarkets and restaurants.

When it gets dark, in Kenya that's around seven in the evening, my day is over. After dinner is leisure time, which doesn't last that long because my eyes begin to close. The next day will begin early again.“

Recorded by Anja Bengelstorff

■ Stop Malaria **2 BioVision-Pilot projects in Kenya**

On the plateau of Nyabondo and on the coast at Malindi, the international insect research institute ICIPE, together with local groups, is fighting the malaria problem at the root. The malaria mosquitoes are combated with environmentally friendly methods. As a first step the population is informed about the danger presented by the many stagnant bodies of water. Through community work these mosquito breeding areas are drained, or treated with the environmentally friendly bacterium Bti (*Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis*), which specifically decimates mosquito larvae. As a further important measure, around 13,000 impregnated bed nets were distributed. BioVision initiated these pilot projects together with ICIPE and with co-financing from DEZA. The first results are very promising. However, David Omondi-O'koch of the Nyabondo project team still sees a call for action in the area of information: „ There are still people who do not know exactly where malaria comes from, or that the correct use of mosquito nets can mean the difference between life and death, especially for children.“ For this reason ICIPE co-workers are next planning an ‚information offensive‘ at schools.

BioVision-Project 5205-02/5205-03



■ Simone Niggli: Ambassador for BioVision **I wish for peace for the world, and a world without hunger**

Simone Niggli is the best orienteering competitor in the world and has already twice been voted as Swiss Sports Personality of the Year. Now the ten time OL champion has been named as BioVision's first ambassador. Peter Lüthi asks the successful top sportswoman about her new charge.



Ms.Niggli, what moved you to become an ambassador for BioVision?

At the moment I receive many such requests from organisations, which I regard critically. It is very important to me that I can completely stand behind that which I represent. I have to know exactly what it is about. And I would like to use my name for an organisation that actually does something concrete. This is the case with the BioVision Foundation and its message. I was factually informed and was very impressed. I have a very good feeling about BioVision.

What do you particularly value about BioVision?

I was convinced by the project approach: the local people are educated so that they can help themselves. In this way something sustainable is created. Those affected are integrated and can apply what is learned independently. A good example for this is the farmers' newspaper The Organic Farmer. This project is extremely solid and shows the farmers what they can achieve themselves.

A second reason for my choice of BioVision is my background as a biologist. I completed my studies with a thesis on the beetle *Cassida Rubiginosa*. The aim of the study was to use the beetle for organic weed control of a kind of thistle. There you have a direct reference to BioVision. Besides this nature and sustainability are very important to me. Both are central themes for BioVision.

Have you been to Africa?

No, I do not yet know Africa from my own experience. Despite this I admire the people there and their fight for survival. I think often of the women who have to carry water for hours every day. Or the the connection that they keep in spite of all the great problems. It is important to me to collect authentic impressions and to be able to educate myself on site about BioVision's projects. So I am planning a trip to East Africa in the coming year.

As a top sportswoman you are extremely successful. What is most fascinating about your discipline, orienteering?

Whoever wants to have success in OL needs fast legs and a clear head. I have to be able to discern at which maximum speed I can still think clearly and remain mentally flexible. And I need the special ability to imagine a two dimensional map as a vivid three dimensional landscape and to decide the fastest route from one point to another at any time. Of course I have to do all of this in the real landscape, find the way and cover the distance as quickly as possible.

Do you also use these abilities in your personal life?

The ability to plan and organise helps me a lot. I can work efficiently and determinedly. That makes it possible for me to compete at a top sport and at the same time complete my biology studies successfully.

How do you combine competitive sport and a love of nature?

Orienteering is a sport that takes place outside in nature. Through it I have an ever-close relationship with nature and I observe it intensively. Especially in spring it is fascinating and wonderful for me to see how everything blooms and how life unfolds around me. I am grateful for the space I live in.



Simone Niggli setzt sich als Botschafterin für die Ideen von Hans Rudolf Herren und der Stiftung BioVision ein.



What does nature mean to you?

Nature is the basis of life. It can exist without us humans- but not the other way around. That is why it is so important to live in harmony with nature and respect it. We must think of future generations and use nature in such a way that it can regenerate, in the long term too. As a biologist it is not just the small cells or individual plants that interest me, but the big picture, the entirety of earth, different life forms and communities.

What would be your greatest wish?

Peace for the world, and a world without hunger. I wish that we would give something of our abundance to the people that have too little.

What do you want to achieve as ambassador for BioVision?

I hope to raise awareness for BioVision and its method of help for self-help in Africa through my high profile and popularity. And to generate attention for the unique worth of nature and the respectful, considered and sustainable use of it.

■ Generate income - conserve the forest Balsam from the rainforest!

The threatened Kakamega forest (Kenya) is an important retreat for endangered plants and animals. For example, it is home to over 350 different species of bird and medicinal plants that have scarcely been researched. Through the project 'Kakamega- Protecting the forest and biodiversity through a new sources of income', the pressure from human habitation and overuse of the forest are being counteracted. BioVision has, amongst other things, financed a distillation facility for the acquisition of remedies from medicinal plants like *Ocimum kilimandscharicum* and *Mondia whytei*. *Ocimum* for instance is a traditional remedy for influenza, coughs, eye complaints, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and rubella and it is also used as a mosquito repellent. In the project the plants are cultivated outside the forest and maintained by a farmers' cooperative. Balsam and remedy balm is produced from extract of the *Ocimum* leaves, and marketed under the label 'Naturub'. Naturub is already sold in many shops in Kenya including big supermarket chains.

The successful concept of Kakamega should also be applied to the other endangered Eastern Arc Mountain Forests of Kenya and Tanzania. In addition, co-operation with the affected population is clarifying which medicinal plants would be suited to cultivation in plantations for commercial purposes.

BioVision-Project 5208-02





■ 8353 Elgg **Living solidarity**

For 20 years the Elgg community (ZH) has supported projects in the Third World with a yearly tax percentage, or 40,000 franks. This commitment goes back to a private approach to a community assembly. Following strained finances there were two attempts to abolish the tax. Without success, the community stood firm. Every year the Elgg- Third World club chooses the projects approved by the community council. In 2004 a BioVision project in Mwea, Kenya, was one of them. Co-President Felix Schröter: „It is important to us that we think of the people much worse off than us. We want to keep this awareness alive in the community.“

At the Elgg Apple Market in October the club arranged a stand, where specialised dealers added a frank to one of their products for the BioVision ‚Farmers‘ Newspaper‘ project. The Schenk bakery participated with macadamia bread, Chäslädeli with Tomy-Chäslì, florist Creaflor with a little bouquet, and the Keller drugstore with ‚Fit and healthy tea‘. „This is really great“, said Elisabeth Hardegger from Creaflor and looked forward to working for a good cause with the other businesses.

■ Zürich Journalism Award 2006 **Peter Baumgartner honoured for his life's work**

On the 18th May Peter Baumgartner was honoured with the Zürich Journalism Award for his life's work as editor at the Tages-Anzeiger. According to his laudation, as Africa correspondent he brought the readership closer to the continent. After his retirement he initiated the BioVision project The Organic Farmer in Kenya and composed articles for the BioVision Newsletter (pages 1 and 2 in this edition). BioVision congratulates the dedicated journalist on his award and considers itself privileged to count on his experience in Africa and his competent co-operation.

■ Good News from the Finance Area **Sincere thanks to all of our donors!**

BioVision's 2005 Annual Report is in. Thanks to a 17% increase in donations from the previous year and a reduction of administration costs to just 8% of total expenditure, the proportion of funds available for projects could be distinctly increased. 1.9 million franks went to the projects in 2005. BioVision sends heartfelt thanks to all of its donors for their trust and support.

The Annual Report and financial statements with a detailed audit report can be viewed at www.biovision.ch or can be ordered in printed form from the BioVision office (Tel. 044 341 97 18). Orders can be made cost-efficiently by mailing info@biovision.ch

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Hope for Africa!



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