

The Organic Farmer

The newspaper for sustainable agriculture in Kenya

Nr. 9 January 2006



Su Kahumbu's farm is certified as organic

All our readers know Su Kahumbu, the prominent organic farmer from Limuru, who also answers questions from you farmers. In mid-December last year she received the Certification of Registration from Musa Njoka, director of a Kenyan Certification Company, EnCert. This is a big step for the local organic farming community, which is struggling to market their organic produce, as you can read on pages 4 and 5. *(Photo TOF)*

Early land preparation important

Many farmers wait until it is too late to prepare their land for planting.

By The Organic Farmer

In the farmers' calendar, the month of January is important. This is because it is just after the harvest when most farmers prepare the land for the next crop. Proper land preparation at this

stage determines the quality of harvest the farmer will get at the end of the next season.

At this time, farmers have plenty of organic material, mainly maize and bean residues that remained in the shambas after the harvest. What often happens is that farmers release their animals to graze in the farm fields for a short time. Then they burn these materials. The burning will be done so that the farms can be ploughed in readiness for the planting season.

What farmers might not know is that this material is in fact very essential organic manure that supports a lot of life in the soil, such as worms and microscopic bacteria, which help release food for the plants in a balanced way.

Early land preparation, however, has many advantages for the farmer. One advantage is that it loosens the soil, making it easy for the plants roots to penetrate. Early digging also helps the circulation of air in the soil, which is essential for plant germination and growth. (See page 2)

Dear farmers,

First of all, we would like to wish you and your families a happy and prosperous New Year, good health, excellent harvests and sufficient rains throughout the year.

Finally, the Kenyan economy is slowly recovering. Since agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy, farmers have all reasons to be proud of having contributed to this recovery. Let us redouble our efforts! We need to be more practical in taking up challenges that confront us in our day-to-day farming activities. This is the only way we can solve our problems. We need more action and less talk. That is the reason why we are pushing for the marketing of organic products in Kenya (see pages 4 and 5). Even though the organic farming sector is still very young, it has a bright future.

At this time, we are lacking clear information of the potential and the needs of the organic farming community. Therefore we would like to ask you for a favour:

•First, to get a reliable idea of the number of organic farmers in Kenya, please let us know whether you are an organic farmer. Simply send us an SMS (see details on page 7).

•Secondly, in order to do a good job, The Organic Farmer would like to know what you as farmers think about our newspaper. Are you satisfied with the topics we write about? Do you understand the articles? What kind of articles would you prefer or wish to read? Do you miss reading about any topic, technology for instance?

To help us improve our services to you, we have prepared some questions. The questionnaire has been sent to around 800 farmers in all parts of the country. We will be grateful if those of you who get the questionnaire would fill it as straightforwardly as possible and send it back to us soonest, at least before the end of January. You will not meet any costs because we provide an addressed and stamped envelope, in which you will put the questionnaire and post it.

We thank you all for your cooperation and are looking forward to your responses. Your proposals will help us to improve our newspaper, to become more involved in a direct dialogue with you and to cater even better for the growing needs of the organic farming community.



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MY OPINION

By Isaac Maina Munyari

Have you ever planted crops in a former cowshed? And what did you discover? You got a very nice and healthy harvest. This is a good example for farmers. One can see, that farmyard manure is very important for soil fertility. A lot of farmers have a lot of such good experiences. But do we really share the knowledge with others? We should share information, especially when we are going organic. Up to now, we are a minority in the country. But things will change. It will change even faster if we work together.

I. Maina is a farmer in Subukia.

The Organic Farmer

Nr. 9, January 2006

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Publisher

International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE)
P.O.Box 30772, 00100 Nairobi
KENYA
Tel. +254 20 863 2000
e-mail: icipe@icipe.org
homepage: <http://www.icipe.org>

Editors

Peter Kamau, Peter Baumgartner

Secretariat

Lucy W. Macharia

Advisory Board

Dr. Bernhard Löhr, ICIPE
Dr. Nguya Maniania, ICIPE
Dr. Fritz Schulthess, ICIPE

Address

The Organic Farmer
P.O.Box 14352, 00800 Nairobi
KENYA
Tel. 020 445 03 98
e-mail : info@organickenya.com

Layout:

In-A-Vision Systems(k)

Soil care increases fertility

Proper soil cultivation methods can improve its quality and productivity

By *The Organic Farmer*

Good land preparation practice involves taking care of the soil to ensure it contributes to increased farm productivity. Working on the soil the right way can improve its capacity to retain water and allow the circulation of air. Water and warmth in the soil is also important for plant germination and growth. There are many ways a farmer can prepare their land for planting, but each depends on the type of crops they are planting and the type of soil they are working on.

For an organic farmer, it is important to add organic matter into the soil before preparation of the seedbed. Organic matter includes crop residues, green manure and farmyard manure. The organic matter should be dug into the top layer of the soil (to a depth of 15 to 20 cm).

Take care during cultivation

Soil cultivation has many advantages and disadvantages. One of the benefits is that it encourages the activity of soil organisms; it also helps to reduce evaporation and penetration of the water into the soil. Weeds and soil pests are controlled with good cultivation while soil hardening, caused by previous cultivation is repaired.

Soil fertility can be affected by cultivation methods used. Therefore farmers need to take care to ensure there is minimum disturbance of the soil life during cultivation. Working on the soil will always affect its structure in one way or another. In Africa for example, continuous cultivation speeds up the decaying of organic matter, which can lead to loss of essential nutrients needed for plant growth. Cultivation leaves the soil fragmented and exposed to erosion that is why manual cultivation is preferred to the use of machinery, as it does not disturb the soil. Other methods a farmer can use to improve the soil are outlined below:

Weed management

The aim of weed management should be to keep weeds under control rather than to eliminate them completely. Weeds help form a good mixed environment. There are several methods of weed control, including using a hoe or hands to remove weeds. Weeding immediately before planting is a useful technique when

growing crops from seeds, which are slow to germinate, such as onions, and carrots. This is especially so where weeds are a problem. Make the seedbed and allow the first weeds to appear, use a hoe to remove them, then plant the seeds you want.

Benefits of mulching

Manure is best composted before use on the crops. Add bulky plant material such as straw if not already present. Fresh manure should not be used directly on the soil because the nitrogen in the ammonia it releases can be harmful to the plants. Fresh manure can also attract pests. Avoid manure from town sewage as it may contain disease causing agents such as parasites and harmful bacteria.

Mulch is any loose material such as straw, leaves or dry grass that is placed around the plant to protect the soil from over-drying and to control temperatures. Recommended mulches are crop residues, dry grass, dry leaves, dust, old compost and old manure. Green vegetation should not be used because it takes a long time to break down and does not allow water to penetrate the soil. It also attracts pests and fungal diseases.

Mulch in the proper amount is used after a seedbed is planted. Too much mulch prevents adequate airflow and encourages pests such as termites in dry areas, or fungal disease. Mulch only in the dry season and apply it two weeks after seedlings develop. Mulching has many advantages. It helps decrease water loss through evaporation. It results in increased water retention and keeps the soil cool and moist. Soil temperatures are maintained and erosion is minimised. There is increased presence of useful microorganisms in topsoil as a result of organic matter while weed growth is reduced.

If possible farmers should carry out soil tests to determine the level of acidity. If this is not possible, consistent use of organic matter can regulate the level of acidity in the soil.



"One can make money with indigenous chickens"

Rearing traditional chicken the modern way has increased earnings for a former chief.

By Peter Kamau, Rongo

It is a common practice among all Kenyan communities to rear indigenous chickens in the traditional way whereby they are allowed to scavenge for food around the homestead. It had been the same for 53 year-old retired Senior Chief Josiah Arende of central Kamagambo location, Rongo division in Migori district. Throughout his working life as the area chief, he did not take chicken-rearing as a serious business. He only concentrated on dairy farming in his 7-acre piece of land. With two wives and 10 children, Chief Arende was often forced to buy eggs from neighbours. His own stock of 11 chickens could not lay enough eggs or even meet the family's meat requirements.

All this changed when he attended a workshop on poverty reduction organised by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and The Consortium for Scaling-up Small-Scale Farming in Kisumu two years ago.

"I came to learn that a farmer can make a lot of money from indigenous chickens if they are well fed and cared for like we do with exotic breeds. Many farmers do not realise the full potential of indigenous chicken because they neglect them", he says.

Armed with all this knowledge, Chief Arende went to work immediately. He

selected four good layers and a cock from his flock and put them on nutritious feed made of maize flour and omena fish with adequate drinking water. He also built a modern chicken house for the project. By the end of 2004, he had 480 chickens ready for sale to individual buyers, market centres and hotels in Rongo, Migori and beyond. Each chicken goes for Ksh 200 at farm gate price.

Demand is high for indigenous broilers, which are popular with many people in the region. His income has improved considerably and he now plans to expand the chicken house to accommodate 2000 chickens.

False eggs encourage brooding

"A good poultry farmer also has to understand the egg laying behaviour of an indigenous hen. With proper feeding a hen can lay 15 to 18 eggs in each laying cycle; after this it will want to brood (sit on the eggs until they hatch into chicks)," he says. Chief Arende has therefore exploited the



Chief Josiah Arende (Photo TOF)

egg laying and brooding patterns to increase production. When the brooders hatch, the chicks are taken away on the seventh or eighth day and put on artificial brooders. Since the hens are still in a brooding mode, they are given false eggs made of Kisii soapstone to sit on until the other hens have laid enough eggs.

When the required number of eggs is attained, the hen is now given the genuine eggs and continues brooding until the eggs hatch. When the chicks are taken away, the hens start laying eggs after 15 to 16 days. Each egg laid is clearly marked to indicate the date when it was laid to avoid mixing and ensure all eggs given to a brooder hatch on the same day. He also maintains five good layers which supply eggs for hatching.

Chicks are isolated

When the chicks are taken away, they are kept in an artificial brooder and kept warm with heat from kerosene lamps. Here they are fed with chick mash mixed with glucose and clean water to promote fast growth. Temperatures are also monitored by use of a thermometer to ensure they are safe from excessive or low heat.

Fellow farmers from the area have learnt a lot from Chief Arende. Thirty-three of them have taken up poultry farming to supplement sugarcane growing, the main economic activity in the region. Together they have set up the Kamagambo Community Development Project with Chief Arende as their patron. Their mission is to popularise indigenous chicken-rearing among the farmers.

It is easy to manage indigenous chickens

Feeding: Indigenous chickens feed on maize, rice and remains of ugali. This should be properly dried and ground into fine pieces. Feeding should be on a clean and hygienic surface or from feeders specifically made for chickens.

Housing: Chickens, whether indigenous or exotic, need proper housing for shelter and protection. They require spacious and well-ventilated rooms. Perches should be erected, as birds prefer resting on them. The chicken house should be securely closed at night to keep away predators. It should be clean to reduce diseases such as coccidiosis. Sawdust or old clothing material should never be used on laying nests as they encourage mites and fleas. Use of sand is preferable.

Drinking water: Clean water should be provided. This should be checked regularly and refilled. Drinking containers should be kept clean at all times. Dirty water must never be given to birds.

Vaccinations: Vaccination of the flock is important to help keep infections and diseases in check. Common diseases include Newcastle, fowlpox and typhoid. Vaccination is usually done once every two months depending on any disease outbreaks in the region. A qualified livestock officer should provide advice on how and when to vaccinate.

Record keeping: A proper record of the flock should be maintained. Records should include type of feed, batch number, expiry date, daily feed intake, mortality and egg production. Weighing should be done the same day of every week. This will guide the farmers on when to market the chickens. Vaccination and medication records are also important. These should include the age of the flock, when they were vaccinated, drugs used, expiry dates, etc. These records guide the veterinarian.

This advice is given by Chief Josiah Arende

What is certification in organic farming?

To sell a product as organic, a farmer has to get a certificate from an inspection company.

By *The Organic Farmer*

Let us explain the procedure of certification in organic farming with an example: A farmer wants to buy a panga. At the shop he finds two pangas, one Ksh 90/=, while the other costs 180/=. Both are of the same size, and they look similar. But a closer look reveals that the more expensive panga is made of better material.

Now, a woman wants to buy organically grown vegetables, let's say cabbages. Because organic vegetables are healthier and therefore of higher value, she is willing to pay more. But, she cannot see the difference between organic and chemically produced cabbages. Since she does not know the farmer who produced the cabbage, there has to be a recognized mark to show the cabbage is really organic. In other words, somebody has to certify and put the mark to prove this.

This is why certification of organic farm produce is so important. Organic certification is done by reputable and recognised companies. These companies continuously inspect farmers to ensure they meet all the requirements of organic production. To be certified, a farmer has to undergo a conversion period, which varies depending on the crop and the previous use of the land. During this period they have to follow organic production guidelines.

A question of trust

On certification, the products are given the logo of the certifying company. The whole process of certification is a question of trust, seriousness and transparency. If, for example, a farmer is cheating by using chemicals or artificial fertilisers, they will lose the certification. The company that has certified them also loses their reputation. Both the farmer and the company therefore have to be very careful not to lose their credibility with their clients and the buyers of organic produce.

In many parts of the world, the system has worked very well for many years. In Kenya, several companies have been offering certification services mainly for the export market. These companies are the Soil Association, IMO, Africert and Ecocert. In July 2005, a local Kenyan

company, EnCert, was officially registered to offer certification services to local farmers for selling to the local market. Its director, Musa Njoka, is a trainee of the Soil Association, a reputable UK-based Certification Company. He is their local representative.

The good news for organic farmers in Kenya is that the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) has recognised the importance of organic farming in the country. They have therefore prepared the guidelines for organic farming (DKS 1928:2004) which will hopefully come into force this year. Musa Njoka was a member of the technical committee that prepared the guidelines.

All the principles, practices and requirements are defined in the EnCert Standards for Organic Production and Processing. These standards meet the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) requirements, and of course those of the Kenya Bureau of Standards.

EnCert works like all the certification companies mentioned above. This means that the farmers have to pay for the certification. For individual applicants, the application and the annual licensing fees are based on the total area to be converted to



organic farming. For self-help-groups, these fees are based on the number of group members. The inspection fee varies depending on the complexity of the operation. It is around Ksh 17,000/=. There is also a fee to cater for travel expenses.

”Strict control”

Is it not too expensive for small-scale farmers?

“No”, says Musa Njoka. “If a farmer is registering with a group, they are only required to pay Ksh 3000/= at the beginning. Every year after that, we charge Ksh 2000/=. But if they can sell their organic produce say, vegetables, at a higher price, these will offset the certification costs”.

If you certify a farmers’ group, how can you be sure that an individual farmer does not cheat?

“Oh, we should not worry about that, the farmers themselves inspect each other very strictly to ensure none of them cheats. Even the Soil Association does the same in Europe. IFOAM too allows group certification”.

How do you expect farmers to pay for certification if there is no market for organic produce?

“In Kenya, the market is small at the moment, but it is growing. We have to raise awareness of the benefits of health foods. Take Europe for example: Many years ago, the market for organic products was negligible, however in the last few years, the demand has been growing at a rate of 25 % every year. I am sure that more and more Kenyans begin to realise the benefit of organic foods.”

EnCert Ltd, PO Box 74510, 00200, Nairobi Tel: 0724 910 240.

Cost of Certification

| Individual Applicants | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Converted Area | Application Fees Ksh | Annual Fee Ksh |
| Up to 2 ha | 10,000 | 15,000 |
| 2.1 to 5 ha | | 20,000 |
| 5.1 to 10 ha | | 30,000 |
| 10.1 to 20 ha | | 40,000 |
| Over 20 ha | | 50,000 |
| Group Applicants | | |
| No. of members | Application Fees Ksh | Annual Fee Ksh |
| Up to 15 | 10,000 | 15,000 |
| Extra member | 300 | 500 |

The market for organic products will grow

Marketing of organically produced vegetables is a big problem for small-scale farmers, but the future for organic products looks bright.

By *The Organic Farmer*

There is a lot of confusion within the Kenyan organic farming community. Every week, farmers complain to our newspaper that they can neither get a market nor a higher price for their organically grown vegetables and fruits. A research study recently carried out by *The Organic Farmer* among greengrocers and supermarkets in Nairobi shows a baffling result. Some shopkeepers say: "We do not get enough organically produced food for our customers". Others claim: "There is no demand for organic food".

So, what is going on? Let us have a look at this problem from different points of view.

The question of the price

When it comes to price comparisons, many small-scale farmers in Kenya turn to Europe. Customers there pay much more for bio-products, as the organic food there is labeled. Organic agriculture or farming without using chemicals in Europe, is more expensive because more labour is needed than growing vegetables using chemicals. Labour in Europe is very expensive. This additional cost of labour plus the cost of certification and to some extent, the forces of demand and supply, has resulted in higher prices for organic products.

The situation in Kenya is different. Labour costs are comparatively cheap, at least in small-scale farms where activities are shared among family members. However, even if labour costs are not the main problem, farmers have to pay for certification (see page 4). These costs must be passed on to the consumers.

The need for certification

One fact must be understood by farmers: The priority is to assure the



Products of Meru Herbs are certified by the UK-based Soil Association (TOF)

consumer that the products are organically produced. The certification is an assurance for wholesaler and retailer and also results in bargaining power for better prices for the farmer. A "Certified Organic" product, where the certification body is recognised and respected in the marketplace, guarantees the consumer of the products integrity. In the end, the consumer is willing to pay a higher price for these certified products both for health and environmental reasons.

To avoid unethical labeling of organic products, most countries have developed standards at a national level which include clauses that *prohibit* the use of the words "organic, organically grown, organically produced etc." on any products unless they are certified by a recognised certification body. Some countries go to the extent of pressing charges on producers who break this code of ethics. As mentioned earlier, the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) has produced a set of documented Standards for the local organic industry. Once gazetted, it is hoped that fraudulent labeling will be a thing of the past. Knowledge of these Standards is absolutely necessary for certification.

A local certifier

In Kenya all certification of produce has been carried out by international certifiers until recently, at a very high cost and for the export markets only. Producers for the local market could not afford certification. But in July last year, a certifier for the local market was established with the aim of certification at an affordable cost. The certifying body is known as "EnCert" and is already operational (see page 4). Products certified by EnCert are authorised to carry the label "EnCert Organic" on their packaging.

The Kenya Organic Agricultural Network (KOAN) is currently proposing a national label for organic products. This initiative by KOAN has caused some confusion, as the symbol is not backed by a certification body, and will be an additional cost to the farmer when labeling. From the KOAN proposal it appears as if a

producer will be expected to carry three labels, a) the producer's trade mark, b) a certification label and c) the so called national symbol (the KOAN label). Some members of the organic movement fear that there would be a conflict of interest, because KOAN itself is not authorised to label products and cannot act as a certifier. KOAN is an NGO mandated to act as a mediator to network with the organic stakeholders, including certification bodies, farmers, training institutions as well as processors. What is needed is an independently working and officially acknowledged authority to do certification work. The way forward for KOAN could be to play a supportive role in the industry by strengthening the existing players like EnCert rather than competing.

Let us review the important issues about organic certification:

1. In order to be able to sell their products as organic, farmers must follow the documented Standards of Organic Production.
2. Farmers need to have their land certified as organic by a recognised certification body. Costs are greatly reduced when farmers get certification as a group. There are a number of NGOs that may be willing to help with initial certification costs. Farmers have to look at farming as a business; therefore certification of their products is an investment for the future.
3. Farmers don't take risks. International statistics show that the consumption of organic produce is increasing year-after-year due to better consumer awareness. Both local and export markets of Kenyan organic produce have yet to be tapped. Local consumption is set to rise due to the newly formed integrity system and certified labeling and the forthcoming massive consumer awareness campaign promised by KOAN in 2006. As Kenya has a reputation for being the largest exporter of naturally produced flowers into Europe, we

Continued on page 8

What can we do against aphids and cutworms?

Readers of *The Organic Farmer* in Subukia had two questions. The first one on the preparation of seedbeds was answered in the December issue. Let us look at the second question: What can we do against attacks by pests, especially aphids and cutworms?

The presence of aphids suggests imbalances within the system. This could be due to many factors, however generally, a healthy soil will promote healthy plants. The weakest are those that normally succumb to attack by aphids and other insect pests and diseases. If dealt with at an early stage, the damage can be controlled quite effectively. This can be done by spot spraying with a biopesticide such as pyrethrin or neem-based extracts.

However, this is merely dealing with the symptom and not the underlying problem. It is also detrimental to the good insects, those which act as natural enemies and pollinators, which we need in abundance.

A better long-term solution would be to provide havens on your farm in the form of untrimmed hedges, bushes and fallow areas, to harbour the natural enemies, such as ladybirds, lacewings and parasitic wasps.

As organic farmers, we must recognise that nature has all the answers to what we perceive as problems. We must strive to allow the balance of pests and natural enemies to prevail. This is only possible by creating diversity on our farms. By growing a variety of crops, we encourage a variety of natural enemies and predators that help us to manage our yields with as little intervention as possible. By farming in this manner, we automatically create a system of rotation which also helps us avoid the problems related to monocropping (growing only one kind of crop). We also have a wider variety of goods to sell, and most importantly, we have better health for ourselves due to a varied organic diet. This finally translates to a healthier nation and a safe environment for our families.

Su Kahumbu
answers your
questions



Write to:

The Organic Farmer
P.O.Box 14352, 00800 Nairobi
KENYA
Tel. 020 445 03 98
e-mail : info@organickenya.com

To see nature firsthand, take a close look at your aphid infestation. Hopefully you will notice some brown round eggs interspersed with the aphid population. These are aphid bodies that have been parasitised by a small parasitic wasp. The wasp lays its eggs in the aphid and the emerging larvae feed on the aphid, killing it. By spraying the aphids we also kill their natural enemies.

Chickens against cutworms

Cutworms normally damage crops at night. By digging the soil around the affected plants, you can usually dig out the cutworm. Damage by cutworms is not normally very severe. If it is, chickens can be useful. We are experimenting by allowing our chickens exclusive access to an area; we expect them to clean up this area and fertilise the soil at the same time.



Cutworm destroys a plant stalk (TOF)

We shall keep them in this area for six months and then we will plant a crop. If the situation is desperate, however, use pymac, the residue left from pyrethrum extraction. Pymac can be put into the holes with your seedlings and this can also deter the worms.

“Farming is like gambling”

Jacob Kamau from Bahati, P. O. Box 1128, Nakuru feels that, “after trying many farming methods the whole business appears to be like gambling”. He has three questions:

1. How do I get a fertile and organically self-sustaining soil for crop production?

Unfortunately the only self-sustaining fertile organic soil is that which is formed beneath our natural indigenous forests. We can produce fertile organic soil, however it cannot be self-sustaining for as long. As we take crops away from an area, we must replenish the area with more nutrients if we expect to reap another harvest from that same area. Therefore we must sustain the soil by using organic inputs so as to create an enabling environment for all of the microorganisms, fungi, bacteria, etc. that we need for optimum fertility. To do this we need to continually add organic material, compost, farmyard manure, and green manure, as well as to grow fertility-building crops such as beans, peas and other legumes.

Our aim is to understand our crop requirements and in so doing, we try to make the nutrients and conditions optimum for the crop we grow. As organic farmers we must learn to read our fields, notice the differences in the

crop quality and learn from the lessons nature teaches us.

2. How do I plan farming activities on a small piece of land to realise maximum yields?

A first start here is to concentrate on building soil fertility. This will depend on your available inputs such as manure, composting materials, etc. If you have quite a large area and not much in the way of inputs and are not prepared to purchase any, concentrate on the little you can do, and do it well. Spreading fertility-building material thinly over a wide area will not result in good quality crops, only in a lot of hard work. You can concentrate on cultivating a small area as you grow fertility-building crops like legumes in another area to be used in the future. At the same time, another area can be left fallow or used to grow animal feed.

Weed can be used for compost

Land laid bare will soon dry out, so let some areas go to weed and bush; the soil beneath them is healthier than that of bare land. The bush/weed materials, even though of no commercial value, can be collected for bedding for animals and eventually used in compost. All of this will then enlarge your bank of organic material to put back into your land.



Letters to the editor

Good for training

We wish to thank you most sincerely for sending us *The Organic Farmer* magazines. These magazines proved an asset in the group as they arrived by the time the group was under going Farmer Field School (FFS) lessons on fodder establishment and agro-forestry project. The group since its inception in 1996 to date has great interest on organic farming, that is why the magazine proved indispensable and of greater help to them. May I request that you continue sending us more issues if possible.

Alice Kemunto Nyakundi
Nsicha Nyabomo Group
P.O Box 33, Nyamira

Su's answers

continued from page 6

Your choice of crops will depend on many factors: Will you grow commercial crops, subsistence crops, animal fodder or compost making material? Note that many of these can be intercropped with each other and will in fact benefit overall soil fertility and quality of your crop. Diversity is extremely important. If we think diversity, we automatically start to think rotation, we also create better chances for biodiversity to balance our growing systems. This should answer the final question:

3. How do I curb pests and diseases without using chemicals?

Ideally we strive to create a natural balance without using toxins of any kind, either synthetic chemicals or of biological origin. However, organic systems do not produce ideal solutions immediately. Infact, we have to work very hard to achieve the balances we want. Financial losses can be averted with the use of biopesticides but more often than not, the underlying problems are just encouraged. We can manage pest problems meanwhile using natural pyrethrum products, neem, and other natural extracts. Some of these have been covered in past issues of *The Organic Farmer*. Diseases of a fungal nature can be treated with milk diluted 1:10 and sprayed on the affected area. Sulphur products can also be used for fungi and can be purchased as a product called Thiovit. Organic farming requires absolute integrity and respect. Only by respecting our planet can we attempt to respect ourselves.

Goat story was informative

The demand for *The Organic Farmer* magazine among the farmers here is putting me in as awkward situation. A topic 'dairy goat farming is easy' in Nr 6 September/October attracted a larger number of readers than the five copies you send us. A sub-topic and a design on how to build a goat shed helped many farmers erecting goat structures in their homesteads. This is testimony and a very encouraging gesture that the paper is informative, educative and an eye opener. In your next issue, a detailed subject on fish farming for human food and commercial purposes would equally help us. Keep up with the good work.

John Njoroge, P.O Box 82, Sabasaba

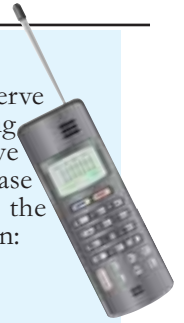
Dear Farmers,

As part of our efforts to serve the organic farming community effectively, we would like to create a database of organic farmers in the country. We are interested in:

- Your names,
- Addresses, Location,
- Farm acreage,
- Are you an organic farmer?

We make it easy for you. We have a special telephone number: given below. All the farmers can provide these information through short messaging service (SMS). *Come on Farmers, Tuma jibu. Asante.*

0721 541 590



We are making photocopies of the newspaper

We are a group of farmers who meet regularly in our church in Gikingi Nyandarua. As a group we are interested in improving our farming skills and knowledge to the betterment of our small society that generally is very poor. When we received 10 copies of your newspaper Nr. 7 we were excited. We have distributed the copies to 10 farmers who we believe will make good use of it and who have promised to pass the newspaper to other farmers. We have also downloaded from your website the issue Nr. 6 as the topics in that paper are of particular interest to farmers up here in the highlands of Kenya. Especially the goats, control of potato bacterial wilt, we made photocopies of the newspapers and distributed them. However this is a bit expensive and we are therefore grateful if we can in future receive your newspaper free.

We will also formulate some questions and send them to you as we have any problems. We thank you for the newspapers.

Rachael Nduriri, Gikingi Church Group, P.O Box 1334, Nyahururu, 0720 616435

Dear Mrs Nduriri,

That is a great effort on your part. We will make an effort to send you more copies. However our resources are limited. Due to the small budget, we can only print 12,000. Many other farmers have made the same request.

Increase our allocation

I take this opportunity to heartfully thank the editors of *The Organic Farmer* newspaper for the prompt response to our request for the newspaper. So far we have received two times from your organization a total of 12 newspapers. In October we received 7 copies of different issues as per our request just to catch up with the system and in the month of November we received 5 copies of the same issues. This newspaper has rejuvenated our memory on organic farming and we are supplying them to our motivators in the field to read and spread the ideas to the farmers. We are also making a follow up to verify and add value to the impact of the magazine. In the field we have seven motivators who covers an area with a population of about 50 000 farmers

and according to your provision of 5 newspapers, there is slight requirement of adjustment if possible may be to at least 10 copies. Other wise we appreciate very much your support and in case of any requirement that may improve areas of more supply, please never hesitate to inform us. I promise that soon you will be getting practical feedback of our input in the newspaper. Thanks.

Peter O. Okwany, Agriculture Sector Head, Ortum

Send us copies

Your newspaper is interesting. We are an organized small-scale farmers and the group is registered by the Department of social services. I request you to send us 20 copies.

Chairman, Jambo Yetu Jisaidie Group
P.O Box 55, Londiani

Marketing

.....continued from page 5

must realise that our foot is already in the door. The potential is out there!

Awareness campaign

Kenya urgently needs an awareness campaign which highlights the advantages of organically produced vegetables. There is limited knowledge of the benefits of organic products among local consumers in Kenya. Nearly all buyers of organic foods live in urban areas and a large percentage are expatriates. "There is need for a serious awareness campaign for local consumers through the Kenyan media", says Su Kahumbu, the organic farmer from Limuru who answers questions from our readers. "We have to lobby much more for organic food", declares John Njoroge, Director of the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming (KIOF). "There is a need for stronger links between the producers and the consumers. KIOF is already working towards this end, and this lobbying should be done by KOAN."

Andrew Botta has the same opinion. He is the co-ordinator of Meru Herbs, a company producing organic products which is certified by the British Certification Authority Soil Association (*see label on page 5*). "Once more, consumers demand certified organic vegetables; the pressure mounts on the shopkeepers to offer such food", Botta says.

Cooperation needed

The situation at present is unclear. Many traders take advantage of the lack of certification. They are selling products from anywhere as organic and are therefore cheating consumers. This attitude will soon change due to demand caused by informed consumers. This will finally allow the farmers to get the due respect and prices for their efforts.

To get there, farmers, traders and all organisations supporting organic farming need to work together. Sometimes it appears as if these organisations jealously try to defend their positions against each other and miss out the overall interest of the thousands of small-scale farmers they claim to support. Our paper, *The Organic Farmer*, will continue to provide as much information on these problems and act as a forum for exchange of ideas. We are able and willing to work with all the relevant interested bodies to achieve this objective.

Marigold

This very useful plant is well known all over in Kenya. The common name is *Tagetes minuta*, because of the smell it is also named "stinky weed"

Plant parts used: Flowers, leaves, and roots

Mode of action:
Insecticidal, repellent, fungicidal, nematocidal

Although there are no known bad effects on human beings, clean properly the utensils before and after preparation and applying, wash your hands and do not have a direct contact with the crude extract.



| Materials | Preparation | How to use | Plant pests |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fermented marigold extract Whole flowering plant Soap, Water, Strainer, Drum | Fill-in drum with 1/2-3/4 full of flowering plants. Leave to stand for 5-10 days. Stir occasionally. Strain before use. | Dilute the filtrate with water at a ratio of 1:2. Add 1 tsp soap in every liter of the extract | Coffee berry disease. Rice blast. Tomato blight. Root knot nematodes |
| Marigold water extract Mexican marigold leaves, Soap. Hot water Mortar and pestle Strainer, Pail | Pound the leaves. Soak the pounded leaves in hot water. Leave to stand for 24 hours. Strain. | Dilute the filtrate with water at a ratio of 1:2 Add 1 tsp soap in every liter of the extract | Ant Aphid Grasshopper |
| Marigold/tomato extract 1 kg of marigold leaves 1 kg of tomato leaves 20 lt of water. Grinder, Soap, Strainer | Grind the leaves. Add enough water. Strain. | Add 20 liters of water to the filtrate. Add 1 tsp soap in every liter of the extract. Spray on the target pests. | Aphid Bean pod borer Leaf beetle |
| Marigold and chili extract 500 g of whole plant. 10 hot chili pods. 15 liters of water. Knife, Soap, Strainer, Pail | Finely chop the plant and the chilies. Soak them in water overnight. Strain. | Dilute the filtrate with water at a ratio of 1:2 Add 1 tsp soap in every liter of the extract. | Most agricultural pests |
| Marigold, chili, garlic, onion spray 2 handfuls of marigold leaves, 2 pieces of chili, 3 garlic cloves, 2 large onions, Cooking pan, Pail, Strainer | Chop 2 handfuls of marigold leaves, 2 pieces of chilies, 3 gloves, garlic, and 2 large onions. Place in a pan of water and bring to boil. Let it cool. Strain. | Add four times amount of water to the extract. Spray or sprinkle on affected plant parts. | Most insect pests |