

Biovision

Newsletter June 2016

Taking the bull by the horns!
Success for the man with the kitten!



A future for all, naturally

Aklilu Mekasha

Manager of the Agricultural Research Centre
in Melkassa, Ethiopia



“The Push-Pull method for maize and sorghum cultivation creates synergies that help small-scale Ethiopian farmers improve their lives.”

Push-Pull in Tolay (Introduced in 2013)

Expanding the use of the Push-Pull methods will reduce poverty and improve the lives of rural communities in Tolay District.

Objectives:

- 12000 farmers in Ethiopia using the Push-Pull method by 2018
- Incomes of participants increased by 20–30 %
- Sustainable integration of all four project elements in Tolay (malaria, tsetse fly, bees and honey, Push-Pull)

Project Budget: CHF 264 000

Account for donations: PC 87-193093-4

Global Goals:

Biovision is shaping the shift to sustainable development in accordance with the UN Agenda 2030. The projects in Tolay are contributing to four of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals:



Escape from poverty

Success for Tesfaye Ejeta!
The man with the kitten defied fate and escaped poverty. The knowledge he needed to do that was acquired from a Biovision project.

**Peter Lüthi, Biovision Project Reporter
(Text and photos)**

“We are doing very well,” says Tesfaye Ejeta as he strokes the kitten in his arms. Layla, his wife is standing next to him and is pregnant. The couple have been married for five years but waited until now before having a family. “We first wanted to secure our economic future to ensure that we could feed the baby and give it a good life,” stresses Tesfaye.

The Ethiopian knows what he is talking about. Born and raised in the uplands, he was the youngest member of his family and so there was no land left for him. His future looked bleak. When he was just 22 years of age, he had the courage to take control of his own future. He followed the recommendations of the government who was urging those living in the drought-prone uplands to move to the lowlands and make a fresh start. He said goodbye to his family and friends and moved alone to Charana in Tolay District.

However, once there misfortune befell Tesfaye and other new settlers (see Page 8). Four children just in his immediate neighbourhood died from malaria and most of the ploughing oxen provided as start-up help perished within days dying from sleeping sickness.

Routes out of poverty

In 2006, a small team of insect specialists came to Tolay. They had already demonstrated in other Biovision projects that biological methods could control the insects that transmitted the disease. Working under the team’s

supervision, the settlers managed to bring the tsetse flies and malaria mosquitoes under control using ecological methods.

In 2011, the Biovision Project was extended to provide training in modern beekeeping and honey production. The beekeepers also planted trees to provide food for the bees and improve the natural resources.

Push-Pull for maize and sorghum

The final element was added in 2013 when the project trained more than 200 demonstration farmers in how to use the ecological Push-Pull method. This method reduces the damage caused by pests to maize and sorghum. Farmers learn how to protect crops from the pests by growing special plants. These auxiliary plants also enrich the soil with nutrients, protect it from erosion and provide the farmers with excellent cattle fodder.

Thanks to the Push-Pull method, Tesfaye Ejeta was able to significantly reduce his crop losses; previously they had been as much as 40 %. He was also happy to save the 3300 Birr that he used to spend on artificial fertilisers. The nutritious fodder crops have allowed him to increase the number of animals. “I now have four oxen, two cows, two calves, one cow in calf, six goats and one sheep,” he says proudly. Next on the agenda is the training of five neighbours in the Push-Pull method.

However for now, Tesfaye and his wife are looking forward to the birth of their first child. He is clear that he wants to have a second one at some time in the future. Layla shakes her head. “One child is enough,” she says – making it clear that family planning will be a source of much discussion in future.

For more information and photos see:
www.biovision.ch/tolay-en



Good maize harvests thanks to Push-Pull (top). Auxiliary plants are grown at the edges of fields or between individual maize plants (bottom right). Tesfaye and Layla have also innovated in their garden by planting fruit trees such as papaya.

What does Agenda 2030 mean for Biovision?

Many countries, particularly in Africa are under pressure to increase agricultural productivity as a response to climate change, population growth and changes in consumer behaviour. The approach adopted by Biovision, which places small farmers at both the heart of project development and the shaping of sustainable policies, is more important than ever.

When it comes to the implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, a crucial question is how the world can safeguard food supplies and also farm sustainably. Particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the agriculture sector plays a key role in efforts to promote employment and general economic growth. For these processes to be sustainable, ecological approaches are required. This is where Biovision – with its extensive networks and wealth of experience – can provide practical knowledge.

In Switzerland, Biovision – a pioneer in the process of change – is actively promoting sustainable action when it comes to the direction of research, investment, our behaviour as consumers and the shape of policies on sustainable issues. Our ecological footprint does not stop at the Swiss border and so at both home and abroad we must assume responsibility.

www.biovision.ch/agenda2030-e



Andreas Schriber
CEO and founding member of Biovision



Fundamental change in international cooperation

Last year, UN member states agreed an Agenda consisting of 17 goals for sustainable development until 2030. It is binding on all countries and – unlike the Millennium Development Goals – is designed to pave the way for a better future in every country rather than just the developing world. Global sustainable development should be more than just “business as usual” with a green tinge.

Martin Fässler

Every country faces immense challenges if the Agenda for Sustainable Development is to be successfully implemented. Many are asking what additional value the new goals will provide. The urgency of sustainable development has been recognised since the Brundtland Report (1986) and the Rio Conference (1992). So why should the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeed when the Rio Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 fell short of expectations?

What follows is an overview of the main innovations:

1. Universal Goals

For the first time, the Sustainable Development Goals apply to all countries and not just to developing countries. Policies on development and sustainability must operate in tandem. This will require a global shift by both industry and society in favour of sustainability. In addition to new technological solutions and sustainable production and consumption, the implementation of the Goals requires sustainable energy services and sustainable designs to cope with rapid urbanisation as well as the promotion of sustainable land use and the development of renewable energies.

2. Integrated Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are ambitious and are better integrated than previous initiatives. The ecological, political and social dimensions of sustainable development and their interdependence are firmly embedded in all 17 Goals. Sustainable agriculture is not just intended to combat hunger but also to maintain healthy soils and biodiversity, increase resilience to climate change and generate an income to cover essential needs. Issues disputed for so long, such as good governance and fair distribution are now included in the Goals.



Martin Fässler

Member of the Board of Biovision, lecturer and adviser in international cooperation

3. Obligations on governments and civil society

The MDGs were agreed by just a few experts. In contrast, the consensus reached on the SDGs was preceded by a three-year process that was both transparent and broadly supported – and in which Biovision was also involved. It included online platforms, campaigns and national discussion forums.

“I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better”.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799)

4. Implementation issues

62 of the 169 targets relate to the resources required for implementation. Issues relating to development funding were discussed during the summer of 2015 and a compromise was reached on issues such as “shared responsibility” and “easier transfer of technology”. Obstacles such as global finance and trading systems, violent conflicts and corruption are explicitly mentioned in the final document.

5. Review of implementation

Implementation of the Goals will be reviewed annually to identify where progress has been good but also not so good. Successful approaches will be then be rolled out more widely. Governments are asked to carry out an annual inventory of what they have done. The involvement of parliaments, civil society, the private sector and science in both the

implementation and review processes will make a crucial contribution to ensuring that genuine progress is made.

Change with a more sustainable focus

To ensure that the increased prosperity for all is achieved within ecological limits, efforts must be made to combat poverty, encourage development and maintain natural resources. Globally, the middle and upper classes must direct their consumption of resources into more sustainable channels. Five key words – people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership – must guide the change in industry and society towards greater sustainability. There is an urgent need for alliances between those countries pursuing convincing and ambitious policies on sustainability.

And Switzerland?

Like other member states, Switzerland must expressly align its national sustainability goals to the internationally agreed 17 SDGs. Many development and environmental organisations take the view that the existing coordinating bodies are not powerful enough to prevent political decisions that run counter to the sustainable development goals. At the national level, Switzerland needs to strengthen institutions involved in issues of sustainability so that the latter becomes firmly embedded not only in foreign and domestic policies but also in the relationship between Federal, cantonal and municipal governments.

In February 2016, the Swiss Federal Council agreed the “Dispatch on international cooperation 2017–2020”. The emphasis is on continuity. Although Agenda 2030 will serve as a frame of reference, there is still no evidence of an emerging paradigm shift in international cooperation.



By agreeing the 17 Development Goals, the international community is planning to contribute to global development, promote human wellbeing and protect the environment. Biovision Projects will particularly promote Goals 1, 2, 3, 12 and 15.

Permaculture and coffee growing

The objectives of the project “Ecological coffee production in Rongo” (Kenya) – supported by Biovision since 2015 – are ambitious: It seeks to improve and safeguard the incomes and food security of coffee farmers for the longer term. At the same time, it seeks to strengthen the regeneration of the environment and improve the resilience of the local community. To achieve these aims, the 175 coffee growers will apply permaculture principles.

Permaculture is a productive system of land use that is committed to sustainability and minimises the harm to the environment. As a result, it should also secure resources for people in the longer term. In agriculture, it is characterised by small-scale farming and varying intensities of land use. It opens up opportunities to maximise ecological and biological diversity.

The Rongo farmers grow their coffee plants as part of a diverse mixed-cropping system. The ground cover, shade, wind protection and closed nutrient cycle are designed to improve the sustainability of the system and the quality of their products. The project is also seeking to improve the access by farmers to markets at which they can sell their high-quality coffee. | pl

www.biovision.ch/rongo-en



Permaculture is characterised by small-scale land management and healthy ecological and biological diversity.



The “Biovision Africa Trust” and the “Farmer Communication Programme” of Biovision are under the directorship of Dr David Amudavi.

Biovision’s partners in Africa

In 2009, Biovision founded the “Biovision Africa Trust” (BvAT) in Nairobi. Today, our partner in Africa employs more people than Biovision in Switzerland. The Trust has been independent since 2016 and coordinates one of the main Pan-African initiatives on sustainable agriculture.

Benjamin Gräub, Nairobi

The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA) has grown from small beginnings. It was developed originally by SSNC, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and SDC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Since 2012, the Biovision Africa Trust has been implementing EOA in the 8 pilot countries on behalf of and in cooperation with SDC and an African steering committee. The Initiative is based on a resolution agreed by heads of government of the African Union in 2008 to whom it reports. Currently eight countries in West and East Africa are members of EOA (Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mali, Nigeria, Benin and Senegal). These countries promote networks

and organisations involved nationally in the implementation of ecologically sustainable agriculture and the expansion of its use. It adopts a holistic approach that embraces all relevant aspects from research to policymaking. In addition to the SDC, the funder, the EOA Initiative continues to be supported by SSNC and the Biovision Foundation. The Biovision Africa Trust coordinates the activities of the national partners in all eight countries. It also provides the link between the EOA and the Commission of the African Union.

Farmer magazine and radio in good hands

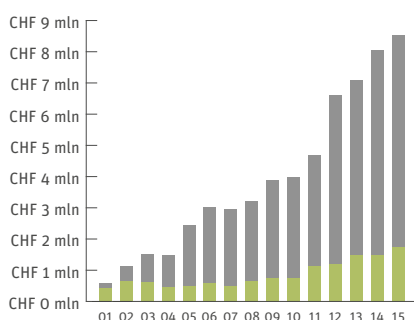
Since 2011, BvAT has implemented Biovision’s proven Farmer Communication Programme (FCP) in East Africa. In Kenya, this includes TOF, the farmer magazine as well as radio broadcasts for farmers. Tanzania has its own version in Swahili “Mukulima Mbunifu” (The Smart Farmer). Dr David Amudavi is director of BvAT in Nairobi and through him, Biovision strengthens its local presence both strategically and operationally.

In Africa, the BvAT is regarded as a local partner with a high reputation. It employs local specialists who work with project beneficiaries to ensure that the projects are implemented properly. This local participation is often accompanied by training programmes and professional support allowing BvAT to make an important contribution to the longer term success of the projects.

Great news!

In the last financial year, Biovision achieved a record income of 8.48 million Swiss Francs. The year was marked by healthy growth and a prudent expenditure policy. We are delighted that last year we were able to invest 6.75 million Swiss Francs in our 35 projects. Many thanks to our donors, members and institutional partners.

15 YEARS BIOVISION IN FIGURES



■ Project Investments
■ Fundraising and administration

The full Financial Statement for 2015 is now available at www.biovision.ch/ar

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Experience Biodiversity

Are you familiar with the old grain varieties such as Popeli wheat or Naked Oats? Do you know what Blue Tinge Emmer is? Examples of rare varieties as well as lentils, peas, soya beans and chickpeas can currently be found sprouting up around the Paul Klee Centre (ZPK) in Bern as part of the UN International Year of the Pulses.



During its Agricultural Days, ZPK is offering opportunities on certain Saturdays to find out more about pulses and biodiversity. This will include a series of fascinating events under the direction of agro-ecologist Professor emeritus Fritz Häni and his partners from HAFL (the School of Agricultural, Forestry and Food Science at Bern University of Applied Sciences), IP-Suisse and Biovision.

Hans Rudolf Herren in Bubikon

18.16 hours on 22 June: This is the precise start time of a public event in the Ritterhaus Bubikon. Entitled "A world without hunger", it will be led by Professor Nina Buchmann, Head of the ETH World Food System Centre and Dr Hans Rudolf Herren, joint founder and president of Biovision. Both will give short presentations, which will be followed by a discussion on food security moderated by Christine Hubacher from SRF.



Switzerland's last famine

The event is part of the project "1816 – The Year without a Summer", with which Zürcher Oberland is commemorating the last great famine in Switzerland. Exactly 200 years ago, it claimed 90 000 lives in Europe. Switzerland, particularly Eastern Switzerland, was by far the worst affected. In addition to the extremely low temperatures caused by a volcanic eruption in Indonesia, the famine was triggered by major price rises, the effects of the Napoleonic Wars and the collapse of the cottage-based textile industry.

Züri Oberland helps

The exhibition at the Ritterhaus Bubikon and many other events organised by the association "Project 1816" and the Cultural Commission of Züri Oberland will create a connection between the famine of 1816 and the famines of today. As part of the campaign "Züri Oberland helps", donations are being collected for the projects of Biovision, "Bread for All" and the "Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund".



Deni family Biftuberi, 14 May 2012



Deni family Biftuberi, 29 January 2016

Story from the life of the Deni family in Biftuberi, Ethiopia

There were too many memories in the old house

Peter Lüthi, Biovision Project Report (text and photos)

More than 3 ½ years divide the two photos. The photos bring joy – but also sadness – to Derartu Gerba und Tesfaye Deni. In both family photos, two of their children are missing. Their youngest two daughters died from malaria eight years ago.

In 2006, the couple moved down from the Ethiopian Uplands to Biftuberi in Tolay District. The lowland areas still had land available and the risk of famine was lower. However, their new home on the River Gibhe was infested with the insects that cause sleeping sickness and malaria.

Despite the death of their two children, the couple found the strength to meet the challenges facing them as settlers. Tesfaye Deni and his neighbours joined the Biovision projects that sought to eliminate malaria and sleeping sickness – they succeeded on both counts.

In contrast, his start in beekeeping and honey production failed. Although Tesfaye and his neighbours started to use the modern beehives provided by Biovision, one morning

they found the hives smashed to pieces on the ground, wantonly destroyed by persons unknown. Now, however, the people of Biftuberi want to have another go at beekeeping.

If you compare the two photos above, it would seem as though not much has changed in the Deni family. This impression is deceptive. The family no longer live in the same house. “After the death of our daughters, we wanted to start again,” says Tesfaye, “and there were too many memories in the old house”. A second reason for the move was that their former house was too far away from their fields. “The maize and sorghum crops were often invaded by wild boar and monkeys,” explains Tesfaye. They now live immediately adjacent to the fields and so Tesfaye can drive away the wild animals and limit the damage.

The family’s economic situation has also changed. Compared with 2012, we have made good progress,” says Mr. Deni. At that time they only had two cattle, whereas now they

have four. In addition they have four nanny goats. “We fought hard for a better life and life is good,” says Tesfaye with satisfaction. Looking at his two daughters he is also thankful that one of the cattle is a cow that provides milk every day. Both children are at school; Alamitu, the elder daughter is 12 years old and in the 4th class and her 7-year old sister is in her first year. School attendance is very important for the Deni family.

Derartu, their mother, says very little – as was the case 3 ½ years ago. She just says, “we are healthy”. However, she gives a relaxed smile as she says it. A smile that says more than a thousand words.

Read Biovision Newsletter No. 29 for more on how Derartu’s and Tesfaye’s story started: www.biovision.ch/deratur-en

“We fought hard for a better life”

