

Biovision

Newsletter June 2017

Knowledge brings progress
Two cockerels as thank-you to teacher



A future for all, naturally

Alex Wostry

Founder and Finance Manager of
“Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania” (SAT)



“Biovision has helped us over many years with the development of our Farmer Training Centre from which both small farmers and organisations such as Swissaid and Swisscontact can benefit.”

Project “Marketing of ecological production”

(start date: 2017)

This new project is seeking to facilitate the first ever cooperation between Massai herders and farmers – to the benefit of all.

• Objectives of current project phase:

- Improve the food security of farming and herding families
- Defuse conflict for land by encouraging economic cooperation between farmers and herders
- Strengthen the resistance of rural populations to the impact of climate change

• Project budget to end of 2017: CHF 430 405

• Account for donations: PC 87-193093-4

• Sustainable Development Goals:

Biovision is helping to bring about a shift to sustainable development in accordance with the UN Agenda 2030. The project in Morogoro is making a concrete contribution to four of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Training to a high level

In Tanzania, the Training Centre for agro-ecology is now a destination of choice, benefiting farmers and like-minded organisations.

Peter Lüthi, Biovision Project Reporter

“Do you put on a gas mask to eat carrots?” The cartoon projected on the screen provokes amusement amongst the 25 men and women in the classroom. The students have just learned how to protect their vegetables from diseases and pests without using chemicals. The Swiss NGO Swissaid has sent these Tanzanian agricultural advisers to Morogoro for an intensive course in agro-ecology. The Training Centre for ecological agriculture, run by Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT), has an excellent reputation in Tanzania. It is used by NGOs such as Swissaid, Swisscontact, the Burundi Organic Agriculture Movement (BOAM) and government organisations such as the Tanzanian Ministry of Water & Irrigation. Welcome news for Biovision as it has supported SAT almost from its inception.

In 2008, the young Austrian Alex Wostry started the project with a start-up capital of US\$ 300 and a small demonstration garden. Biovision has supported the Training Centre since 2009. During the last 8 years, Alex, members of his team and his now wife Janet Maro have continued their pioneer work with great commitment and professional expertise. They have founded an organic shop, entered into a research agreement with the Sokoine University and developed the major Farmer Training Centre (FTC) in Morogoro. FTC, which has 15 employees, farms more than 80 hectares of land and uses agro-ecological principles to grow arable crops, vegetables and fruit trees. The Centre also has training gardens, classrooms, accommodation and a refectory for 42 students, a water reservoir with solar-powered water pump and much more.

Knowledge brings progress

SAT sees itself as a platform for innovations in agro-ecology that benefit small-scale farmers. The Tanzanian NGO uses a holistic approach that combines research, marketing, networking and the dissemination of information.

An internal post-intervention survey in 2016 found that:

- Those who applied agro-ecological methods increased their incomes on average by 38%.
- 91% were using erosion control measures.
- 64% were able to restore and reuse leached soils by applying ecological methods.
- 97% of trainees indicated that they had improved their situation in a sustainable way.

Up to the end of 2016, a total of 2006 farmers had been trained in the theory and practice of using ecological methods on their land. Some 1464 small-scale farmers and agricultural advisers had been trained at the SAT Training Centre. The NGO is now working with 72 farmer groups, including the Mungano women’s cooperative in Kibuko. In the past, female farmers just about kept their heads above water by growing fruit. Since the training they have also successfully grown vegetables, allowing families to benefit from the income earned from the sale of produce.

Recently, Janet Maro visited the cooperative and the women presented her with two live cockerels as a thank-you to the SAT Director and her husband Alex Wostry for the effective way they had helped them to help themselves (see cover photo).

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



Classroom in the training centre run by Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania, SAT (top picture). The SAT Farmer Training Centre offers accommodation and classrooms as well as training gardens and arable fields (middle left). The practical application of the theory is important for the transfer of knowledge (in photo bottom left the agronomist and SAT joint founder Janet Maro). The new water tank with its solar pump helps them survive periods of drought (right).

New solutions!

In the past, farmers managed to survive using traditional methods that had developed over many generations. If conditions changed, they usually had enough time to adapt.

Today, change often occurs very quickly, particularly in Africa. Pressure on arable land has increased rapidly as population densities increase and land is used more intensively. This puts a permanent strain on poor soils and sensitive pastures, making targeted adaptations essential. However, traditional knowledge is insufficient. For example, climate change is increasing fluctuations in rainfall, which are pushing local people to the limit of what they can achieve.

New solutions are needed; this requires more research and the development of new strategies that strengthen the resilience of communities to rapid changes without damaging natural resources. It also calls for the transfer of knowledge from the laboratory to the farmers working the land.

Biovision has been working on such solutions in East Africa for many years through its well-established farmer information programme. The farmers are provided with the necessary information on ecological methods of cultivation through personal advice, training courses, farmer magazines, radio programmes and the Internet.



Andreas Sicks

Head of Programmes and Partnerships
at Biovision



“As a farmer you never stop learning”

The majority of those living in Africa are involved in arable or livestock farming. However, they often find it difficult to make ends meet. There are many reasons for this but a lack of knowledge is one of them.

Ruedi Küng

“The problems started more than 10 years ago and so we got together to work out what to do”. Jacob Mugo speaks on behalf of the farmers from Kirinyaga County south of Mount Kenya. The farmers are assembled in their meeting room – an open hut – to talk candidly about their situation. Problem No. 1 was their sons. They spurned the tedious work of farming, took drugs and stole in order to fund their habit. Problem No. 2 was the growing of plantain. “Maize and beans grew of their own accord provided that they had enough water. That was not the case with the plantains”. Problem No. 3: The farmers wanted to improve their situation but they lacked the knowledge. “We asked the Ministry of Agriculture to teach us how to rear goats as well as dairy farming, vegetable cultivation and poultry rearing”.

And in fact, a government farming adviser from the district capital of Kerugoya took on that role for a year. This task was subsequently continued by an adviser from KALRO, the Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organisation. The Amuka Farmers’ Self Help Group is now a success story. “We are very satisfied and it has cost us nothing,” says farmer Joffrey Mugweru. In addition to the staples of maize and beans, the farmers also grow plantains, tomatoes, papayas and avocados and so earn extra income. They also keep poultry and dairy goats; some of them also keep cows. They continue to expand their knowledge and advisers working on the Biovision Farmer Communication Programme (FCP) recently trained them in organic methods of cultivation: “We learned how to make compost. That was something new for us. We now make compost from the vegetable materials that we previously sprayed as a weed. We grow maize without artificial fertilisers and it grows well,” explains Jacob Mugo.

Agriculture had been neglected since the 1980s

Not all farmers in Kenya, let alone in Africa, were as lucky as those in Amuka. Most families had to find their own way to a greener future. In Kenya and in many African countries, the share of public funds spent on agriculture, livestock, fishing and forestry – including



Tanzanian farmers from Bamba being taught tree grafting skills by Hugo Kunguru from SAT (photo on left).

The training of small-scale farmers is crucial to overcoming hunger and poverty. For example, if nomadic people settle down, they often have to rely on growing crops and vegetables. As livestock specialists they lack the required knowledge and experience (photo on right West Pokot, Kenya)

advice for farmers – is small: 4% in 2016. The percentage was much higher in the past but it has been reduced, so wrote the journalist Uwe Hoering in his book “Agrar-Kolonialismus in Afrika (Agro-colonialism in Africa) published in 2007. “On average, government spending on agriculture declined from 7.3% in 1980 to 3.8% in 2000. In parallel to that, the percentage of official development aid spent on agriculture (worldwide) declined from 18% to just 3.5% in 2004”. This is now starting to rise again (see green line in graph). However, Kenya’s spending on agriculture remains below the 10% promised by African governments at their meetings in Maputo in 2003 and in

Malabo in 2014. In addition, a survey by the World Bank in 1999 showed that advice for farmers has been problematic for some time.

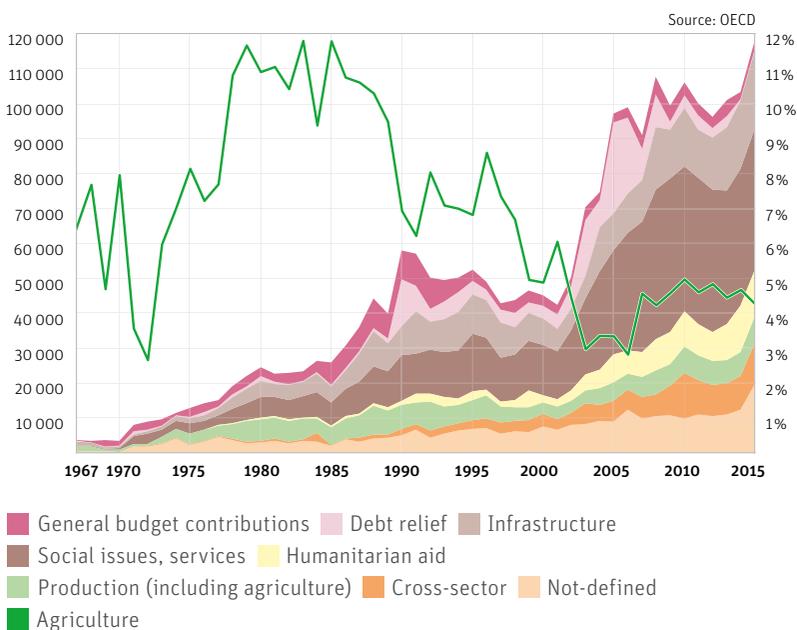
Farmers without support or advice

In the late 1960s and 1970s, farmers were given particular encouragement to grow hybrid maize varieties. In the 1980s, “the focus was on male farmers and large landowners, whereas one-third of all farmers and more than 80% of small farmers were women”. In 1999, “most of the farmers responding to the survey said that there had been a reduction in the information available compared with 10 or 15 years previously”. As a result of the structural adjustment

programmes called for by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the 1980s, the Kenyan government drastically reduced its support for farmers and advisory services. It was not until 2001 that the country approved the new agricultural and livestock programmes (NEAP and NALEP). This resulted in an increase in resources and the recruitment of more highly trained staff. The Amuka farmers have also benefited from this development. However, governments and research institutes are not the only ones providing advice for farmers. A wide range of NGOs and private agro-businesses also disseminate information – with widely diverging messages. Although they are providing information to farmers – including by SMS – it is debatable whether the advice actually helps farmers with their work. Soils, crop varieties, pests, weather, climate and agriculture in general are continually changing, says the former agricultural adviser Joseph Ndambo Molila on a tour of his exemplary farm in Ngutani in the East of Kenya. As a farmer, you have to keep learning. You must never stop”.

OECD EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, 1967–2015

by sector in US\$ millions (left) with % spend on agriculture (on right)



Ruedi Küng

Africa specialist with 35 years of experience. 12 years as Africa correspondent of Radio SRF. InfoAfrica.ch

Organic coffee stimulates the Rongo economy

Last autumn, as part of their Christmas range, Kenyan supermarkets stocked organic coffee grown by farmers in Rongo using permaculture techniques (see Newsletter 43): a profitable coup. It allowed Rose Opunda, one of the successful coffee producers, to buy a cow for 20 000 Kenyan shillings (about CHF 200). The cow has now calved and provides six litres of milk per day. Her family drinks about one litre and the 78-year old sells the surplus in the village for 80 shillings per litre. Mama Opunda is investing the daily income of 400 shillings in her grandson by paying his school fees.

His grandmother is not resting on her laurels. She now mixes cow manure with organic compost to increase the soil fertility. She expects to be rewarded by higher maize and coffee yields in future and if the sums add up, the elderly entrepreneur will soon be looking for new investment projects. | pl



Rose Opundo (top photo) has invested the profit from the sale of organic coffee in a cow. She now has enough milk for her own use and to sell in the market.



Buy in season!

Our personal consumption has global consequences but buying produce in season can minimise the negative effects. Seasonality tables help you choose the right products at the right time.

*Marcel Anderegg,
Responsible for the Clever Exhibition at Biovision*

Resources are used to produce, process, package, transport, distribute and dispose of consumer goods. This puts a strain on the climate, environment and natural resources. Test your personal shopping habits with our interactive exhibition “CLEVER – playful intelligent shopping” and the associated online version. Follow Biovision’s tips for fair and environmentally friendly consumption: Avoid food waste, buy regional produce in season, eat less meat, choose labelled products where possible and avoid palm oil.

New Biovision Seasonality Table

Buying locally-produced, seasonal produce reduces food miles. It also reduces storage times and so minimises storage losses. Biovision recommends the buying of local fruit and vegetables when they are in season – best of all buy organic produce grown

without the use of heated greenhouses. In this way, you are doing something for your own health, helping to look after land in Switzerland and secure the existence of local producers. To be sure that you choose the right products at the right time order a copy of our new seasonality table for fruit and vegetables or download it from our website (in German or French).

Alternatively visit our CLEVER Exhibition at the Bundesplatz in Zug from 1 June to 19 July 2017!

Seasonality tables and online shop:
www.biovision.ch/clever-en



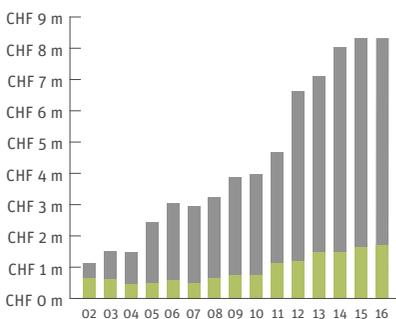
“If you think that cauliflower, broccoli or iceberg lettuces are winter vegetables, you are mistaken. The Biovision seasonality calendar will tell you when they are actually in season!”

Sabine Lerch, responsible for sustainable consumption at Biovision

Continuing success!

In 2016, Biovision was once again able to invest more than 6 ½ million Swiss Francs in its project activities. For many years, Biovision has been recording healthy growth combined with a prudent expenditure policy. This has allowed us to continue our work as a pioneer of change thanks to the support of our donors, members and institutional partners – to whom we give our sincere thanks.

DEVELOPMENT OF BIOVISION



DEVELOPMENT 2002–2016

- Project investment
- Fund raising and administration

The full Annual Report for 2016 is now available at: www.biovision.ch/ar

Imprint

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Cover photo Members of the Mungano Women's Cooperative in Kibuko thank Janet Maro, SAT (right) with a live gift. Photo: Jürg Weber/Biovision

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A protestor demands the recognition of ecocide as a crime against humanity at the Monsanto Tribunal.

Damning legal opinion on Monsanto

The five judges at the Monsanto Tribunal were highly critical of the company and questioned the international legal situation.

David Fritz, Head of Communications at Biovision

In October 2016, the symbolic hearing in The Hague heard charges levelled against the agro-chemical company by 30 victims and scientists. The highly regarded judges concluded that both Monsanto and international trade agreements gave scant regard to human rights:

1. Right to a healthy environment

Since 2011, a total of 140 nations have incorporated a right to a healthy environment in their constitution or legislation – and yet internationally little progress has been made.

2. Right to food

Food systems dominated by large corporations cannot feed the world. Monsanto has repeatedly undermined the agricultural production of local communities.

3. Right to health

In various areas, Monsanto has privatised the right to food, water, sanitation and a healthy environment. In so doing, it has also violated the right to health.

4. Independent research

Evidence shows that Monsanto regularly exerts pressure on scientists to prevent them publishing the results of unfavourable research.

5. War crimes and “Agent Orange”

Some 70 million litres of “Agent Orange” were sprayed during the Vietnam War; this destroyed the local environment and seriously damaged human health: Monsanto was one of the producers of this environmental poison.

6. Ecocide

International law should be extended to include the crime of ecocide. This would provide a more tangible way to hold companies such as Monsanto to account.

The Tribunal called for human rights and environmental protection to take precedence over investor rights and trade agreements. The judges identified a major difference between the rights of multinational companies and their responsibilities. They called upon politicians at all levels to strengthen the protection for effective human rights and environmental protection in the face of opposition from multi-nationals.

www.biovision.ch/monsanto-en



Story from the life of David Bugmann of Winterthur

Passion for fairness, environment and politics

Peter Lüthi, Biovision Project Reporter

As a 19-year old, do you recall your motivation?

David Bugmann from Winterthur is that 19-year old and below he explains openly what motivates him: “You must have a good understanding of the current system if you want to change it”. He cites climate change, global overfishing, dwindling natural resources, major social inequalities and global hunger as reasons for an urgent need to change. When David talks about the major problems of our time, he does so with passion and the courage for change.

His choice of subjects at university demonstrates that he means what he says: geography as his main subject with political economy and more recently economics as subsidiaries. Currently a student at the University of Zurich, he plans to use this knowledge to counter the arguments put forward by lobbyists on the other side. He has known for some time that questions of justice are more important to him than the study of rock formations. “I am passionate

about the environment, social justice and politics,” acknowledges David. He firmly believes that constructive cooperation is required at all political levels in order to overcome the global challenges.

The young man sums up his attitude with the words: “It is not acceptable for us in Switzerland and the West to live well if we then do nothing to resolve the world’s pressing problems. Even though it is against our better judgement, we continue to exacerbate those problems on a daily basis”. For that reason, David Bugmann has geared his lifestyle to sustainability.

The committed cyclist is vegetarian and shuns air travel. He also separates plastic at home for recycling and wherever possible chooses fair-trade, organic products. He also supports the ideals of certain non-profit organisations with a financial donation. As soon as he was 18 and earning money for the first time during his alternative national service he set up a

standing order for a monthly payment of 600 Swiss Francs to the Biovision Foundation. “I opted for Biovision because I liked their holistic approach. Biovision tackles different issues simultaneously, e.g. it combines the fight against hunger with the introduction of ecological production methods and the protection of the environment and natural resources”. He also values the international advocacy work of Biovision, through which the Foundation campaigns successfully for fairer and genuinely sustainable policies for small-scale farmers throughout the world.

In future, David Bugmann hopes to work on sustainable issues in either the private sector or for a non-profit organisation. Whatever he

does, we can be sure that he will remain true to his ideals: “For me, it is very important that we humans also live for others rather than merely alongside or even against others”.

“For and not against others”

