

Biovision

Newsletter March 2014

Change for the better in Tolay
Ethiopian settlers seize the opportunity



A future for all, naturally

Belete Kibre

Farmer in Biftu Beri, Tolay, Ethiopia



“The project changed my life and I now want to do my bit to make things green again”

4 health benefits in the project region of Tolay

- Start date: 2005

- **Objectives**

By triggering a chain reaction, the projects seek to gradually reduce human poverty, improve living conditions and conserve natural resources. Some 25,000 people are benefiting from the projects in Tolay.

- **Four pilot projects**

- Until 2008: Control of tsetse fly in Tolay
- Since 2008: Stop Malaria: Environmentally friendly malaria control
- Since 2011: Modern beekeeping
- Since 2013: Sustainable farming using the eco-friendly “Push-Pull Method” for maize and sorghum

- **Budget 2014**

CHF 409 875.00

- **Account for donations**

PC 87-193093-4

Change for the better in Tolay

“I want my story to be more widely known. Biovision and *icipe* helped me transform my life. I want my brothers and sisters in other places to have the same opportunity”

Belete Kibre, farmer from the village of Biftu Beri in Tolay, Ethiopia

“I arrived in Tolay some 40 years ago. There were few people living here then; it was just scrub and dense forest. The entire area was infested with tsetse flies that transmitted the deadly nagana disease (sleeping sickness) to cattle. This made it impossible to keep working animals and cultivate crops. Times were hard and I was only just able to keep my head above water”.

Animal Health

About 10 years ago, settlers started to arrive in droves from the drought-ridden high plateaus. The government supported the newcomers by giving each of them a pair of oxen for ploughing. The settlers started to clear the forests and plough the soil. However, the oxen soon died from nagana. The government sent new oxen but they too perished. It was a disaster.

The authorities then turned to insect researchers at *icipe* and Biovision for help - they had been working with local farmers in the neighbouring region of Guraghe to solve the tsetse fly problem. By using traps, they had managed to decimate the population of flies and bring the problem under control.

In 2006, the farmers in Tolay were trained in the use of traps and each farmer was given responsibility for one of them. This dramatically reduced the number of flies and farmers gained the upper hand over the deadly nagana disease. Since then, life has improved. “I too was able to realise my dream and 40 years later I have 2 oxen, 2 bulls, 6 cows, 9 calves and 12 goats. I produce 12 litres of milk per day”.

Human Health

Local children were often dying from malaria and so we wanted to do something to combat this terrible scourge. Biovision and *icipe* trained the locals to become mosquito scouts. We learned how to recognise malaria and what to do if it occurred. We were taught how to eradicate the mosquito breeding grounds. We were given mosquito nets and shown how to use them properly. It worked and the number of victims dropped sharply.

Health of the Environment

In 2011, 500 people learned how to keep bees in modern hives and produce high-quality honey. “We regard honey as a medicine. In addition to being good for our health, honey can provide us with a good income – but only if the bees can find enough flowers. We needed to plant more trees. As part of the project, Biovision set up a tree nursery and I have also started to plant seedlings. I missed the trees that used to be here and I want to do my bit to make things green again”.

Plant Health

A fourth project was started in 2013: Farmers from Tolay are learning how to use plants to protect maize and millet from insect pests.

For more on the Project:
www.biovision.ch/tolay_e

icipe: International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (www.icipe.org)



In Toley (Ethiopia), the deadly sleeping sickness in cattle has been brought under control. In addition, an awareness campaign for local people and the use of environmentally-friendly ways to combat mosquitos has significantly reduced the burden of malaria.

Comment

The successful honey project is one of four in Tolay where Biovision, working with local people, is employing a holistic approach. It is based on our realisation that an intact environment combined with healthy people, animals and crops are prerequisites for sustainable development.

It requires more than medical care to restore the health of local farmers and then keep them healthy. If the oxen used for ploughing die from deadly parasites – as was the case in Tolay before the project – ploughs stand idle and maize and millet yields plummet. The result is famine, poverty and sickness.

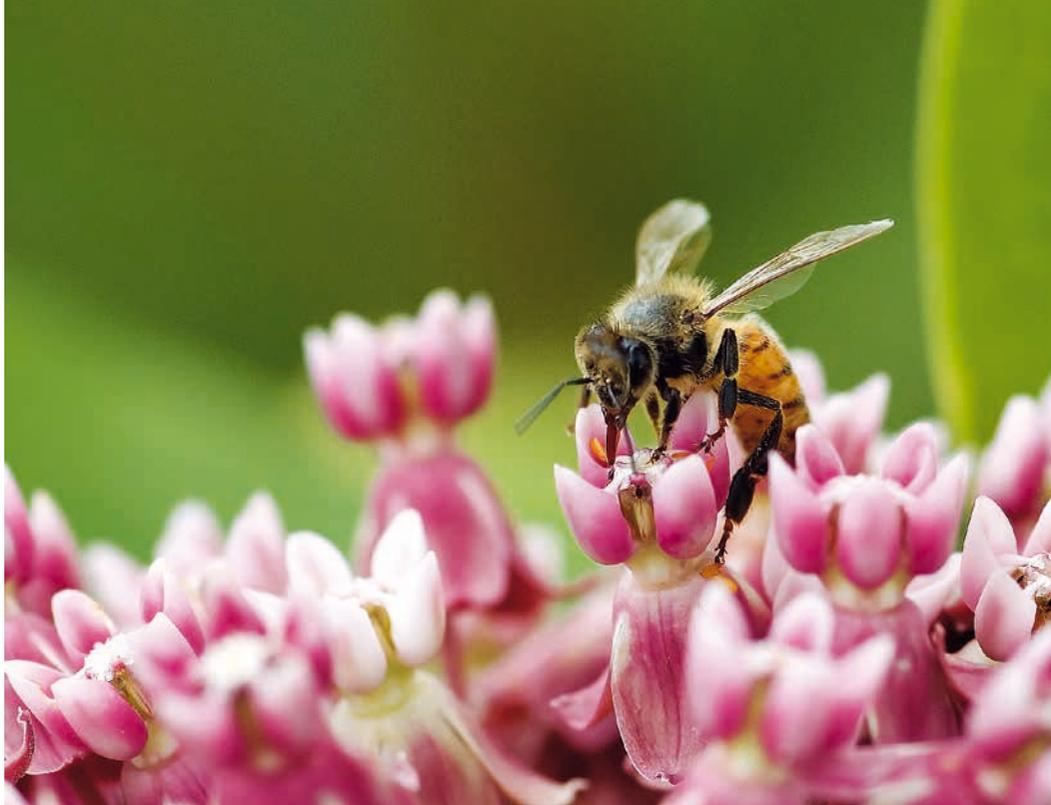
For good health, both humans and animals need enough healthy food. This food can only be produced if natural resources are not conserved and not over-exploited.

Biovision is using this holistic approach in specific projects in Tolay in order to deliver health in four key aspects of health. Success is dependent upon providing training for farmers in all four. I am very encouraged by this approach and hope that it can be copied throughout Ethiopia and elsewhere.



Dr. Shifa Ballo

Manager of the *icipe* office in Ethiopia and the Push-Pull Project (plant health) in Tolay



In Africa, the survival of bees is not threatened by pests such as the varroa mite or the small hive beetle.

Beekeeping: Africa has the advantage

Apis mellifera, the European honey bee, originally came from Africa. It is a highly productive species and so has spread throughout the world. Both its importance and the risks it faces differ widely from continent to continent. **Dr. Peter Gallmann**

Recently, there has been an upsurge in the public's interest in bees. That's good because bees are important – for us humans as well. The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that 71 of every 100 crop species are pollinated by bees. Most crops cultivated in the European Union rely on insect pollination. Apart from the fundamental importance of pollination for maintaining biodiversity, it is estimated that the annual global financial value of pollination runs into hundreds of billions of euros.

Bees are dying in the Northern Hemisphere

During the last two decades, there has been an increase in the number of bees dying throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Despite intensive research, no single cause has been identified for the higher “bee mortality”. However, scientists now agree that the losses are primarily the result of specific diseases affecting the bees, e.g. parasites, viruses and bacteria together with the interac-

tion of several environmental and biological factors. A particular problem is the prevalence of a parasitic mite (*varroa destructor*), which transmits viruses. It is also suspected that certain pesticides, even in minute concentrations, can have a chronic effect. Finally, the reduction in the diversity and availability of food supplies may also be an issue.

So is the Southern Hemisphere a paradise for bees?

The Africanized honey bee is now common through much of South America. This is a hybrid variety produced by cross-breeding European and African bees and in Latin America it copes relatively well with the varroa mite. Australia is still free of the varroa but it has been invaded by the *small hive beetle* (*aethina tumida*). This bee parasite has also caused extensive damage to the bee populations.

In Africa, several subspecies of honey bees, in particular the *apis mellifera scutellata* are susceptible to varroa infestation but so far it

has not been necessary to take steps to eradicate the mite from a particular bee colony, because the bees are less faithful to a particular nest and have a marked tendency to swarm. This behaviour means that pests such as the *varroa mite* and the *small hive beetle* do not currently threaten the survival of bees in Africa.

African bee products are much in demand

In many areas of Africa, bee products are not contaminated with the residues from parasitic control or agriculture. This benefits not just the honey but beeswax as well. Beeswax is highly sought after throughout the world by both the cosmetics and bee industries. The absence of pollutants in honey is even more important when used in medical preparations. Propolis (bee resin) is a natural remedy against bacteria, viruses and fungal infections. Similarly, Royal Jelly, a secretion used to feed adolescent queens, is valuable as a dietary supplement and for cosmetics. This huge global demand for both medical preparations and other bee products represents an enormous potential for African beekeepers, although to date it has only been exploited to a limited extent. As a result, beekeeping is now featuring more and more in development projects. The initial focus is to provide a basic education and technical training for beekeepers. The industry is also switching from the traditional methods of keeping bees in hollow tree trunks and baskets to more flexible honeycomb systems using beehives. This significantly improves both the quality and the output of pure honey. Another important focus is to ensure that producers have access to markets and that reliable supply chains are created.

Role models

In addition, local beekeepers are forming associations to run joint collection and processing points and market their products. Successful examples are the “Cabesi” and “Tolay” projects run by Biovision in Kenya and Ethiopia. These projects have had a major impact on those living in those regions and can open up development opportunities in a range of fields. This is one of the aims of the bee project initiated by the Learning for Life Foundation in the Ethiopian village of Supe. There, the beekeepers are seeking to

generate income for the wider population and to exert a positive influence by improving the sustainability of agriculture and forestry, creating jobs, particularly for women, and by acting as role models for the region as a whole.

Dr. Peter Gallmann

Dr. Peter Gallmann is a food scientist and until his retirement was Director of the Swiss Bee Research Centre in Liebefeld. As researcher and consultant, he has visited bee projects throughout the world and is now using his experience for the benefit of the Foundation “Learning for Life”.



In the Tolay region of Ethiopia, Biovision is encouraging beekeepers to use modern hives. By producing and marketing high-quality honey, they can supply the regional market and earn an income.

“Now we can even pay tax”

A look at the life of the Deni family from Biftu Beri in Ethiopia



In February 2006, Derartu, her husband Tesfaye and their two daughters Alamitu and Sorse left their home in the high plateau of Amhara and travelled full of hope to a new life in the settlement of Biftu Beri. “In Amhara, we had too little to eat, no land and no opportunities,” explains the young mother. They accepted the government’s re-settlement offer and moved to the lowland area of Tolay close to the River Gibe. To get them started they were given two oxen so that they could plough their new land. Yet within a few weeks their life turned to misery; the animals died from sleeping sickness, a disease transmitted by the tsetse fly. Then on 13 May 2008, Derartu and her family suffered more tragedy; Tadelu, their one-year old daughter who had been born in their new home died from malaria and within a month, three-year old Sorse also succumbed to the deadly disease. “It was aw-

ful,” sighs Derartu. “There was nothing we could do. We just had to accept it”.

The turning point came in 2009. Thanks to a Biovision project, the settlers have significantly reduced the threat of malaria (see Page 2). “We learned that the disease is transmitted by mosquitos that breed in the stagnant water”, explains Derartu. “We filled in the holes to eliminate the puddles. We cleared the blocked water channels and collected plastic waste”. This deprived the mosquitos of their breeding grounds, which in turn dramatically reduced the number of insects and the incidence of the malaria parasite. At night, the villagers used mosquito nets to protect them from the deadly mosquito bites.

Working with Biovision and *icipe*, they succeeded in controlling the tsetse flies and

brought the sleeping sickness under control. Tesfaye and Derartu again have 2 oxen and produce healthy crops of maize, millet, teff, chickpeas, peppers and beans. As they now harvest slightly more than they consume the surplus is sold along with the eggs from their 10 hens. In addition, Alamitu is now able to go to school. “We live modestly but we get by. We can even pay tax,” says Tesfaye proudly. He now plans to train as a beekeeper and sell honey. He intends to use the additional income to buy a cow, rear calves and produce milk. “I work hard but I intend to create a better future for us,” he says with a new confidence.

Further photos:
www.biovision.ch/biftu-beri_e

Globi challenges Biovision

Deciding the content of the new book “Globi, the smart farmer” presented our staff with a real challenge



Ladybirds as the aphid police:
Globi welcomes his partners in the fight
against the pest.

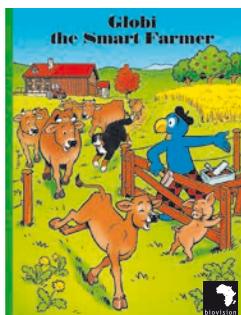
The book is designed primarily to explain the background and basic principles of sustainable, organic and social agriculture in words and pictures in a way that is suitable for children but without making sloppy compromises. That is easier said than done – not least because individual staff and experts viewed the issues from a range of perspectives.

For example, we had to decide which project Globi should visit in East Africa. In the end we agreed on a Push Pull project. This ruffled poor Globi’s feathers somewhat as whilst in Africa he ventured too close to the elephant grass and so his tail feathers stuck to it – a graphic illustration of the pull function of elephant grass. In the end, after much discussion on a very wide range of topics, all turned out well. Of course, the book is mainly about a Swiss family farm but Globi is also inspired by his trip to Kenya where he meets up with a female farmer running a small-holding in Kenya.

The book also reflects one of the aims of the Foundation, which is to inform consumers in Switzerland. The book is a useful tool to complement our interactive exhibition CLEVER.

The project found particular favour with the SDC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Berne, who after checking the content supported Biovision with a substantial financial contribution as part of the UN 2014 International Year of Family Farming.

Finally, we need your support with the distribution of the book. Children will love the book so why not buy a copy for those close to you.



◀ You can order the book direct from us, by phone or through: www.biovision.ch/shop_e

Three questions to Samuel Glättli, the Globi illustrator

How many Globi books have you illustrated so far?

“Globi, the smart Farmer” is my third.

What were the particular challenges when illustrating the “Smart Farmer”?

The greatest challenge was to find a way of presenting hard facts about organic farming in a way that was suitable for children. The Globi stories are designed to work without words and it was not always easy to find strong, meaningful pictures – whether they were about pest control or the right way to rear particular species of livestock. The pictures not only have to convey the relevant information but also have to entertain and to bring a smile to a child’s face. After all, it is a Globi adventure and should be fun.

Did you yourself learn anything from the “Smart Farmer”?

Definitely! Although I have bought organic products for years, it was only during my research for the Globi book that I realised what was actually involved. The science behind organic farming and the associated issues such as biodiversity is extremely complex. I have great respect for the organic farmers who put their knowledge into practice every single day.



Start a campaign!

www.getactive.ch offers you the chance to start a creative fundraising campaign on behalf of the Biovision camel project. Camel milk is highly nutritious and rich in Vitamin C and the camels can help those living in drought-stricken regions of Kenya cope with extreme aridity. Your idea may be to sell cakes, clean bikes or do a sponsored run. Whatever it is, your campaign will help buy a camel for a particularly disadvantaged group. Biovision's Samuel Trachsel on Biovision is on hand to provide useful tips Tel.: 044 / 500 49 53 or s.trachsel@biovision.ch



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Members' Event on 7 May 2014 in St. Gallen

For more than 15 years, Biovision has demonstrated innovative ways in the field of development cooperation by using a holistic approach that embraces four aspects of health - human, animal, plant and environmental.

Under the title "Biovision - More than Projects", Dr. Samuel Ledermann will talk about his visits to projects in East Africa and the latest findings. He will describe how the dissemination of sound, scientific information

Samuel Ledermann, Project Manager at the Biovision Foundation will present an exciting insight into Biovision projects. The venue is the "Forum der St. Galler Pfalz" and the evening starts at 19.30 hrs.

produces a positive chain reaction that offers local populations the chance to achieve sustainable improvements in living conditions.

In addition, Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren and other Biovision staff will be present to answer your questions. Don't delay. Register today by phoning 044 / 341 97 18 or online at www.biovision.ch.

Biovision needs friends!

Over 6,000 people in Switzerland have already joined Biovision to support our project work. Can you help us to find new friends? Tell your friends and family about Biovision and our holistic approach to healthy people in a healthy environment.

We can help by providing professional hand-outs for your campaign. To order your set, phone 044 / 341 97 18 or email info@biovision.ch. Thank you for acting as ambassador for Biovision and we wish you every success!



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