

TACKLING POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY AMONG SMALLHOLDER FARMERS THROUGH ORGANIC TRADE

Mount Kenya Organic Farming

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ARUSHA- TANZANIA

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

MOOF is an independent registered non-profit making NGO in Kenya which seeks to promote the acceptance and implementation of sustainable low external input farming systems, referred to as Sustainable and organic agriculture.

It has a primary objective to improve and help to raise the living standards of Kenya’s smallholder farmers by having an assured food security for themselves and their communities and to empower the local community economically through production of speciality high value organic crops for local and export markets .

MOOF has already developed a local network of Self-Help smallholder groups which it services with training and advice on certified organic farming technologies in accordance with the **IFOAM SMALLHOLDER GROUP CERTIFICATION GUIDE** - May 2004. The farmers network is under

the umbrella organisation initiated by MOOF Known as The Kenya Organic Oil Farmers Organisation- **KOOF**. for the organic certification and business management purposes.

How the project came about.

The Mount Kenya Organic Farming came about after my return to Kenya from the United Kingdom after spending 1 year in the UK gathering knowledge and experience in organic agriculture including spending five months at The Henry Doubleday Research Association-HDRA- the largest organic research Organisation in Great Britain. At HDRA I began to realise my vision of a community based organic training Centre and an Organic Agriculture Resource Centre in summer 1998. During the establishment phase, Hannah Jones, Overseas Advisory Assistant visited MOOF to carry out field work as part of HDRA research project. This sought to identify the ways in which knowledge of farming techniques is gained and passed on to other farmers in Kenya. (See report). The work found that training centres and demonstration farms to be the most effective communication pathway.

This confirmed that MOOF was needed and enabled the project to meet the requirements of the local community from the on set. As work proceeded, other organisations were informed about MOOF existence and intentions so that networking could begin. This included establishment of a link with the soil Science department of Nairobi University, The International Centre for Insect Physiology and Entomology-ICIPE, International tree Foundation-ITF, The University of Essex, The University of Coventry, and other groups promoting sustainable agriculture in Kenya and overseas.

What was the primary aim

The main emphasis of MOOF Programme is the facilitation of smallholder producer groups in the production of enough food for themselves and the community and production and marketing of specialty high value certified organic products. MOOF's main goal is to "Tackle Poverty among Smallholder Farmers through Organic Trade".

Who was involved

The founder sold the idea of registering MOOF as a Non-governmental Organisation- NGO in Year 2000. Those were drawn from International NGOs, in Nairobi, Private sector, and Education sector. Six of the people approached liked the idea and wanted to be associated with the fast growing MOOF.

The Nanyuki- Community were represented through their views and results of the field research conducted around Nanyuki by Hannah Jones from HDRA-UK and MOOF staff. The Devon community of the United Kingdom was also involved in fund raising and MOOF.AFRICA. was inaugurated in Throwleigh Village Hall-Devon, England in May 1998.

2. REVIEW OF SUCCESSES TO DATE

i) Food Security

Visitors were eager to see what sustainable and organic agriculture could produce in our organic vegetable gardens constructed. It is .25 acres and consists of a number of raised beds growing 14 vegetables types. All of them reached maturity in 75 days and did not suffer remarkably from pests and diseases. Those present were kept under control by the use of natural predators, and plant extracts, neem and garlic sprays. The vegetables in the demonstration gardens survived in spite of the drought which hit Kenya in year 2000 to 2002.

Around 3.3 Million people were at risk of starvation during year 2000 drought. Yet those adopting some organic methods like soil management practices which help to retain moisture had a greater success story for their crops. This increased MOOF determination to train farmers in food self-sufficiency through organic agriculture and simple methods of water and soil conservation. As a

result 925 farmers visited MOOF organic gardens and 300 farmers adopted at least one organic technique in food production.

For organic farmers it was not a total crop failure but farmers could still harvest maize with vegetative maize stovers for their livestock. Organic farmers trained by MOOF each cultivated a small plot of vegetables which helped in nutrition by supply of vitamin A and Minerals needed in the diet of young children and pregnant women for the supply of iron and other trace elements needed in the human diet. Hence organic agriculture have helped local community to have availability of food for them to leave a healthy and active live.

ii) Impacts on Household and Rural Economy.

The MOOF Borage Project.

The Project targets production of certified organic Borage seeds for cold pressing into neutraceutical oil for export to Europe and the United States of America. This has contributed immensely in building up the rural economy in the project area. Being on the leeward side of Mt. Kenya it suffers from poor rainfall and the area can be described as semi-arid. The high population density puts great strain on the natural resources especially land and due to continued agricultural activities with synthetic fertilisers.

This has contributed to soil degradation and no longer supports food production. Most indigenous trees have been cut down for charcoal burning to generate some income. The local community has encroached Mt. Kenya forest for more charcoal burning, cutting down indigenous trees for timber building and fencing posts, which they sell to generate income to meet their economic needs. The project is anticipated to reduce the community encroachment to Mt. Kenya forest for agricultural activities and burning charcoal.

Organic agriculture is labour intensive farming system and it has contributed to large number of people getting employed in the sub-sector. Borage seeds fetches good farm gate price at US\$ 4.00 per Kilogram which has been negotiated and agreed upon by the buyer -Earthoil Kenya Limited and Farmers Self-Help groups .

Borage yields are estimated at 500-750 Kilogrammes per acre. The cost of production is very minimal as compared to conventional agricultural technologies. Income generated from this project this year is 30 acres certified organic Borage seeds. The total income estimate is $500 \times 30 \times 300 =$ Kshs. 4.5 Million (US\$ 64,000) coming into the Nanyuki community for a period of 7 months. For two seasons income to the community is estimated to be Kshs. 9 Million (US\$ 128,500) for 80 smallholder farmers.

The income generated from Borage project will slowly contribute to the people lifestyle through purchase and installation of solar panels for electricity supply, purchase of a family bicycle and at least every household will afford a transistor radio. It is hoped that with further income generated from this project people will be able to have access to better health facilities, have access to more protein foods from stocking Tilapia fish for their diets. An income of Kshs. 150 Million (US\$ 2 Millions) for a period of 2 years to the Nanyuki community.

iii) Impacts on Environment.

Increased income and availability of adequate food in the community will help to conserve the Mt. Kenya catchment. This is a world Heritage Site. This is due to the fact that soil conservation and increase in organic matter on farmer's farms will lead to a sustainable food production system. Income generated from sale of organic oil crops is hoped to provide for the money needed for the household basic needs hence reduce encroachment to Mt. Kenya forest for charcoal burning, felling of indigenous trees for timber and fencing posts.

Borage attracts bees in large numbers and this is hoped that farmers will engage in production of organic honey, which, when marketing is well organised, will fetch good income market and help

people to add to their Borage income. This will reduce frequent forest fires in Mt. Kenya forest which occasionally get into forest fires from honey gatherers. Forest fires destroy the biodiversity of the forest and contribute to global warming.

MOOF project works with farmer groups in smallholder irrigation Schemes. Sustainable water management on farmers farms help to conserve the water in rivers which feed the Great Ewaso Nyiro River which is of great importance as international waters. Low flow in Ewaso Nyiro river affects livestock and communities in Isiolo and to the North Eastern region of Kenya , the Lorian Swamp biodiversity and Somalia. Organic agriculture technologies help to add more organic matter into the soil and this helps to imitate the forest soil and with high moisture retention this reduces irrigation frequency, hence resulting into more water flowing to Archers Post.

3. CHALLENGES OF MOOF PROJECT

i) Agricultural Policy

The government seems to embrace the Genetically Modified Organisms-GMO as the answer to perennial food problems and poverty inflicted to rural farming community. This is seen by the big expensive (GMO) research complex in Nairobi- Kenya and the onset of GMO maize field trials, which have been terminated so far. This has come about due to a number of strategies being used to ram the technology down African throats- Kenyans included. These include , the masterminds siege on agricultural research Centres (KARI) and Universities in Kenya.

This sets a grim picture towards Kenyan agricultural policy on organic agriculture. Consequently, , there are not many organic agriculture success stories in Kenya to convince the government to think and act into this direction. The Organic subsector is small but growing very fast led by civil society organisations which include church based and non –governmental organisations like MOOF who works with poor and marginalised smallholder farmers. Hence , with the amount of high technological support , big funding organs, high level of education associated with the government on HEIA , the NGOs lack this capacity to market and promote organic agriculture in Kenya.

ii) Availability of resources – Institutional Support.

MOOF .Africa have skeletal extension Programme services, low institutional support which includes lack of electricity supply in the office, lack of updated organic materials in MOOF Library, no access to the Internet , Lack of proper field supervision, no capacity to produce farmers’ training leaflets, our staff lack formal education in organic agriculture.

iii).Finances

MOOF receive its financial support from fund raising concerts in the UK. The main supporter has been individual supporters and International Tree foundation for our community tree project, The Conscience Trust of UK. These funds are not enough to cater for promotion and marketing of organic agriculture , training, research, this deter expansion of MOOF Programme to reach more farmers in the Nanyuki region.

The Borage for export project is currently supported by USAID development Agency through FINTRAC –Horticulture Development Centre where Fintrac has entered into and agreement with Earthoil and MOOF gets finances from Earthoil. This arrangement is not working since MOOF is not free to make decisions and implement them at the right time. Funds are sometimes delayed and overtaken by events, and this has negative effects on the agricultural extension services, farmers training , and implementation of Internal Control Systems and farmers mobilisation and consequently yields of borage seeds from farmers fields.

iv). Markets.

The main draw back in marketing of products is that importers wish to buy organically certified produce. Organic certification process is very expensive for smallholder farmers. The organic certification process is tedious with a lot of paper work and farmer training, this require financial

support. For example the MOOF Borage seeds project organic certification was funded by USAID at US\$ 15,000 for five groups. MOOF has addressed this challenge by initiating the **Kenya Organic Oil Farmers Organisation-KOOF**. KOOF is the Umbrella Organisation whose name appears on the CERES Organic Certificate representing five Self-Help groups. (see the chart)

The Organic agriculture sub-sector is growing very fast through the efforts of NGOs in rural Kenya. It is seen as the sure way to address food insecurity, environmental degradation, and encompasses organic trade in speciality high value certified organic products in order to tackle Poverty and food insecurity in the rural communities of Kenya..

However, to achieve this the prime mover organisations need a lot of support in **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING** to successfully implement organic trade, rural development and Environmental conservation among the rural based poor communities. Lack of formal organic agricultural knowledge and institutional support hinders marketing of organic products and expansion of organic agriculture trade in Kenya.

4. CONFIRMED AND WORKING PARTNERSHIP LINKAGES AND SPECIFIC ROLE OF EACH PARTNER IN THE BORAGE PROJECT.

i) MOOF.AFRICA. : (Project Leader) Mount Kenya Organic farming, in Africa is a registered NGO in Kenya.. Established in 1999 and trains, mobilises, facilitates and provide linkages between the key players in the organic certification process.

It has a primary objective to improve and help to raise the living standards of Kenya smallholder farmers by having an assured food supply for themselves and their communities and to empower the local community economically through production of specialty high value organic crops for local and export markets.

MOOF also facilitates contractual relationships among buyers and Self-Help groups. The training Units for organic agriculture principles are situated at MOOF community training facility, where smallholder farmers are guided through the production of organic crops, certification to the marketing of high quality organic products. There are 20 organised farmers groups of up to 400 growers per group situated in Nanyuki region. Five groups have formed The Kenya Organic Oil Farmers Organisation-KOOF- The umbrella organisation for organic certification in accordance with the IFOAM smallholder Group Certification Guide of May 2004.

MOOF has already developed a local network of self-help groups, which it services with training and advice on organic farming techniques. MOOF is active in the development of linkages between organic producers groups, traders inspection bodies and external certification body –CERES of Germany.

ii). EARTHOIL KENYA PROPRIETARY EPZ COMPANY LIMITED-The Organic Trading Partner.

Earthoil Company Limited was established in Kenya in year 2003 to produce cold pressed organic oils from seeds of a range of organic crops. To date they have invested more than US\$ 350,000 in equipment and their start up costs at their factory in Athi River Epz Nairobi- Kenya. Earthoil plantations Limited the mother company in the England operates as dedicated marketing and distribution company. Estimated turnover in 2004 was more than US\$ 2 Millions.

The process is conducted partially at farm level (Preparation and cleaning of seeds) and the secondary grading completed at the Central Handling Facility at MOOF Premises in Nanyuki- Kenya. Processing of seeds to the cold pressed oil, packing and consolidating freight consignments is carried out at, Earthoil Factory in Nairobi-Kenya. Through gradual and annual expansion of this scheme it is anticipated that the production of 500 tones of organic borage seeds will be achieved

within 2 years. This translates to US\$ 2,142,000 Millions, Equivalent to Kshs. 150,000,000 money flowing into the Nanyuki region community for a period of 2 years.

Farmers organisations have signed both production and buying agreement with Earthoil company . MOOF provides with technical support ,co-ordination of the internal Control Systems-ICS and management of the project. Three field officers carryout agricultural extension services . The MOOF provides overall co-ordination and management input to this project.

iii) SMALHOLDER FARMERS ORGANISATIONS –(Kaaga, Mwireri, Mwiruti, Huku and Mwamuko Organic Farmers groups.)

Twenty smallholder organisations are involved in this project which are located in smallholder Irrigation Schemes. The organised smallholders referred to as the production Units have entered into contracts with individual producer members and with Earthoil Kenya company for production and buying agreement. Five Self-Help groups have currently signed agreements with Earthoil company . The Smallholder organisations have developed Internal Self monitoring and verification systems to ensure that units are adhering to organic certification standards as set forth by CERES certification body in compliance with the EU regulation No. 2092/1 and the National Organic Program (USDA NOP) . Self-Help Groups have formed KOOF umbrella organisation , which is registered in Kenya.

iv). CERES/ AfriCert Company Limited.

AfriCert is a local registered company which is accredited to ISO 65/ EN45011. The main goal is to assure the integrity of regional agricultural products. Leading assisting and providing competitive regional certification services to primary producers of agricultural products to fully benefit from the value addition that accrues from organic certification.

AfriCert works in partnership with The Internationally accredited CERES of Germany to carryout organic certification process by carrying out farm audits with our 90 farmers. The partnership is hoped to reduce the cost of certification by having a local company help in setting out the Internal Control System – ICS rather than somebody having to fly all the way from Germany to Conduct training in Nanyuki . A total of US\$ 15,000 has been allocated in Organic certification process for 5 groups.

v). FINTRAC- HORTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE-HDC

Fintrac –HDC is the USAID development agency in the horticultural sub-sector.

Under Fintrac Contract with the US Agency for International Development in Kenya (Contract # 623-C-00-03-00071-00) a portion of funds approved under the contract may be utilised to provide cost-sharing subcontracts to agribusiness partners and clients that directly contributes to achievement of project goals. Cost –sharing subcontracts are targeted at Investments that promote incomes , exports , employment , yields and productivity for smallholders in Kenya horticultural sub-sector.

Fintrac –HDC has contributed US\$ 40,000 towards this project.

vi). MOOF.AFRICA. CONTACT DETAILS

The Project Leader is Mount Kenya Organic Farming (MOOF), registered NGO , established in 1999, a remit for facilitate smallholder producer groups in the production and marketing of high value certified organic products.

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THANK YOU