

# Promoting Production and Trading Opportunities for Organic Agricultural Products in East Africa

## Capacity Building Study 3: Organic Agriculture, Sustainability and Food Security in East Africa

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September 2006

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For United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

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## Section 1. Overview

### 1.1 Agricultural Production and World Food Security

Over the past 40 years, there has been remarkable growth in agricultural production with per capita world food production growing by 17% and aggregate world food production growing by 145%. Between the early 1960s and mid-1990s, average cereal yields grew from 1.2 t/ha to 2.52 t/ha in developing countries whilst total cereal production has grown from 420 to 1176 million tonnes per year<sup>1</sup>.

Over the same period, world population has grown from three to six billion, but globally per capita agricultural production has overtaken population growth and for each person today, there is an additional 25% more food compared with 1960. However this is not the case for everyone, it varies regionally and in Africa for example food production per person is 10% cent lower today than in 1960.

Modern agricultural methods have brought spectacular increases in productivity - more cereals and animals per hectare, more meat and milk per animal, more food output per person employed. Any farmer or agricultural system with access to sufficient inputs, knowledge and skills, can produce large amounts of food. However the majority of the chronically hungry are small farmers in developing countries who produce much of what they eat and are often poor and marginalized from input and product markets.

The recent advances in aggregate productivity have therefore not brought reductions in the incidence of hunger for all. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still more than 800 million people hungry and lacking adequate access to food. A third are in East and South-East Asia, another third in South Asia, a quarter are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 5% each in Latin America/Caribbean and in North Africa/Near East.

Food security can be defined as a condition where *“all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”*. Indicators of food insecurity in a given region can include numbers of ‘hungry’ or malnourished people, of underweight children and of people suffering from micronutrient deficiency<sup>2</sup>.

Average per capita food consumption in 2003 was 2780 kcal day<sup>-1</sup>, yet consumption in 33 poor countries is still less than 2200 kcal day<sup>-1</sup>. In addition to nearly 0.9 billion people hungry, globally there are 126 billion underweight children and over 2 billion people suffering from micronutrient deficiency. Almost 50% of pregnant women in Sub-Saharan Africa are affected by iron deficiency anaemia<sup>3</sup>.

In the last 10 years progress in the drive to reduce hunger has been slow and has varied around the world, in Sub-Saharan Africa the number of hungry people has in fact increased by 20% since 1990. In the period 2000-2002, the proportion of undernourished people in the total population of Kenya was 33%, in Uganda 19% and 44% in United Republic of Tanzania. The number of underweight children has also increased in Central, Western and

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<sup>1</sup> FAO 2005, Conway and Pretty 1991, Heffernan 1999, Smil 2000, Pretty and Hine 2001

<sup>2</sup> FAO 1996

<sup>3</sup> FAO 2005, von Braun 2005, FAO 2005, UN/SCN 2004, Micronutrient Initiative and UNICEF 2005, IFPRI 2005

Eastern Africa compared to an overall decrease in other developing regions such as Asia, South America and North Africa<sup>4</sup>.

The world therefore still faces a fundamental food security challenge, despite steadily falling fertility rates and family sizes, world population continues to increase and so in parallel will the absolute demand for food. Food demand will also shift in the coming decades, as i) economic growth increases people's purchasing power; iii) growing urbanisation encourages people to adopt new diets; and iv) climate change threatens both land and water resources.

World population is widely expected then to reach 9 billion by the next generation and by this time, 84% of people will be in those countries currently making up the 'developing' world. At the same time, land and water degradation is increasingly posing a threat to food security and the livelihoods of rural people who often live on degradation-prone lands. Although a combination of increased production and more imports will mean per capita consumption will increase to an average of about 3000 kcal per day by 2015, a developing country person will still only consume half of the cereal and a third of the meat compared with a person in an industrialised country, so food insecurity and malnutrition will still persist<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2 The Food Security Challenge

What makes agriculture unique as an economic sector is that it directly affects many of the natural, social and economic resources on which it relies for success. Agricultural systems at all levels rely on the value of services flowing from the total stock of assets that they influence and control, and five types of asset, natural, social, human, physical and financial capital, are now recognised as being important<sup>6</sup>. These five types of 'capital' asset are described below:

1. *Natural capital* produces environmental goods and services, and is the source of food (both farmed and harvested or caught from the wild), wood and fibre; water supply and regulation; treatment, assimilation and decomposition of wastes; nutrient cycling and fixation; soil formation; biological control of pests; climate regulation; wildlife habitats; storm protection and flood control; carbon sequestration; pollination; and landscape<sup>7</sup>.
2. *Social capital* produces a mutually beneficial collective action, contributing to the cohesiveness of people in their societies. The social assets comprising social capital include norms, values and attitudes that prompt people to cooperate; relations of trust, reciprocity and obligations; and common rules and sanctions mutually-agreed or handed-down. These are connected and structured in networks and groups<sup>8</sup>.
3. *Human capital* is the total capability residing in individuals, based on their stock of knowledge skills, health and nutrition. It is enhanced by access to services that

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<sup>4</sup> FAO 2005, von Braun 2005, UN/SCN 2004

<sup>5</sup> von Braun 2005, Uphoff 2002, Pinstrip-Andersen *et al* 1999, Pretty and Hine 2001

<sup>6</sup> Coleman 1988, 1990, Putnam 1993, 1995, Costanza *et al* 1997, 1999, Carney 1998, Flora 1998, Ostrom 1998, Pretty 1998, Scoones 1998, Uphoff 1998, Pretty and Ward 2001, Pretty and Hine 2001, Pretty 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Costanza *et al* 1999, MA 2005

<sup>8</sup> Flora and Flora 1996, Pretty 2003, Cramb and Culaseno 2003

provide these, such as schools, medical services, and adult training. People's productivity is increased by their capacity to interact with productive technologies and with other people. Leadership and organisational skills are particularly important in making other resources more valuable<sup>9</sup>.

4. *Physical capital* is the store of human-made material resources, and comprises buildings, such as housing and factories, market infrastructure, irrigation works, roads and bridges, tools and tractors, communications, and energy and transportation systems, that make labour more productive.
5. *Financial capital* is more of an accounting concept, as it serves as a facilitating role rather than as a source of productivity in and of itself. It represents accumulated claims on goods and services, built up through financial systems that gather savings and issue credit, such as pensions, remittances, welfare payments, grants and subsidies.

As agricultural systems shape these very assets on which they rely for inputs, a vital feedback loop occurs from outcomes to inputs<sup>10</sup>. The basic premise is that more sustainable agricultural systems accumulate stocks of these five assets, thereby increasing all the forms of capital over time. Sustainable agricultural systems tend to have a particularly positive effect on natural, social and human capital, whilst unsustainable systems deplete these assets, leaving less for future generations.

For example, i) an agricultural system that erodes soil whilst producing food results in costs that others must bear<sup>11</sup>, ii) another system that sequesters carbon in soils through organic matter accumulation helps to mediate climate change, iii) a diverse agricultural system that enhances on-farm wildlife for pest control contributes to wider stocks of biodiversity, whilst iv) a simplified modernised system that eliminates wildlife does not contribute to biodiversity. Finally v) agricultural systems that offer labour-absorption opportunities, through resource improvements or value-added activities, can boost local economies and help to reverse rural-to-urban migration patterns<sup>12</sup>. Agriculture is, therefore, fundamentally multifunctional as it produces many unique food and non-food functions that cannot be produced by other economic sectors so efficiently.

Increased food supply is a necessary though not sufficient condition for eliminating hunger and poverty. What is important is who produces the food, has access to the technology and knowledge to produce it, and who has the purchasing power to acquire it.

Clearly then there are 2 emergent food poverty and food security challenges:

1. How to find ways to maintain and enhance food production whilst seeking both to improve the positive side-effects and to eliminate the negative ones?

This will not be easy, as past agricultural development has tended to ignore both the multifunctionality of agriculture and the considerable external costs.

2. What is the best way to increase agricultural productivity in developing countries

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<sup>9</sup> Orr 1992, Byerlee 1998, Lieblin *et al.* 2004, Leeuwis 2004

<sup>10</sup> Worster 1993, Pretty and Hine 2001

<sup>11</sup> Often referred to as Externalities

<sup>12</sup> Carney 1998, Dasgupta 1998, Ellis 2000, Pretty *et al.* 2005

that still, have hundreds of million people short of food?

These questions are controversial, with widely varying positions about strategies which are likely to be effective including: i) expanding the area of agriculture<sup>13</sup>; ii) increasing per hectare production in agricultural exporting countries<sup>14</sup> or iii) increasing total farm productivity in developing countries which are most going to need the food.

The conventional wisdom is that, in order to double food supply, efforts need to be redoubled to modernise agriculture - as this has been successful in the past. But there are doubts about the capacity of such systems to reduce food poverty. The great technological progress in the past half century has not been reflected in major reductions in hunger and poverty in developing countries<sup>15</sup>

Arguably then the most sustainable choice for agricultural development and food security is to increase total farm productivity in situ, in the developing countries which are most going to need the food. The central questions, therefore must focus on

- i) the extent to which farmers can improve food production and raise income with *low-cost, locally-available* technologies and inputs,
- ii) and whether they can do this without causing further environmental damage

### 1.3 Sustainability in Agriculture

Many different expressions have come to be used to imply greater sustainability in some agricultural systems over prevailing ones (both pre-industrial and industrialised). These include biodynamic, community-based, ecoagriculture, ecological, environmentally-sensitive, extensive, farm-fresh, free-range, low-input, organic, permaculture, sustainable and wise-use. There is a continuing and intense debate about whether agricultural systems using some of these terms can qualify as sustainable<sup>16</sup>.

However agricultural systems high in sustainability can be taken as those that aim to make the best use of environmental goods and services whilst not damaging the five assets - particularly natural, social and human capitals<sup>17</sup>. The key principles for sustainability are to:

- i. integrate biological and ecological processes such as nutrient cycling, nitrogen fixation, soil regeneration, allelopathy, competition, predation and parasitism into food production processes;
- ii. minimise the use of those non-renewable inputs that cause environmental damage or that harm the health of farmers and consumers;
- iii. make good use of the knowledge and skills of farmers, so improving their self-reliance and substituting human capital for costly external inputs;

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<sup>13</sup> by converting new lands to agriculture, but with the result that services from forests, grasslands and other areas of important biodiversity are lost

<sup>14</sup> mostly in industrialised countries, so that food can be transferred or sold to those who need it

<sup>15</sup> Trewayas 2002, Smil 2000, Tilman *et al.* 2002, McNeely and Scherr 2003

<sup>16</sup> Pretty 1995, Conway 1997, NRC 2000, McNeely and Scherr 2003, Clements and Shrestha 2004, Cox *et al.* 2004, Gliessman 2005, Balfour 1943, Lampkin and Padel 1994, Altieri 1995, Trewayas 2001

<sup>17</sup> Altieri 1995, Pretty 1995, 1998, 2005; Conway 1997, Hinchliffe *et al.* 1999; NRC 2000; Li Wenhua 2001; Jackson and Jackson 2002; Tilman *et al.* 2002; Uphoff 2002; McNeely and Scherr 2003; Swift *et al.* 2004; Tomich *et al.* 2004; Gliessman 2004, 2005; MA 2005

- iv. make productive use of people’s collective capacities to work together to solve common agricultural and natural resource problems, such as for pest, watershed, irrigation, forest and credit management.

Sustainability in agricultural systems incorporates concepts of both resilience (the capacity of systems to resist shocks and stresses) and persistence (the capacity of systems to continue over long periods), and addresses many wider economic, social and environmental outcomes. Agricultural systems with high levels of social and human assets are more able to adapt to change and innovate in the face of uncertainty. This suggests that there likely to be many pathways towards agricultural sustainability, and so no single system of technologies, inputs or ecological management is more likely to be widely applicable than another. Agricultural sustainability then implies the need to fit these factors to the *specific* circumstances of different local agricultural systems<sup>18</sup>.

### 1.4 Organic Agriculture

If sustainable agricultural systems are those that aim to make the best use of environmental goods and services whilst not damaging the five assets – particularly natural, social and human capitals, then the “whole systems approach” integrated organic farming system can be considered inherently sustainable.

In contrast to the conventional intensive agricultural systems, organic farming represents a deliberate attempt to make the best use of local natural resources. The aim of organic farming is to create integrated, humane, environmentally and economically viable agriculture systems in which maximum reliance is put on i) local or on-farm renewable resources, and ii) the management of ecological and biological processes. The use of external inputs, whether inorganic or organic, is reduced as far as possible.

“Certified organic agriculture” is a defined and certified system of agricultural production that seeks to promote and enhance ecosystem health whilst minimising adverse effects on natural resources. It is seen not just as a modification of existing conventional practices, but as a restructuring of whole farm systems. The FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius guidelines define organic agriculture as “*a holistic production management [whose] primary goal is to optimise the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil, life, plants animals and people*”. Similarly, the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements, with over 750 member organisations in 108 countries, defines it as “*a whole system approach based upon sustainable ecosystems, safe food, good nutrition, animal welfare and social justice. Organic production therefore is more than a system of production that includes or excludes certain inputs*”<sup>19</sup>. Principles of organic agriculture according to IFOAM are shown in Box 1.

#### Box 1. IFOAM’s Principles of Organic Agriculture

IFOAM Principles of Organic Agriculture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Principle of Health</i> - Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.</li> </ul>

<sup>18</sup> Chambers *et al.* 1989; Uphoff 1998; Bunch and Lopez 1999; Olsson and Folke 2001; Pretty and Ward 2001

<sup>19</sup> Lampkin and Padel 1994, FiBL 2000, Scialabba and Hattam 2002, Caporali *et al.* 2003, Reganold 2004, FAO/WHO 2001, IFOAM 2006a, IFOAM 2002

- *Principle of Ecology* - Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.
- *Principle of Fairness* - Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.
- *Principle of Care* - Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.

Source: IFOAM 2006b.

However, "organic agriculture" is not limited to certified organic farms and products but can include all productive agricultural systems that use sustainable, natural processes, rather than external inputs, to enhance agricultural productivity<sup>20</sup>. Organic farmers adopt practices to conserve resources, enhance biodiversity, and maintain the ecosystem for sustainable production.

Many traditional farming systems found in developing countries practice organic and sustainable techniques without seeking or receiving the premium price given to organic food in some markets. Traditional agriculture includes management practices that have evolved through centuries to create agricultural systems adapted to local environmental and cultural conditions. Owing to their nature, traditional systems do not use synthetic agricultural inputs but apply ecological approaches to enhance agricultural production. Many of these traditional systems may not fully meet the production standards for organic agriculture but can be considered sustainable and near organic.

In countries where an established and widespread domestic market for organic produce is not present, then the majority of certified organic production is for export. Whereas certification is essential for export of organic produce to Europe and the U.S., for domestic consumption and local markets in East Africa it is not. Organic certification for domestic markets certainly gives the consumer the security in knowing that food has been produced according to strict organic production standards offering a "quality assurance". However, the cost of becoming a certified organic producer is often prohibitive for small-scale farmers in both developed and developing countries alike, so when there is a limited domestic market for organic produce it is not necessarily critical for farmers to be certified organic.

In this study "organic agriculture" refers to agriculture that meets organic production standards and is subject to organic inspection, certification and labelling, whereas "near organic" agriculture refers to and includes i) agriculture that may meet organic production standards, but is not subject to organic inspection, certification and labelling; and ii) *sustainable* traditional farming systems. Agricultural sustainability in this report is taken to include near organic systems and organic agriculture when a *whole system approach* is adopted.

## 1.5 Organic agriculture and food security

The food security of any region is not simply a question of producing enough food to meet demand but it is influenced by a multitude of factors both natural and man-made (see Box 3). Increased food supply does not automatically mean increased food security for all. What is important is who produces the food, who has access to the technology and knowledge to produce it, and who has the purchasing power to acquire it. Furthermore, many of the

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<sup>20</sup> Scialabba and Hattam 2002

causes of food insecurity are also symptoms, creating a cyclical effect that can result in further food insecurity.

**Box 3. Factors contributing to food insecurity**

<b>1. Availability of Food</b>	
Food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enough food may be produced in a region overall, but food insecurity may persist for those who do not have the resources to buy or produce it</li> </ul>
Consistent access to food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmers may be able to produce or buy enough food for their families after harvest but may be food insecure at other times of the year<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>
<b>2. Natural Capital</b>	
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A degraded natural environment will compromise food production in an area, for example poor soil quality, eroded landscapes or inadequate water resources</li> </ul>
Diversity of agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse agricultural systems are more resilient to stresses than mono-cropped systems so are more likely to promote food security</li> </ul>
<b>3. Social Capital</b>	
Community and group issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where there are poor links within and between communities, with limited networks, partnerships, trust and collective action, credit and responsibility, communities are less likely to cope and to be able to help each other in times of hardship such as droughts, food shortages and conflict. Food insecurity and ill-health is likely to be greater in areas with lower social capital.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Human Capital</b>	
Gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In many regions women are the major agricultural labour force but are not always recognised for this so may not control household budgets, often have poor education</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of education and agricultural/ nutritional knowledge can affect farmer capacity to adapt to change or to cope with food production stresses</li> </ul>
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty remains the root cause of hunger and malnutrition in the world<sup>22</sup></li> </ul>
Ill-health and diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malnourished people are not able to produce food as effectively as those who are well-fed</li> <li>The prevalence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS have had serious impacts on food security and nutrition. When family members become ill or die from the virus, households are less able to produce or buy food<sup>23</sup>. In sub-Saharan Africa 11</li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> Benson 2004

<sup>22</sup> IFPRI 2005

<sup>23</sup> Rosegrant *et al.* 2005

<sup>24</sup> FAO 2002

	million children are orphaned by HIV/AIDS <sup>24</sup> . Mortality and morbidity in HIV/AIDS infected households has led to decreased farm sizes, loss of income at household level, increased dependency ration and a general increase in food insecurity <sup>25</sup>
<b>5. Other External Factors</b>	
Political issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political problems including corruption, collusion and nepotism can significantly inhibit attempts to tackle food insecurity<sup>26</sup></li> </ul>
Land tenure issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land tenure issues can contribute to food insecurity in a number of ways which vary depending on context. For example, in some areas if a husband dies the wife cannot continue to farm the land and the land goes to other members of the family. In East Africa, all of the children of a man inherit his land between them on his death and so as a result farm plots get continually smaller, making it hard to sustain enough food for household.</li> </ul>
Access to appropriate technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of appropriate agricultural knowledge, technologies, methods or inputs or can affect food security</li> </ul>
Poor infrastructure and access to markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor infrastructure and a lack of access to or limited markets affects food security</li> </ul>
Climate and natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In areas which are prone to drought or suffer from unreliable rainfall food security can be particularly challenging</li> <li>• Plagues of natural pests such as locusts can decimate crops</li> <li>• Natural disasters may destroy lives, crops, homes and landscapes</li> <li>• In the last 20 years the number of deaths from natural disasters has been more than the average for the decade before<sup>27</sup></li> </ul>
Armed conflicts and wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political unrest, armed conflicts and wars contribute to food insecurity and prevent food from being produced or accessed</li> <li>• Political conflicts are often associated to food insecurity as both a cause and an effect<sup>28</sup></li> </ul>

Agriculture, by its inherent multifunctionality, has the potential to both influence and address the factors that contribute to food insecurity. As discussed earlier in this report, *whole system* organic agriculture relies on its five capital assets for success and so contributes to and builds up stocks of these natural, social and economic resources over time<sup>29</sup>, thus often reducing many of the factors that lead to food insecurity.

Some examples of the positive side effects of organic agricultural systems that have helped to address the food security issues outlined in Box 3. (as recently recorded in various

<sup>25</sup> Rugalema 1999, Sanchez and Swaminathan 2005 and Wagah 2005

<sup>26</sup> Rosegrant *et al.* 2005

<sup>27</sup> EM-DAT 2005

<sup>28</sup> Messer and Cohen 2004

<sup>29</sup> Ostrom 1990, Pretty 2003

developing countries) and that can build natural capital, strengthen communities (social capital) and develop human capacities include:

- Improvements to availability of food
- Improvements to natural capital
- Improvements to social capital
- Improvements to human capital
- Improvements to external factors

Each of these issues is examined in more detail within Table 2. in section 2.2, where there are also more examples of improvements in the narratives of East African case studies.

#### *1.5.1 Improvements in availability of food*

Organic farming often leads to increased food production, in many cases we have seen a doubling of yields, which contributes to increasing the food security of a region. The cases studies outlined in this report support the growing body of evidence that shows that yield increases are possible and indeed likely, with a switch to organic farming in a variety of different contexts, particularly in marginalised areas or where traditional farming methods are used.

Increased household food security is frequently reported after a switch to organic and near organic production, as the majority of smallholder farmers in East Africa grow the bulk of their crops for domestic consumption with only a small proportion for sale. Organic farming techniques are therefore widely recognised as increasing food security in this context, particularly in rain fed agricultural systems<sup>30</sup>

Organic farming also increases access to food on three levels, firstly increased quantity of food produced per farm leads to household food security and all members of the household having access to enough food. Secondly, the production and selling of food surpluses at local markets or by barter schemes means that fresh organic produce is available to more people in the wider community. Thirdly organic farming enables new and different groups in a community to get involved in agricultural production and trade where previously they were excluded for financial or cultural reasons.

#### *1.5.2 Improvements to natural capital*

Organic farming leads to many improvements to the natural environment, including increased water retention in soils, improvements in the water table (with more drinking water in the dry season), reduced soil erosion combined with improved organic matter in soils, leading to better carbon sequestration, and increased agro-biodiversity.

Water conservation technologies associated with an integrated organic farming system can make a huge difference in areas where water resources are scarce. Increasing the water holding capacity of the soil enables food to be grown further into the dry season, thus increasing food security. Related improvements in the water table also result in more available water for consumption and for watering livestock.

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<sup>30</sup> Walaga 2005

Organic farming improves and nurtures the topsoil of the land, which is widely recognised as being one of the most important resources for the farmer. Organic farmers increase the organic matter and nutrient capacity of the soil by growing leguminous crops, adding compost, animal dung or green manures. The addition of elements of agroforestry, check dams and terracing (amongst other methods) also stabilises the soil and thus reduces soil erosion. As a result soils are healthier, more able to sustain plant growth, higher in nutrient content, better able to hold water and more stable which enables farmers to grow crops for longer, with higher yields and when conditions are marginal. This of course can make a major impact on reducing food insecurity of a region.

With the increased number and variety of crops grown in organic production, the farming system is integrated and more resilient to stress. Farmers in East Africa are aware of the risks of monocropping and so the security offered by a whole systems approach to organic farming is welcomed. Farming families have more available food leading to household food security for more months of the year and surpluses can be sold to create additional income for families. Maintaining a wide variety of crops not only provides food security throughout the year but also leads to increased *nutritional* security for farmer households.

#### *1.5.3 Improvements to social capital*

Organic agriculture leads to improvements to social capital, including more and stronger social organisations at local level, new rules and norms for managing collective natural resources, and better connectedness to external policy institutions.

Many organic and near organic practices inherently focus on social and participatory processes that lead to these social capital increases, so improving people's capacity to work together on common resource management problems, forming groups for pest, irrigation, watershed, joint forest or credit management. Formation of working groups benefits farming households where labour shortages occur, for example when people are ill, suffering from HIV/AIDS and in times of hardship. The creation of co-operatives and marketing groups also helps farmers share the costs of organic certification and meet the demands for large quantities of organic produce required at one time for some export companies.

Strong networks and links with organic support organisations such as KOAN, TOAN and NOGAMU help farmers to organise for organic certification, access export and domestic organic markets and gain knowledge of sustainable organic techniques, crops and markets.

#### *1.5.4 Improvements to human capital*

Organic farming leads to improvements to human capital, including more local capacity for farmers to experiment and solve their own problems; improvements to health such as reduced incidence of malaria in rice-fish zones, increased self-esteem in formerly marginalised groups, increased status of women, better child health and nutrition, especially in dry seasons, and reversed migration and more local employment.

Organic farming can result in increases in education and knowledge on several levels. By using organic and near organic techniques and principles, the knowledge and skills of farmers is built up so that they improve their analytical skills and capacities to innovate and control their own farm systems. The ability to manage more complex systems (for example

to farm for beneficial insects) requires a higher level of human knowledge and skills than is needed to spray a pesticide. This increased knowledge of natural pest and predator relationships increases farmers' resilience and capacity to implement changes in times of pest infestation.

In addition organic farming has another knock-on effect for impacting on education. The capacity for organic systems to increase the amount of food produced per household means that families can both sell surpluses when they are food secure and also gain premium prices for certified organic produce both for export and domestic markets. This means that the additional income generated is available for paying school fees so increasing the education of the wider community.

There are often increased employment opportunities with organic production both from selling surpluses, accessing the export organic market and from the added opportunity to add value to the organic produce by processing and marketing activities.

Organic agriculture enables new and different groups in society to get involved in agricultural trade. Women in East Africa very often are not able to access synthetic agro-inputs or the credit in order to buy them, which has historically put them at more disadvantage in agriculture. Organic agriculture however negates the need to purchase agro-inputs for the system and so women can farm at an equal level, thus empowering them. Selling crop surpluses of vegetables at local markets also increases women's income which leads to increased health particularly for women and children.

Organic farming also has a positive impact on poverty in a variety of ways. Farmers benefit from cash savings as there is no need to purchase synthetic pesticides and fertilisers; extra incomes are gained by selling surplus when households are food secure; premium prices for certified organic produce can be obtained primarily in East Africa for export but also for domestic markets and farmers can add value to organic products through processing activities.

A transition to organic farming can greatly benefit the health of both farmer households and the wider community alike. A whole system integrated organic approach leads to increased amounts and the variety of crops grown and of animals kept which positively increases the health of farmer households. The availability of surpluses creates better access to food for non farming households and so positively affects the health of the community.

Selling food surpluses when food secure and gaining the premium prices for organic produce means that additional incomes are also available for medical expenses, leading to better health, particularly for children.

Undernourished people infected with HIV/AIDS develop the full symptoms of the disease more quickly than people who are well fed<sup>31</sup>. The increased nutritional value from the greater variety of produce grown, together with the higher quality organic produce leads to improvements in the health of those suffering from HIV/AIDS. In sub-Saharan Africa 11 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS so extending the life of a farming parent by several years could mean the difference between life and death for the children left behind<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Sanchez and Swaminathan 2005, Fawzi et al 2004 and Piwoz and Preble 2000.

<sup>32</sup> FAO 2002

#### 1.5.5. Economics

The premium prices received for organic produce is a key benefit for farmers. Involvement with the rapidly expanding organic export market has been the driving force behind the move towards organic agriculture in East Africa. However in addition to the premiums available for export produce, the considerable non-monetary benefits (outlined in the sections above) of organic farming should be a major consideration and in fact arguably the *principle* consideration when looking to increase the food security of a region.

Organic farming, by its inherent holistic and integrated nature involves the use of locally-available and appropriate natural inputs rather than purchased synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. In many cases where farmers have been forced to take out high interest loans in order to purchase such synthetic agricultural inputs this has put a considerable strain on household budgets. Because farmers are no longer purchasing inputs or taking out these loans, the profit margins therefore increase on the farm and farmers are better off financially

#### 1.5.6 Improvements to external factors

A simple transition to organic agriculture is not likely to be able to prevent armed conflicts and wars, alter the climate or reduce political problems such as corruption, collusion and nepotism. However, how farmers react to natural disasters and cope with environmental problems such as droughts and flash flooding can be positively affected by adopting organic and near organic technologies. How the land recovers from stresses can also be positively affected by organic practices.

This increased knowledge of natural pest and predator relationships increases farmers' resilience and capacity to implement changes in their farms during times of pest infestation. The water conservation technologies and the increased water holding capacity of soils means that farming systems are more resilient to stresses of droughts. Improved soil structure and agro-biodiversity often makes soils more stable and less prone to erosion in times of heavy rainfall or flooding

Undoubtedly a premium price can be obtained for certified organic produce for export which can directly impact on farmer incomes addressing poverty and so indirectly impact on food security issues. However, simply substituting the synthetic pesticides and fertilisers for purchased bio-pesticides and organic fertilisers, allowed under organic certification, still leaves the agricultural system largely unchanged. Monocrop farming systems for the export market whether conventional or organic, still leave farmers vulnerable to export price fluctuations and crop failure. It can be argued that unless a whole system, holistic approach to organic farming is adopted; "organic" may not be "sustainable" and may not lead to increased food security in a region, whereas an integrated organic system can provide food security at the same time as building up natural, human and social resources.

Organic agriculture is therefore important for meeting local food requirements while providing protection and sustainable use of natural resources. Organic and near organic farming makes it possible to save on production costs (no expenditure on synthetic inputs) and to promote economic viability and encourage food self-reliance. In areas where farmers

have no access to modern inputs and technologies or in regions where natural resources are poor, organic and near organic agriculture can increase the productivity of traditional systems by making better use of locally-available natural resources and is therefore particularly appropriate for the rural communities that are currently most exposed to food shortages<sup>33</sup>.

## 1.6 The Extent of Organic Agriculture

The lack of a recognized system of organic agriculture data collection globally has meant that it is difficult to obtain reliable information on the extent of organic farming. However, organic agriculture continues to grow worldwide. According to a study by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) and the Foundation for Ecology and Agriculture (SOL) in Germany, the global area of land under certified organic agriculture in 2002 was 17.8 million hectares and is now estimated at 25 million hectares. Globally, this relates to certified organic agriculture occupying about 1% of agricultural land and 1-2% of agricultural sales by value<sup>34</sup>.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the adoption of organic farming in industrialised countries. In Europe, there were just over 120,000 ha under organic farming in 1985 and by 2000 this had risen to more than 3 million hectares managed by 120,000 farmers. In the late 1990s, 550,000 ha of land were certified under organic production in the USA, managed by 5000 growers<sup>35</sup>.

Organic farming is significantly more developed in South and Eastern Africa than other regions of Africa and accounts for over three quarters of the certified organic land of the continent. In some countries the certified organic sector is a result of a few large export oriented farms converting to organic production (e.g. South Africa, Zambia and Malawi) and in other countries the sector is a consequence of significant attempts to engage smallholders in export commodity production (e.g. Uganda and Tanzania<sup>36</sup>).

The story in East Africa is that Uganda had 122,000 ha under certified organic production in 2004<sup>37</sup> and in Kenya, 180,000 ha is under organic production in 2005<sup>38</sup>. In the Republic of Tanzania in 1998 there were only 4000 ha under organic production but there has been significant progress and in 2005 it was estimated at 45,500 ha<sup>39</sup>. Key information about organic agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and Republic of Tanzania can be found in Box 2.

However, as previously discussed, in some developing countries there are large numbers of farmers that practice sustainable, traditional or non-certified organic agriculture. These near organic systems do not rely on purchased inputs often because they were by-passed by the Green Revolution, or farmers do not have access to or cannot afford artificial inputs. It is estimated that in developing countries, there are probably another 10-20 million hectares of this non-certified organic agriculture<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Hine and Pretty 2001, Altieri 2002, Pretty *et al.* 2005, IFOAM 2006c

<sup>34</sup> Youssefi and Willer 2002, Grolink 2006, Morison *et al.* 2005

<sup>35</sup> Lampkin and Midmore 2000, Pretty 2002b

<sup>36</sup> Parrott and van Elzakker 2003

<sup>37</sup> Grolink 2005

<sup>38</sup> Walaga, 2003 and Taylor 2005

<sup>39</sup> Walaga 2000, 2002, 2005, Envirocare 2005

<sup>40</sup> Wynen and Vincetti 2002, Grolink 2006

In Africa, at least 730 000 households covering about 700 000 hectares had adopted near organic agriculture practices in 2001, including integrated and low-external input systems. Recent evidence shows that this has increased to at least 1.9 million farmers on nearly 2 million hectares<sup>41</sup>.

A large proportion of the labour force is employed in agriculture in Africa (60-80%) and the majority of these farmers (many of whom are women) are smallholders with farms of less than 2 hectares. These small farmers grow most of their basic food crops with virtually no or minimal use of fertilizers. For example 72% of millet, approximately half the amount of food legumes and nearly all yams and cocoyams are produced in this way. In Uganda and Tanzania the average use of chemical fertilisers is less than 1 kg per hectare per year, which implies that most land is never fertilised<sup>42</sup>.

**Box 2. Key information about organic agriculture in Kenya, Uganda and Republic of Tanzania**

Kenya	Uganda	Republic of Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organic agriculture from 1980s</li> <li>• Large private companies and CSOs have led the way with certified organics for export</li> <li>• Also smallholder farmers organised into groups – some are registered organic</li> <li>• National representative organisation of stakeholders (both large companies and smallholder farmer groups) in organic agriculture - Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN)</li> <li>• Mainly fruit and vegetables for export market on large scale farms but also more recently essential oils and dried herbs and spices</li> <li>• Small domestic market but on the increase</li> <li>• Estimates of 180,000 ha certified organic</li> <li>• Much agricultural production is organic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified organic farming mainly smallholder farmers organised into private companies</li> <li>• Strong local organic movement</li> <li>• Export market since 1994 – the main driving factor for the development of organic agriculture</li> <li>• More than 39,000 certified organic households</li> <li>• Estimates of 122,000 ha certified organic</li> <li>• National representative organisation of stakeholders in organic agriculture - National Organic Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) Much agricultural production is organic but not certified</li> <li>• No specific policy promoting organic agriculture. The organic Policy Development Committee was created in 2003 but progress has been slow due to lack of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified organic farming for export mainly by smallholders organised into co-operatives</li> <li>• Organic cashews, pineapple, coffee, tea, honey, herbs and spices, cotton for export</li> <li>• History of low-input traditional farming, so much agricultural production for domestic markets is organic already but not certified</li> <li>• Estimates of 45,500 ha certified organic with 30,000 farmers</li> <li>• Recently formed national representative organisation of stakeholders in organic agriculture - Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAN)</li> <li>• No specific policy promoting organic agriculture although existing National Agricultural Policy has clauses on organic agriculture</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Pretty and Hine 2001, Pretty *et al.* 2005

<sup>42</sup> Altieri 2002, OTA 1998, Wynen and Vincetti 2002

<p>but not certified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Government has not recognised role of organic agriculture and no specific policy promoting organic agriculture</li></ul>	<p>funding. Uganda Export Promotion Board is reported to be interested in organic agriculture.</p>	
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Source: Walaga 2000, 2002, Taylor 2005, GroLink 2005, Envirocare 2005

## Section 2. Evidence from East Africa

### 2.1 Evidence from organic and near organic agriculture in developing countries

Some of the most significant progress in the last two decades towards sustainability in agriculture and its associated potential to reduce food insecurity has occurred in developing countries<sup>43</sup>. The largest study examining sustainable agriculture initiatives in developing countries comprised the analysis of 286 projects in 57 countries<sup>44</sup>. This study found on 37 million hectares, average yields increased by 79% over a variety of sustainable agricultural systems and crop types.

We have reanalysed our database on agricultural sustainability to produce a summary of the extent and impacts of organic and near organic projects in Africa (Table 1).

**Table 1. Extent of organic and near organic agriculture in Africa**

Region	Number of countries represented	Number of projects analysed	Number of farmers in projects (million)	Number of hectares under organic and near organic agriculture (million ha)	Average change in crop yields compared with beginning of projects
Africa (all countries with data)	24	114	1,900,000	2.0	+116%
East Africa	7 (Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Tigray, Uganda, Zambia)	71	1,600,000	1.4	+128%
East Africa	3 (Uganda Tanzania and Kenya)	44	1,300,000	1.2	+120%
Kenya	1	18	1,000,000	0.5	+179%
Tanzania	1	9	27,000	0.06	+67%
Uganda	1	17	241,000	0.68	+54%

Note: variations in the increases in yields do not necessarily mean that organic agriculture is more or less inherently successful by country, rather it varies depending on the type of project and the crops/livestock produced.

### 2.2 Narrative Case Studies from East Africa

As has been demonstrated in 2.1, organic agriculture has clearly produced increases in food production. However in addition to this, a change to whole system organic farming has led to improvements in other contexts including environmental improvements, a strengthening

<sup>43</sup> Uphoff 2002; McNeely and Scherr 2003; Pretty *et al.* 2003

<sup>44</sup> Pretty *et al.* 2005

of communities, improvements in the education and health of individuals and a reduction in poverty.

Drawing on such empirical evidence, a typology of improvements has been developed to demonstrate where alterations in the farming system and a change to organic farming methods can positively affect resources of the 5 capitals<sup>45</sup>. The first 4 improvements involve those that positively affect the environment (natural capital) in different ways; the next 2 improve social and human capital (Mechanisms 5-6), and the third 2 involve improving financial returns to farmers and/or their access to finance and credit (Mechanisms 7-9) see Table 2.

**Table 2. Improvement typology for Sustainable Organic Agriculture**

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Natural capital</b> – the environment	<i>1. Better use of locally-available natural resources</i>	A wide variety of technologies and practices are available which farmers and communities can use to make better and more productive use of available natural resources – the basic notion being that for a variety of reasons, water, soils and biodiversity have not been used most effectively in the past. The options include water harvesting, soil and water conservation – e.g. contour cropping, terraces, minimum tillage, grass strips; composting, livestock manures; irrigation scheduling and management; restoration of degraded or abandoned land; rotational grazing; habitat management for pest-predators; drainage systems and sub-soiling; raised beds; bio-pesticides and bio-fungicides.
	<i>2. Intensify microenvironments in farm system (gardens, orchards, ponds)</i>	A further improvement to farm or livelihood systems involves the intensification of a single sub-component of their farm, while leaving the rest alone, such as through double-dug beds, adding vegetables to rice bunds, or digging a fish pond. These technologies can significantly increase total food production for rural livelihoods, particularly of protein and vegetables. The beneficiaries are often children during ‘hungry’ seasons. The options include double-dug beds; vegetables on rice bunds; kitchen gardens; fish ponds; gully cropping and silt traps.
	<i>3. Diversify by adding new regenerative components</i>	The third type of improvement to natural capital involves the diversification of the whole agroecosystem through addition of new regenerative components, such as legumes in cereal rotations, fish in rice, agroforestry and livestock. These technologies can result in synergistic interactions - where one component of the system positively contributes to the success of other components. The options include legumes in cropping systems (cover crops, green manures) and pastures; integrated livestock (e.g. poultry, stall-fed ruminants); fish in rice fields; <i>Azolla</i> in rice; trees in cropping systems, including woodlots; natural enemy releases for pest control; habitat management for pest control and enhancement of beneficials, e.g. hedgerows, beetle banks, flowering and grass strips.
	<i>4. Better use of non-renewable inputs and external technologies</i>	Where external and non-renewable inputs are being used, then the system can be made more sustainable by ensuring precise applications of inputs with little or no wastage or damage to natural or human capital. Such approaches are similarly combined with introduction of regenerative

<sup>45</sup> Pretty and Hine 2001

		alternatives. The options include new seeds, patch spraying of botanicals, low dose and non-toxic sprays, veterinary services, pheromones, sterile males, resistant crop varieties and livestock breeds, and machinery (e.g. hand tools, ploughs).
<b>Social capital</b> – people and groups	5. <i>Social and participatory processes leading to group action</i>	These improvements focus on social and participatory processes that lead to social capital increases, so improving people's capacity to work together on common resource management problems, forming groups for pest, irrigation, watershed, joint forest or credit management. The options include farmers' research and experimentation groups; resource management and users' groups (e.g. forest protection, fisheries, irrigation, watersheds); credit groups; horizontal partnerships between external sectoral agencies (e.g. government and NGOs; private and public).
<b>Human capital</b> – individuals	6. <i>Human capital building through continuous learning programmes</i>	These improvements focus on building farmers' knowledge and skills so as to improve analytical skills and capacities to innovate and control their farm systems. A major constraint in the transitions towards more sustainable systems in the levels of human knowledge and skills needed for management of more complex systems (it is much easier, for example, to spray a pesticide than it is to farm for beneficial insects). The options include farmer field schools for improving agro-ecological knowledge; leadership training; adult literacy classes; computer-based knowledge development; farmer-to-farmer extension; farmer experimentation programmes.
<b>Financial capital</b>	7. <i>Access to affordable finance (credit, grants, subsidies)</i>	Improving access to finance is a vital way to help farm families develop more sustainable systems of management. This may be in the form of affordable and accessible credit (e.g. through micro-finance institutions and social organisation, particularly of women), or through families accessing new sources of external finance (grants and subsidies, or from tourists and visitors). The components include access to affordable credit; access to government grants and subsidies; increased returns on sales of produce; attract new sources of money for natural capital (e.g. eco-tourism, hunting of wildlife; carbon credits for sequestration).
	8. <i>Added value through processing to reduce losses and increase returns</i>	A variety of options are available to increase the returns to families from their production, either by reducing losses to pests (better storage and treatment) and inefficient processes (e.g. fuel-saving stoves); or by adding value before sale or use (conversion of primary products through processing). The options include post-harvest technologies; processing primary produce before sale (e.g. dried fruit, chutney, oil press, sawmills); labelling produce for traceability and transparency (location or eco-labels); fuel-efficient stoves.
	9. <i>Adding value through direct or organised marketing to consumers</i>	Farm families can also add value to their production through better marketing. This may involve improvements to physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, transport); or through direct marketing and sales to consumers (thus cutting out wholesalers and 'middlemen'). The options include rural roads and infrastructure; farmers' markets, box schemes, farm shops and direct mailing and community supported agriculture; producer groups for collective marketing; ethical trading schemes to ensure value reaches rural communities and livelihoods; green tourism schemes (selling the landscape and wildlife functions of farms).

Each type of improvement, by itself, can make a positive contribution to raising production in an agricultural system but as the case studies show, when a combination of different improvement types are used the dividend of synergistic effects are seen (where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts). For example, soil and water conservation that emphasises terracing and other physical measures to prevent soil loss is much more effective than when combined with biological methods that seek to increase the productivity of the system, such as with green manures and cover crops, or with finance for credit groups that reduces indebtedness of households.

To illustrate these improvements in food production and in other areas, several case studies of examples of organic and near organic agricultural systems from East Africa are presented.

### **2.2.1. The Manor House Agricultural Centre, Kitale, Kenya<sup>46</sup>**

Manor House Agricultural Centre was founded in 1984 in response to a three-year drought. The Centre's training and research complex includes demonstration gardens and livestock facilities that provide a working model of bio-intensive agricultural systems for trainees, visitors and members of local communities. The Centre provides practical training to young people, farmers and staff of government agencies and NGOs, as well as conduct adaptive research. In 1999 the Centre had trained some 6000 farmers in 185 community groups, of whom 3000 are known to have adopted grow bio-intensive agriculture (BIA). In 2005 Emaunel Omondi reports that over 70,000 Kenyans have been taught bio-intensive agriculture either directly or indirectly by the Centre. The main impact has been on vegetable production. Many have doubled their yields by adopting double digging and composting, using local natural methods of pest and disease control (such as planting sunflowers to attract predators, local plants extracts to control maize stalk borer, and intercropping to reduce tomato blight). There have been big savings on pesticides, as farmers have cut out their use. Farmers have found phosphorus to be limiting over periods of 6 years of composting, and so bone meal is being brought in to add to compost. The centre encourages these farmer groups to train neighbouring farmers.

A former pupil at Manor House, Susan Wekesa tells how learning to use bio-intensive farming methods has impacted on her life: *"The lessons I had from Manor House and those that I continue to receive from Eric Kisiangani and his colleagues at Rural Technology Centre have moved my household from misery to normal rich life comparatively. My small "shamba" is producing surplus which I sell for income. Last season, April to June, I earned Kshs. 15,000 (U.S. \$268) from sales of Sukuma Wiki (similar to tree collards). My 0.3 acres of land is producing plenty and healthy vegetables that bring money to knock at my door in the wee hours of the day. I mean, people come knocking at the door of my house before 6:00 a.m. wanting to buy vegetables. Apart from food and money for my family, I am able to fertilize my soil from material that it produces and supports. BIA has recreated hope in me and my household. I can now face the future proudly".*

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<sup>46</sup> Source: University of Essex SAFE Research Database 2001, Ecology Action 2000, 2005  
<http://www.growbiointensive.org/biointensive/Kenya.html> and  
<http://www.growbiointensive.org/newsletter/may2000/biointensive-applic-3.html>

### 2.2.2. Organic Cotton, GTZ, Tanzania<sup>47</sup>

Cotton is the second most important export for Tanzania and is generally produced by smallholders using few agricultural inputs, in two main areas the “Western Cotton Growing Area” (WCGA) and the Eastern Cotton Growing Area” (ECGA). In 1994 the Tanzanian Government liberalised the cotton market to allow private companies to buy seed cotton from farmers and to run ginneries. One such company CIC Limited (a Tanzanian textile company) approached the GTZ-Protrade program in order to run an organic cotton feasibility study. A village in the Meatu District, Shinyanga Region, Northwest of the country in the WCGA, was chosen as the project area and 45 contracted farmers produced organic cotton in the 1994/5 season. This area was particularly suitable for the project for several reasons, because cotton is produced here at low-yield level so risks of yields falling during conversion are less and so farmers were therefore keen to participate. Most farms have areas of fallow lands to act as refuges for natural enemies of insect pests and farmers have large numbers of cattle so can provide animal manure fertilisers for their cotton crop. The GTZ-IPM project offered support in training of extension staff and research and two private ginneries were under construction in the area. Project farmers agreed to organic cultivation and to practice crop rotation and the cultivation of trap crops for insect pest control in return for inputs and guaranteed markets for their cotton. By the late 1990s, the project consisted of 134 farmers, producing an average of 663 kg/ha of cotton with the cotton officially certified as organic.

### 2.2.3. SACDEP, Thika, Kenya<sup>48</sup>

SACDEP Kenya is an indigenous NGO that has worked for the 13 years with over 30,000 smallholder farmers. Based in Thika in Central Kenya, SACDEP facilitates training programmes for farmers in sustainable agriculture and community development with a focus on production, processing, agro-marketing, savings and credit schemes and is currently working with 4,500 smallholder farmers in Eastern and Central provinces of Kenya. SACDEP mainly works on a weekly basis with farmers in organised community groups of about 30 families. SACDEP operates under the 4 principles of sustainable agriculture i) Ecological feasibility, ii) Environmentally friendly, iii) Social justness and iv) Culturally acceptability. Topics covered in the SACDEP training programme include natural soil fertility management; integrated environmentally friendly weed, pest and disease protection; on-farm soil and water conservation techniques and farm level seed conservation. Farmer groups are trained by SACDEP for 3-4 years in which time productivity has been reported to increase by 50% giving the farmers food security and surplus produce to sell. SACDEP also facilitates the development of Smallholder Farmers Organisation (SFOs), that together address common issues such as value adding for produce, marketing, savings and credit. SFOs in this development stage also agree on sustainable and organic norms for all the producers in the group to use. Incomes have increased as a result, up 40%, enabling farmers to meet basic needs such as paying school fees and medical expenses.

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<sup>47</sup> Source: G Ratter in “Organic Cotton” by D Myers and S Stolton (1999, IT Publications). University of Essex SAFE Research Database 2001

<sup>48</sup> Source SACDEP 2006 personal communication

#### **2.2.4. Certified organic cotton in Uganda<sup>49</sup>**

Cotton production was introduced in Uganda in the 1940s, but the production virtually stopped between 1972 and 1986 due to poor prices and an unfavourable policy environment. Since 1986 there has been a revival in agriculture and a renewal of the cash crop sector, which has made way for organic cotton production in certain districts of Uganda, including in the low-potential east and north-east of the country. In 1994 organic cotton production only involved 200 farmers. By the year 2000, some 24,000 had become organic.

The majority of cotton producers are small-scale resource-poor farmers. Soil fertility and pest management is maintained through traditional cultural practices such as fallowing, crop rotations and natural pest control. Although agricultural policy generally promotes the use of pesticides, some areas of Uganda are now exempt from pesticide promotion campaigns and some districts are now promoting organic agriculture.

Organic cotton production achieves yields of 1 000-1 250 kg/hectare of seed cotton giving approximately 300-320 kg of cotton lint. Recent studies have reported that that organic farmers have started to obtain high cotton yields compared to conventional farming systems. In addition organic cotton receives premium prices, on average a 20% organic premium on export, which relates to a 15-20% premium over farm-gate prices. Organic cotton farming is therefore economically viable and this has tempted many farmers into organic production.

Organic cotton production is mainly a private-sector market driven, business activity organized by exporters while the conventional system is under government promotion. Organic cotton production is therefore well structured with extensive support from Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa (EPOPA) under the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA). EPOPA works with large groups of smallholder farmers (e.g. cooperative unions), giving technical advice on production and marketing.

#### **2.2.5. Community mobilisation against desertification (C-MAD) programme, Kenya<sup>50</sup>**

The C-MAD programme works in a 'low-potential' part of South Nyanza, western Kenya. The programme area has a single rainfall season, and the land is badly degraded due to overgrazing and deforestation. The project began as a straightforward tree-planting effort, expanded to incorporate soil conservation, soil fertility and organic farming methods, and now focuses on whole farm improvements. The social processes incorporate participatory learning methods, farmer-based research groups, strengthening community and village groups, and collaboration with government and non-government research and extension agencies. It works with about 500 farmers in some 1000 hectares, who have seen maize yields improve from about 2 to 4 t/ha. Income has also increased for many farmers following the cultivation of fruit (citrus, orange, mango, pineapple). The project reports increased local employment through growth in demand for on-farm labour. The cultivation of vegetables in home gardens has further improved domestic food security. The project also reports reduced child mortality and improved health and nutritional status.

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<sup>49</sup> Source: Walaga, 1997; van Elzakker and Tulip, 2000

<sup>50</sup> Source: Peter Omondi, C-MAD and Questionnaire for University of Essex SAFE Research Database

### 2.2.6. Small-Scale Aquaculture in Malawi<sup>51</sup>

The International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM) works to integrate pond fish culture into low input farm systems in Malawi. The programme uses a participatory process for farmers and scientists jointly to map resource flows on farms, and then identify the potential for adjustments that would bring synergistic effects. It has worked with some 2000 individual farmers on both vegetable improvements in home gardens and fish-pond aquaculture. This integrated agriculture-aquaculture component of farmers often comprises only 500 m<sup>2</sup> within an average farm size of 1.5 hectares. Yet intensification of just this core component has led to significant improvements in food security – vegetable yields have grown to 2700 to 4000 kg/ha, and fish ponds produce the equivalent of 1500 kg/ha of fish – a new source of food for households. These integrated farms also produce six times more cash than conventional farms – with the vegetable-fish element contributing up to 70% of annual cash income. ICLARM has documented the steady improvement of productivity in these systems amongst collaborating farmers – with pond productivity increasing steadily from 800 to 1500 kg/ha. Amongst those farmers trained only through the conventional Training and Visit system in southern Malawi, yields by contrast fall steadily, as the over-designed systems unravelled as farmers lost control. An asset-building approach, building both on natural capital on the farm and farmers own human capital (skills and knowledge) allows for continuous readjustments over time.

### 2.2.7. ICIPE *Vutu-sukumu* (Push-pull) pest management in smallholder systems, Kenya<sup>52</sup>

The work of ICIPE is explicitly focused on designing low-cost integrated pest management technology. It works closely with farmers to test and adapt technologies. It is also producing unexpected synergistic effects through manipulation of agricultural systems and the paradigms that define them. One activity is investigating novel habitat management approaches to suppress cereal stem borer and *Striga* populations in maize and sorghum. This project is developing novel 'push-pull' strategies to repel stem borers from the cereal crop and attract them to intercrop or barrier forage grasses. It has found extra-ordinary multi-functionality in a range of fodder grasses and legumes in cereal systems. The strategy involves trapping pests on highly susceptible trap plants (pull) and driving them away from the crop using a repellent intercrop (push):

1. The forage grasses, *Pennisetum purpureum* (Napier grass) and *Sorghum vulgare sudanense* (Sudan grass), attract greater oviposition by stem borers than cultivated maize.
2. Non-host forage plants, *Melinis minutiflora* (molasses grass) and *Desmodium uncinatum* (silver leaf) repel female stalk borers (*Chilo spp*).
3. Intercropping with molasses grass (*Melinis minutiflora*) increases parasitism, particularly by the larval parasitoid, *Cotesia sesamiae*, and the pupal parasitoid *Dentichasmis busseolae*. *Melinis* contains several physiologically active compounds. Two of these inhibit oviposition (egg laying) in *Chilo*, even at low concentrations.
4. Molasses grass also emits a chemical, (E)-4,8-dimethyl-1,3,7-nonatriene, which summons the borers' natural enemies.
5. Napier grass also has its own defence mechanism against crop borers: when the larvae enter the stem, the plant produces a gum-like substance kills the pest.

<sup>51</sup> Source: Randall Brummet, Daniel Jama; Brummet, 2000 and Questionnaire for University of Essex SAFE Research Database

<sup>52</sup> Sources: Hans Herren, John Pickett, ICIPE annual reports; Pickett, 1999; Khan et al, 2000, ICIPE 2005

6. Sudan grass also increases the efficiency of the natural enemies (the parasitism rate on larvae of the spotted stem borer, *Chilo partellus* more than tripled, from 4.8% to 18.9% when the grass was planted around maize in a field and from 0.5% to 6.2% on *Busseola fusca*, another important pest).
7. ICIPE has found that intercropping maize with the fodder legumes *Desmodium uncinatum* (silver leaf) and *D. intortum* (green leaf) reduced infestation of parasitic weed, *Striga hermonthica* by a factor of 40 compared to maize monocrop. Reduction in *Striga* infestation by intercropping maize with the two species of *Desmodium* was significantly more than intercropping maize with soybean, sun hemp and cowpea.

Researchers from ICIPE and IACR-Rothamsted have found that such 'push-pull', using the attractive plants as trap crops and repellent plants as intercrops, reduces stem borer attack and increases levels of parasitism of borers on protected maize, resulting in a significant increase in yield. Farmer participatory trials in 1997 and 1998 have shown significant yield increases in maize. The aim is now to develop a maize-based cropping system that will reduce yield losses due to both stem borer and *Striga* and at the same time improve soil fertility due to nitrogen-fixing action of *Desmodium*. Such a redesigned and diverse system has many of the characteristics of 'traditional' farms in Kenya. ICIPE has trained a network of farmer teachers and now over 3000 farmers have adopted these push-pull technologies.

### **2.2.8. Ethiopia: Cheha Integrated Rural Development Project<sup>53</sup>**

This is an example of an integrated and relatively small-scale project making a substantial impact on regional food security. It has been working in south-west Ethiopia since the drought of 1984, and has introduced new varieties of crops (vegetables) and trees (fruit and forest), promoted organic manures for soil fertility and botanicals for pest control, and introduced veterinary services. Some 12,500 farm households have adopted sustainable agriculture on about 5000 ha, resulting in a 70% improvement of overall nutrition levels within the project area, along with a 60% increase in crop yields. Some farmers have begun to produce excess crops which they sell in local markets, earning much needed income for their families. Thus an area once reliant entirely on emergency food aid has now become able to feed itself and have enough left over to contribute to surplus. The real promise of the programme, however, lies in the fact that farmers are replicating activities on their own initiative (including those outside the project area), where once they had to be encouraged to participate through food for work payments.

### **2.2.9. Mumias Education for Empowerment Project, Kakamega, Kenya<sup>54</sup>**

The MEFE project works with some 2070 households in Kakamega, and area of western Kenya characterised by high rates of rural malnutrition, infant mortality and non-literacy. Severe food insecurity affected 1 in 4 people before the project, with many households only food secure for 1-3 months per year. The project uses a structured learning process (REFLECT) to encourage all groups to analyse critically their own environment and to seek new solutions based on locally-available resources. The project uses a range of integrated pest management methods together with legumes, cover crops and green manures for soil fertility improvement. Raised beds have been incorporated on farms to increase vegetable

<sup>53</sup> Source: Food for the Hungry International and Questionnaire for University of Essex SAFE Research Database 2001

<sup>54</sup> Source: Francisca Mate, James Atema and Questionnaire for University of Essex SAFE Research Database 2001

production. As a result, beans and groundnut yields have doubled from 300 to 600 kg/ha. The project reports that the food security period has improved to 3-6 months for a typical household. The increased consumption of protein particularly benefits child health.

#### **2.2.10. LOMADEF, Lipangwe, Malawi<sup>55</sup>**

In 1993, the challenge of crop productivity far below subsistence levels, soils with deteriorating fertility and escalating prices of essential farm inputs inspired a group of determined Malawian smallholder farmers to provide themselves with hands-on experience with selected organic soil improvement practices. As a result, they established the Lipangwe Organic Manure Demonstration Farm (LOMADEF), a small farm on a steep undulating landscape with the objective of demonstrating the benefits of organic agriculture and to reduce dependence of smallholder subsistence farmers on artificial fertilizers; nurture a sense of self reliance among farmers; use the demonstration farm for smallholder farmers from all over the country to come and learn about organic agriculture techniques and establish further sustainable agriculture demonstration farms for smallholder farmers.

The first step LOMADEF took was to use manure on the fields. While surrounding farmers suffered wilted and stunted crops, the LOMADEF farm gave very conspicuous results which encouraged more farmers, other agricultural NGOs and the Government to take an interest. Over 1200 farmers have since been brought in to observe the benefits of organic agriculture and to learn some simple organic agriculture practices. LOMADEF has now grown from one club to thirteen and membership has increased from 13 to 200, with clubs spread across the country. The LOMADEF experience suggests that smallholder-managed demonstrations that show affordable technologies are very attractive to smallholder farmers.

#### **2.2.11. Organic Cashews and vegetables in Mkuranga District, Tanzania<sup>56</sup>**

Providing children with good, nutritious food, healthcare, clothing and education is at the forefront of the minds of most mothers, including the women farmers of Mkuranga district, 40 km south of Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania. Since 2004, women from this region have come together and formed groups all associated under the umbrella of 'Muungano<sup>57</sup>' and have been collaborating on organic vegetable production and processing activities with the aim of producing organic vegetables for increased food security and incomes.

Traditionally, farmers in this area have grown rice and cassava, and have been dependent on income from the sale of coconuts, or more recently cashew nuts, to sustain their families. With facilitation from the SIDA-funded EPOPA programme, a large Dar es Salaam-based company, Premier Cashews Industry Ltd. (PCI), has converted part of its system to be able to process certified organic cashew nuts providing the opportunity of organic cashew production for export for farmers in Mkurunga. PCI works with 480 farmers in three villages in the district to grow and supply the organic cashew nuts.

However, farming households still remain highly vulnerable to changes in world market prices for cashews and when combined with the substantial pressures put on their limited

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<sup>55</sup> Source: Kanjanga,

<sup>56</sup> Source: Petra Bakewell-Stone Organising for organic agriculture in Tanzania LEISA Magazine 22.2 June 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Muungano means "union" in Kiswahili

household resources by the unreliable climate and repeated droughts of recent years, food security was not always achieved in the region.

The women grow fruits such as bananas and papaya, and vegetables including amaranths, sweet potatoes, okra, cassava, collard and tomatoes. Farming is carried out through a mixture of traditional and novel practices such as mulching and the use of botanical pesticides. An intimate local knowledge of the area's ecological conditions has been combined with new technologies such as sunken beds and contour planting for soil and water conservation.

The reliance on locally-available natural and social resources and the internalisation of organic principles of production into the farming system have improved overall agroecosystem sustainability in Mkuranga. Organic vegetable production has helped to diversify sources of food and income which is particularly important in an area where relatively good prices for cashews have resulted in neglect of food crops.

Social capital in the region between the women has improved. Helping one another financially during difficult periods, such as with school fees and medical expenses, by opening savings accounts was one of the main motivations for the project and cooperation between women around a common goal has created powerful momentum in the drive for community development. In addition to vegetables, the local groups are engaged in many other activities such as producing red palm oil, handicrafts (such as grass mat-making and basketry), local chicken-rearing and cassava milling to make flour for baking cakes and doughnuts. Although these activities used to be carried out individually, the formation of groups has meant that production is more organised, which has also increased access to markets.

So, far, the women's groups have been selling at local markets and directly to local schools. Formal certification of organic production is generally of low priority where production levels are low and most of the produce is marketed locally. However, after a visit by the manager of the national certification body, TanCert, the groups have decided to certify their production as organic. Specialist and general stores in Dar es Salaam are increasingly demonstrating their willingness to market fresh and processed organic produce, and large hotels are also emerging as a potential market. The relative proximity to the main national market lends itself well to expansion of trading activities in this area.

Whilst certification could have many advantages, it may not solve all farmers' problems. Whilst there are many opportunities for improving the sustainability of smallholder livelihoods through organic agriculture, these depend upon adequate human and social capital. The introduction of technologies and establishment of market linkages is of limited assistance without a corresponding expansion of awareness about organic production and trade and new ways of working together. Organic agriculture that integrates both a production and a community focus gives an opportunity to secure sustainable livelihoods for smallholders in Africa. This can enable them to make more efficient use of available resources within the current institutional context and to build upon existing livelihood strategies. If community organisations, commercial enterprises and other stakeholders were to collaborate on certification procedures, this would bring additional benefits by combining farmer empowerment with production of high quality products for the concerned consumer.

### 2.2.12. Soil and crop productivity improvements, EAT, Kenya<sup>58</sup>

The Environmental Action Team (EAT) soil and crop productivity enhancement project covers smallholder-farming communities of Trans Nzoia, West Pokot, Lugari and Bungoma districts in North Rift and western regions of Kenya. Here, rainfall reliability is generally high in most of the areas except West Pokot District where climate is marginal. However most of the districts are covered by soils that are inherently low in fertility; it is an area with traditionally low crop productivity (less than 2 tons/ha for maize and less than 0.1 tons/ha for beans); there is low diversity in the crops that are grown (about 95% of cultivated land covered by the dominant crops of maize and beans) and there is rampant household food insecurity (with an average 3.3 months of hunger experienced every year). The aim of this EAT project is to enhance household food security within the target farming communities through increased crop yields by encouraging soil and crop productivity improvements. EAT carries out training using participatory methodologies such as field days, demonstrations, farmer verification trials, farmer follow-ups, farmer to farmer visits; it encourages the formation of collaborative partnerships and participatory learning and identification. EAT instructs on soil fertility management, crop diversification, improved crop management and improved farm planning.

This has resulted in more than 1000 farmers drawn from different farming communities directly trained through the project and they are integrating components into their farms. Untrained farmers are learning from trained farmers causing a multiplier effect so the number of farmers who have benefited from the project is much higher. Integration of components has resulted in maize yields of 3414 kg/ha (71% increase in productivity), while bean yields have increased to 258 kg/ha (158% increase in productivity) as compared to traditional agriculture. There has also been an increased diversity of crops grown. These results have led to broad reaching impacts on food and nutrition security, the natural environment, on communities, education and economy (see Box 4.)

#### **Box 4. Impacts of the soil and crop productivity enhancement project of EAT Kenya**

- Increases in diversity in food crops available on farms has made diets more varied and has thus improved health
- Surplus produce is sold and income used to access health facilities and medicines
- There are reduced health risks for farmers because of reduced pesticide use
- Surplus produce sold and income used to pay school fees for farmers' children and thus improved education
- Reduction in soil loss from farms following implementation of soil conservation techniques
- Increased soil health through soil organic matter accumulation following application of organic manures
- Cohesion within farming communities enhanced through forums organized for farmers for sharing ideas and findings on productivity improvement and marketing of farm produce
- Groups formed during the project's interactions with farmers have evolved into channels for entry into other development interventions within the communities, such as group marketing of farm produce
- Farmers who have adopted new practices have become teachers for other community members on techniques for improving productivity, and in the process they themselves have gained more respect and social standing within communities and households, which has increased their self esteem
- More people have gained self-employment in farming and businesses established through finances obtained from sale of surplus farm produce
- Capacity of individual farmers to evaluate emerging production techniques has increased

<sup>58</sup> Source: Charles Wasonga, EAT Kenya pers. Com. 2005.

- Households have been financially empowered and have been able to adopt technological advancements such as mobile telephones, which have increased communications and enhanced efficiency in exploitation of market opportunities
- Unemployment levels within farming communities have reduced leading to an overall reduction in poverty within households

Source: Charles Wasonga, EAT Kenya pers. Com. 2005.

### 2.2.13. Organic agriculture Iganga District, Uganda<sup>59</sup>

The Poverty Eradication through Environmentally Sustainable Technologies (PEEST) project has been implemented in the Iganga District of Eastern Uganda since June 1997 by Africa 2000 Network. The aim of the project is to combat environmental degradation by promoting ecologically sustainable development for improved livelihoods among the smallholder farmers in the District. Since the 1970s the natural and agro-ecosystems of the area have been suffering degradation following rapid population growth and deterioration in the economic situation. As the population grew, natural forest and woodlands were cleared for agricultural use, fuel wood, timber and human settlements. This mass clearing of forests, woodlands and wetlands has resulted in an increasing scarcity of fuel wood, timber, and drinking water from natural wells and springs which are increasingly drying up at a much faster rate during the dry season.

By 1997, many farmers in the Iganga District were faced with a problem of increasing vulnerability characterized by high poverty levels (above the national average of 45% living below the poverty level of one dollar per day) and food insecurity. The three-year Poverty Eradication through Environmentally Sustainable Technologies project (PEEST) was initiated in 1997 with the aim of improving the livelihoods of the smallholder farmers through increased agriculture productivity and sustainable natural resource management. The aims of the project were to provide knowledge and skills to enable communities to manage their environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner; facilitate communities in the District to improve food security and diets, and to increase incomes and fuel wood production; ensure active participation of both men and women as a family unit for improved family welfare and ensure that successful projects and practices are replicated, where conditions permit, and unsuccessful ones avoided.

Partners supporting PEEST include: Cordaid (formerly Balance), International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Programme (TSBF), the Kawanda Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) of the National Agriculture Research Organization (NARO), Makerere University Soil Science Department and SIDA's Regional Land Management Unit.

The first phase of the project used participatory methodologies and raised environmental awareness in the community, equipped farmers with knowledge and analytical skills about their environment and skills to manage their natural and agricultural resources more sustainably. This resulted in improved productivity of natural resources. The technologies and practices, which were adapted and adopted, reduced soil erosion, conserved soil water, helped prevent soil nutrient loss, improved soil fertility resulting in improved agriculture productivity. By improving soil fertility the demand for more land from forests and wetlands has been eliminated for those participating farmers. The new agroforestry

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<sup>59</sup> Source: Walaga and Kakinda 2002

technologies increased the supply of fuel wood and fodder and contributed to increasing the fertility of the soils, while the improved cook stove reduced the demand for fuel wood. The promotion of indigenous crop varieties contributed to improving the food security of the community and to the conservation of the local agrobiodiversity. Of the 10,000 farmers reached in the first phase of the project, 99 percent reported increased food supplies and many reported increased income.

However the rapidly growing population of a predominately rural population remains a serious challenge. The project has recognized this problem and is now adding family planning and HIV/AIDS in its interventions. Gender inequity remains a serious limitation to organic agriculture development in Uganda as it affects labour deployment and allocation of resources. The project has mainstreamed gender and instituted incentives like support to families that show a higher degree of gender equity to promote change. Gender equity is a social phenomenon and takes time to take effect in many of the families.

The project is now in its second phase of implementation with the aim of reaching a total of 50 000 households in the District. With many farmers replicating organic farming practices and technologies, positive contributions of organic agriculture to the ecosystem of the District are being multiplied. The adoption of sustainable agriculture techniques has also improved the livelihoods of rural farm households. They are particularly suitable to small and resource poor farmers and scaling-up should be facilitated to benefit many more farmers more quickly.

#### **2.2.14. Mount Kenya Organic Farm (MOOF), Kenya<sup>60</sup>**

Mount Kenya Organic Farm (MOOF) is a registered NGO which was established in 1999 with a remit to facilitate smallholder producer groups in the production and marketing of high value certified organic products. The primary objective is 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, to tackle poverty and to empower the local community through the production of speciality high value organic crops for local and export markets. Its main goal is to "Tackle Poverty among Smallholder Farmers through Organic Trade."

MOOF has formed links 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 such as Kenya Organic Oil Farmers Organisation (KOOOF) and overseas.

The MOOF farm demonstration garden consists of 0.25 acres and is made up of a number of raised beds growing 14 vegetable types. During the 2000-2002 drought, vegetables in the demonstration garden fared well compared to others in surrounding gardens. Pest control included the use of natural predators, and plant extracts, neem and garlic sprays. MOOF has already developed a local network of Self-Help smallholder groups which it services with training and advice on certified organic farming technologies. Farmers trained by MOOF and adopting some organic methods like soil management practices (which help to

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<sup>60</sup> Source: Peter Murage Pers.com. 2006

retain moisture) had a greater success story for their crops. As a result 925 farmers visited MOOF organic gardens and 300 farmers adopted at least one organic technique in food production

MOOF has recently started the organic borage for export project, which is currently supported by USAID Development Agency through FINTRAC – Horticulture Development Centre and Earthoil. 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. This organic agriculture is labour intensive and has contributed to large number of people getting employed in the sub-sector. Borage seeds fetch 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 kg per acre and the cost of production is very minimal as compared to conventional agricultural technologies. Income generated from the 30 acres of borage of this project in 2006 estimated Kshs. 4.5 Million (US\$ 64,000) coming into the Nanyuki community (80 smallholder farmers) over a period of 7 months.

It is hoped that income generated from this project will enable people to have access to better health facilities, afford a family bicycle and have access to more protein foods from stocking Tilapia fish for their diets. Income generated from sale of organic oil crops is also hoped to provide for the money needed for the household basic needs and hence reduce encroachment to Mt. Kenya forest for charcoal burning and the 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 further add to their Borage income.

#### **2.2.15. Pelum, Tanzania<sup>61</sup>**

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management-Tanzania (PELUM-Tanzania), is a network of civil society organisation working with rural communities in promoting sustainable agriculture in Tanzania. PELUM-Tanzania is one of the ten Country Working Groups (CWGs) in East, Central and Southern Africa that form PELUM Association. The association was launched in 1995 and its headquarters is in Lusaka Zambia. PELUM also has CWGs in Kenya and Uganda. Currently PELUM-Tanzania has a total of 33 member organisations that have all come together to facilitate learning, networking and advocacy in participatory ecological land use management. As a network of CSOs, PELUM-Tanzania does not work directly with smallholder farmers but works through Member Organisations that work with the rural community in Tanzania.

The objectives of PELUM Tanzania are to develop capacity of member organisations through organising own training workshops; facilitate networking through farmer organisations; be a tool for documentation and communication; facilitate advocacy work in food and seed security and sustainable land use management; advocate issues of marketing and trade and develop PELUM-Tanzania membership functioning, assessment and visibility. PELUM-Tanzania works with and for smallholder farmers to tackle food security

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<sup>61</sup> Source: Donati Alex Senzia pers. Com 2006, PELUM TZ

issues by advocating participatory policy formulation; access to markets; seed security, improved rural infrastructure (roads, storage facilities, physical markets, communication etc) and allocation of 10% of national budget to agriculture and food security by 2010. PELUM-Tanzania also organises farmer exchange visits and networking days so that farmers can learn and exchange best practices in agricultural sector. During networking days, farmers' groups and networks through member organisations come together exhibit their produces, share experiences and skills in production, processing, storage and marketing of agricultural products.

In 2003, 4 field staff from PELUM Tanzania participated in a two weeks workshop on Organic farming and Marketing organised by PELUM Association with an aim to introduce member organisations to the potentials of organic farming in Tanzania. After this workshop, some members have started strategies for introducing organic farming in their areas. PELUM-Tanzania also made it possible for its member organisations and farmers to meet with organic farming institutions in Tanzania to know more about organic farming (institutions such as EPOPA (Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa), TOAM (Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement) and Tancert (Tanzania Organic farming Certification association)).

### 2.3 Discussion of Evidence

Recent research and the case studies highlighted in this report reinforce the view that food security is influenced by many different factors that vary from region to region and although an increase in yield is a fundamental factor, this alone cannot guarantee a reduction in food insecurity. Other factors such as improvements to the natural, social and human capital assets base that organic agriculture provide, are also significant and can often be seen as measures of success in reducing food insecurity.

A study in 2002 comparing organic initiatives to other sustainable but not purely organic projects<sup>62</sup> found a number of findings that are also reflected in the case studies in this research. Organic systems are more integrated than average, as they tend to use a larger number of the improvement mechanisms and focus on intensifying microenvironments on farms and diversifying by adding new regenerative components to the system. A large proportion of organic and near-organic systems focus on social capital building through groups and 97% of cases in the 2002 study have a human capital development element. Adding value through direct links to markets and consumers has also been shown to be an important development in the success of organic systems.

The productivity of organic agriculture systems tends to vary through the different stages transition (i) in-transition from conventional/ traditional to organic management; (ii) in-conversion from traditional to organic management; (iii) organic management based on input substitution, and (iv) complete shift to a systems approach<sup>63</sup>.

Particularly in more industrialised farming systems, after switching from synthetic inputs to organic systems farmers usually experience an initial decline in yields. After the agro-ecosystem is restored and organic management systems are fully implemented, yields increase significantly. The issue of asset accumulation over time is also important. If

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<sup>62</sup> Pretty 2002

<sup>63</sup> Altieri 2002

agricultural systems are low in natural, social and human assets, either intrinsically low, or have become damaged by degradation, then a sudden switch to organic practices that rely on these very assets will not be immediately successful and may take time to reach its full potential.

Evidence from this study and other s shows that yields from organic systems tend to be stable when converting from low-input systems (those that may have been by-passed by the “green revolution”); they can outperform traditional systems and can match and increase those yields of more conventional input intensive systems over time. However these periods of lower yields seem to be more apparent during conversions of industrialised agricultural systems<sup>64</sup>.

Farming systems also become more productive when human capital increases, particularly in the form of the capacity of farmers to innovate and adapt their farm systems for sustainable outcomes. Sustainable and organic agriculture is not a defined set of particular technologies, nor is it a simple model to be widely applied with time. It needs to be conceived of as a process for social learning. Lack of information on agroecology and the necessary skills to manage diverse farming systems is a major barrier to the adoption of organic agriculture<sup>65</sup>.

Much less is known about organic and near organic resource-conserving technologies than is known about the use of external inputs in modernized systems. So it is clear that the process by which farmers learn about alternative ways of farming is crucial. If alternatives are enforced or coerced, then farmers may only adopt them for a limited period. But if the process is participatory and enhances farmers' capacity to learn about their farm and its resources, then the foundation for change and continuous innovation is laid<sup>66</sup>.

The transition from unsustainable agricultural systems to those which are organic is often conceived as requiring sudden shifts in both practices and attitudes, but not all farmers are able or willing to take such a leap. However, as highlighted by the examples from East Africa, all farmers can take small steps, and small steps added together can bring about big transformations.

## **2.4 Limitations and challenges to the spread of organic agriculture in East Africa**

### *2.4.1 Knowledge*

Although many resource-conserving technologies and practices are currently being used in East Africa, the total number of farmers using them is still relatively small. Lack of knowledge of organic and sustainable agricultural techniques is often a limiting factor in the spread of organic production.

Adoption of these new technologies is also not a costless process for some farmers as often they cannot simply cut their existing use of fertilizer or pesticides and hope to maintain outputs immediately, so making operations more profitable. One of the reasons that these transition costs arise is that farmers must first invest in learning. As recent and current

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<sup>64</sup> Altieri 2002 and Pretty 2002

<sup>65</sup> Pretty and Ward 2001, Röling and Wagemakers 1997, Pretty 2002

<sup>66</sup> Bunch and López 1996

agricultural policies have tended to promote specialised, non-adaptive systems with a lower innovation capacity, farmers then have to spend time learning about a greater diversity of practices and measures. Lack of information and management skills is, therefore, a major barrier to the adoption of organic agriculture. During the transition period, farmers must experiment more, and so incur the costs of making mistakes as well as those of acquiring new knowledge and information<sup>67</sup>.

In addition, lack of knowledge and information about organic agriculture among government bureaucrats and other influential actors in educational and research institutions, also leads to poor appreciation of the potential for organic and near organic agriculture in poverty eradication and tackling food security issues.

#### *2.4.2 Support and infrastructure*

The difficulties in disseminating information in remote and marginal rural areas in East Africa, is also a limiting factor to the spread of organic production. One of the greatest constraints faced by farmers changing to organic and near organic systems is they lack knowledge, information sources, and technical support. Greater government investment in appropriate research and extension services would help overcome these constraints<sup>68</sup>.

East Africa is starting to benefit from organic market opportunities but at the moment large certified producers and operators find it easier to access international markets than the smaller scale farm enterprise. Where smaller farmers are organised into farmer groups and are being supported by organisations including KOAN, NOGAMU and TOAM they are able to access markets more easily but for many the costs of certification systems and complying with international standards may also be prohibitive<sup>69</sup>.

Another factor affecting farmers wanting to take advantage of the organic export market is the limited infrastructure in East Africa. Many companies who specialise in organic produce for the overseas export market often expect large quantities of organic produce at once. When considering that much of the certified organic produce in East African countries may be grown by a cooperative group of small farmers the logistics required to ensure that produce leaves from many different farms yet reaches the destination on time (with transport infrastructure often very limited or not consistent) and in perfect condition (with limited and inconsistent refrigeration facilities available). In order for farmers from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to compete in the international organic markets significant investment into supporting infrastructure is essential.

The lack of distinct domestic organic markets in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania alike is seen to make commercialised organic agriculture (monocropping) a high risk venture as it relies solely on the export market<sup>70</sup>.

Lack of financial resources has also limited the spread of organic agriculture in East Africa because many farmers are small-scale, poor and lack the financial resources to enable them to start the transition to organic agriculture.

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<sup>67</sup> Orr, 1992; Röling and Wagemakers 1998; Bentley et al. 2003; Lieblin et al. 2004; Bawden 2005; Chambers 2005, Gallagher et al. 2005

<sup>68</sup> Altieri 2002

<sup>69</sup> Wynen and Vanzetti 2002

<sup>70</sup> Walaga 2005

It is not just farmers who lack the financial resources facilitate organic production and to venture towards the export market, there is also the problem of limited and uncertain funding for development agents and NGOs involved in implementation of organic support programs within the farming communities.

#### *2.4.3 Winners and Losers*

In some contexts where organic agriculture is being adopted, there will also be critical trade-offs that may limit the spread and potential to scale-up. The use of one asset for improvements can result in the depletion of another (e.g. building a road to improve marketing near a forest can aid illegal timber extraction). In some cases, progress in one component of a farm system may cause secondary problems, such as increased yields leading to increased offtake of nutrients, which may need to be supplied from external sources<sup>71</sup>.

Another secondary problem that may arise in these projects includes land having to be closed off to grazing for rehabilitation, resulting in people with no other source of feed having to sell their livestock.

There will also be new winners and losers with the wider adoption of organic agricultural systems. This model for farming systems implies a very limited role for current agro-chemical products, the producers of which are unlikely to accept market losses lightly.

#### *2.4.4 Gender, health, employment and land tenure issues*

In some cases organic farming systems may increase the household workload and the burden may particularly fall on women if the cropping intensity of the farm increases or new lands are taken into cultivation. However with the exception of vegetables, additional incomes arising from sales of produce, particularly coffee and cotton for export, may go directly to the men, who are less likely than women to invest in the children and the household as a whole. Farmers are also sometimes hesitant to adopt more labour intensive farming methods sometimes associated with organic agriculture, particularly if they are to be used with crops they consider as low value.

Sustainable livelihoods based on organic agricultural production may appear to be keeping people in rural areas away from centres of power, and 'modern' society when the aspirations of some rural people's aspirations may precisely be to gain sufficient resources to leave rural areas.

The poor health of the farming workforce in some areas due to disease, HIV /AIDS and malnutrition will also affect and reduce the productivity of labour in some areas of East Africa.

Whilst a whole systems organic farming approach advocates an integrated system featuring both crops and livestock, some of the communities in East Africa are traditionally pastoral and sometimes crop-livestock conflicts can occur.

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<sup>71</sup> Smaling *et al.*, 1997

Organic agriculture that increases the assets base and the so the value and potential of the land may simply increase the incentives for more powerful interests to take over, such as landlords taking back formerly degraded land from tenants who had adopted soil-improving methods. Conversely, tenant farmers may also be reluctant to spend any initial outlay on improvements to someone else's land.

#### *2.4.5 External factors*

External factors that limit the spread of uptake of organic and near organic farming in East Africa are largely the same as those external factors that contribute to and exasperate food insecurity (see section 1.5). Particularly though, the high incidence of pest and diseases incidences on some species and in some areas may have limited the uptake of organic agriculture and of course climate - unfavourable weather conditions such as droughts may limit the spread of some the organic techniques to certain areas.

#### *2.4.6 Participatory development policies for organic agriculture*

The findings from this report suggests that the technical improvements leading to natural capital accumulation are being widely applied with organic agriculture development, but there remains a need to focus more on social capital and institutional development for building resilience and innovation capacity within communities, and aiding the spread of good practice in organic agriculture<sup>72</sup>.

As indicated earlier in this paper, agricultural sustainability can contribute to increased food production, as well as making a positive impact on the environment, society and individuals. Clearly much can and is being done with existing resources, but a wider transition towards organic agriculture will not occur without some external support and money. As the evidence shows it costs time and money to rebuild depleted natural and social capital and also there are costs in developing new or adapting old technologies.

Most agricultural sustainability improvements worldwide occurring in the 1990s and early 2000s appear to have arisen despite existing national and institutional policies, rather than because of them. The lack of enabling policies, particularly those aimed at fostering growth of the organic sector in areas of research and development and markets has been a major obstacle to the spread of organic farming. The tendency of governments has been to create programmes designed to draw small farm agriculture into (high-input) technology and higher-value crops especially for export markets, on the assumption that they will become more productive and competitive and this has been the case in East Africa. Policies designed to deliver increased food production will have to be changed and be developed with full stakeholder consultation if they are to help deliver environmental and social benefits too. Rural development policies, that focus on 'exogenous' solutions to the economic and social problems of rural neighbourhoods are ill-suited to the needs of the community and to participatory development<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Pretty 2002

<sup>73</sup> Dasgupta 1998, Altieri 2002

Although almost every country would now say it supports the idea of agricultural sustainability, the evidence points towards only patchy reforms. Only three countries have given explicit national support for sustainable agriculture: Cuba has a national policy for alternative agriculture; Switzerland has three tiers of support to encourage environmental services from agriculture and rural development, and Bhutan has a national environmental policy coordinated across all sectors. Neither Tanzania, Kenya or Uganda have included organic farming in main agricultural policy and many policies still support input based, non-organic agriculture. However Kenya's catchment approach to soil conservation is evidence of reform of parts of its agricultural policy<sup>74</sup>.

More importantly, an export-led approach to organic agriculture can ignore the in-country opportunities for agricultural development focused on local and regional markets. Agricultural policies with food security, sustainability and poverty-reduction aims should therefore adopt an approach with varying strands, one that emphasises aspects such as small farmer development linked to local markets; agri-business development (both small businesses and export-led and agro-processing and value-added activities to ensure that returns are maximised in-country.

All case studies in this research where reliable data has been reported have shown increases in per hectare productivity for food crops, which goes against the popular myth that organic agriculture cannot increase agricultural productivity. Whilst we cannot guarantee whether a transition to whole system organic agriculture, delivering greater benefits at the scale occurring in these projects, will result in enough food to meet the current food needs in Africa and other developing countries, but what is being seen is highly promising. There is also scope for additional confidence, as the evidence indicates that this productivity can grow over time if natural, social and human assets are accumulated<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Funes et al 2002; Pretty 2002; Herzog et al 2005

<sup>75</sup> Borlaug 1994a, b; Avery 1995

### Section 3. Conclusions

- Whole system organic agriculture can increase agricultural productivity and can raise incomes with low-cost locally available and appropriate technologies without causing environmental damage. Furthermore evidence shows that organic agriculture can build up natural resources, strengthen communities and improve human capacity thus improving food security by addressing many different causal factors simultaneously.
- Organic and near organic agriculture methods and technologies are ideally suited for many poor, marginalised smallholder farmers in areas of Kenya, Uganda and Republic of Tanzania as they require minimal or no external inputs, use locally and naturally available materials to produce high quality products and encourage a whole system approach to farming that is more diverse and resistant to stress.
- Certified organic production for a purely export market, in order to obtain premium prices, whilst undoubtedly can lead to a decrease in farmer poverty, still leaves farmers vulnerable to export price fluctuations and crop failure. It can be argued that unless a whole system, holistic approach to organic farming is adopted, “organic” may not be “sustainable” and may not lead to increased food security in a region, whereas an integrated organic system, whether certified or non-certified, can provide food security at the same time as building up natural, human and social resources.
- Organic and near organic agricultural systems are making a significant contribution to the reduction of food insecurity and poverty in some areas of East Africa and to the improvement of rural livelihoods. There is the potential to do more in this area with enabling policy and institutional support.
- Organic agriculture is not directly and specifically supported by agricultural policy in East Africa and is sometimes actively hindered by policies advocating the use of high-input farming management practices. If organic agriculture and its associated positive side effects are to scale up, an enabling policy environment is critical.
- Whole system organic agriculture, whether certified or non-certified, is more management and knowledge intensive, and so requires building the learning and cooperative capacity of individuals and groups. This will require investment in social capital development at local level if organic agriculture is to spread.
- We know much more about intensive high-input farming systems than we do about sustainable organic systems so more information on agro-ecological technologies is needed. However this needs an emphasis shift of research and science budgets and the creation better linkages between scientists, agricultural training and extension providers and farmers.
- Partnerships between farmers, farmer groups, NGOs and CSOs, organic movement organisations, Governments and certifying bodies at all levels foster successful organic and near organic agriculture. In order to facilitate the spread of organic agriculture there is a need to work from local to national and international levels, as well as encourage links between government, NGOs, and the private sector.

- Improving agricultural sustainability through adoption of organic agriculture in East Africa may not bring all the solutions, but promising progress has been made in recent years. We cannot guarantee that a transition to organic agriculture will result in enough food to meet the current food needs in Africa or meet future needs after continued population growth and development, but the evidence gives room for optimism. With further specific support, these benefits to food security and related improvements to natural, social and human capital, could spread to much larger numbers of farmers and rural people in the coming decades.

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## Annex A. Key Organic Stakeholders

Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ABLH – Association for Better Land Husbandry</li> <li>• Baraka Agricultural College</li> <li>• Bungoma Family Development Programme</li> <li>• ICIPE – International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology</li> <li>• ICRAF – International Centre for Research in Agroforestry</li> <li>• ITDG Kenya – Intermediate Technology Development Group</li> <li>• KARI - Kenya Agricultural Research Institute</li> <li>• KARI – Kenya Agricultural Research Institute</li> <li>• KIOF - Kenya Institute of Organic Farming</li> <li>• KOAN- Kenyan Organic Agriculture Network</li> <li>• Manor House Agriculture Centre</li> <li>• OFOP - Organic Farming Outreach Programme</li> <li>• PELUM Kenya</li> <li>• SACDEP - Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme</li> <li>• SACRED-Africa - Sustainable Agriculture Centre for Research and Development in Africa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bufumbo Organic Agriculture Producers Association</li> <li>• CIOF – Ceres Institute of Organic Farming</li> <li>• COOPIBO-Uganda</li> <li>• Environmental Alert</li> <li>• EPOPA - Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa</li> <li>• International Centre for Tropical Agriculture,</li> <li>• Kayunga organic Agriculture producers Association</li> <li>• KOFT – Organic Farm and Training Centre</li> <li>• LOFP – Lango Organic Farming Production</li> <li>• Masaka Organic Producers</li> <li>• NOGAMO – National Organic Movement of Uganda</li> <li>• Nombe Organic producers Association</li> <li>• PELUM Uganda</li> <li>• RUCID - Rural Community in Development</li> <li>• SANU - Sustainable Agriculture Net of Uganda</li> <li>• Uganda Centre for Sustainable Agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COOPIBO-Tanzania</li> <li>• EPOPA TZ- Export Promotion of Organic Products from Africa</li> <li>• INADES – Formation</li> <li>• KCU - Kagera Cooperative Union</li> <li>• KIHATA – Chama Cha Kilimo Hai Tanzania</li> <li>• KNCU – Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union</li> <li>• Laela Agricultural Centre</li> <li>• PELUM Tanzania</li> <li>• TOAM – Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement</li> <li>• TOFO – Tanzania Organic Foundation</li> <li>• TOPP - Tanzania Organisation of Permaculture Promoters</li> </ul>