

AfrONet

NEWS

Making Africa an
Organic Food Basket



April - June 2026

Issue No. 0015



Virunga, DRC

In Hajeb province in Morocco, within the fertile Fez-Meknes region, Biomouja, a family-run farm, produces organic figs, apricots, and pomegranates on seven hectares, using only biological pest control methods.

Africa's Looming Water Crisis: Why Organic Farming May Be the Continent's Last Best Hope

By AfrONews Reporter

By 2050, three out of every four people on earth will face debilitating drought conditions, and Sub-Saharan Africa is squarely in the crosshairs.

According to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), up to 40 percent of the world's land is already degraded, affecting over 3.2 billion people. The warning is chilling: Africa faces an alarming combination of environmental and socio-economic challenges that could unravel decades of development progress.

[Continues on page 3](#)

Why Is Morocco Winning the Organic Race While the Rest of Africa Lags Behind?

By AfrONews Reporter

Imagine a country that offers farmers up to 90 percent off their certification costs, pours nearly \$150 million into organic agriculture, and has a roadmap to convert 100,000 hectares to organic farming by 2030.

[Continues on page 5](#)

Africa's Food Future: Can the Continent Feed 2.5 Billion People by 2050?

By AfrONews Reporter

The continent's population, now past 1.5 billion, is projected to reach nearly 2.5 billion; a 63 per cent increase in just twenty five years, this demographic tidal wave raises a stark question: can Africa feed its people?

[Continues on page 4](#)

Africa's Looming Water Crisis: Why Organic Farming May Be the Continent's Last Best Hope

Continues from page 2

But a growing consensus among scientists and policymakers insists there is a way forward, one rooted not in high-tech fixes but in organic agriculture and agroecology.

The 2050 Projections

Globally, droughts have increased by nearly one-third since 2000, and by 2050, three in four people worldwide are projected to face drought conditions.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the crisis is amplified by rapid population growth, land degradation, and climate change.

The UNCCD's Global Land Outlook paints a sobering picture that high population growth in dry lands, low crop yields, intense pressure on agricultural expansion, and marked increases in water stress are converging.

Agriculture, which already consumes 70 percent of the world's freshwater, will compete with cities and industries for every last drop.

COP17: From COP16's Foundation to Concrete Action

COP16 in Riyadh (2024) marked a turning point, featuring the first official Agri-food Systems Day and a historic decision on rangelands and pastoralists.

Agroecology appeared over 30 times in COP16

preparatory documents as a recommended approach for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality.

But COP17, convening in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from August 17-28, 2026, under the theme "Restoring Land, Restoring Hope," is where commitments become action. The preparatory documents build on COP16's legacy in three critical ways.

First, a new Drought Resilience Index, modeled on the Human Development Index, is being developed through UNCCD and the International Drought Resilience Alliance to help countries assess their capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to drought. This provides a concrete, measurable framework that COP16 lacked.

Second, dedicated thematic days at COP17, including Finance (August 24), Water (August 25), Land and People (August 26), and Food Systems and Soil Health (August 27), explicitly connect soil restoration to food security, delivering on COP16's agri-food systems commitments.

Third, the Riyadh-Ulaanbaatar Action Agenda serves as a platform to mobilize finance, policy coalitions, and partnerships to restore degraded land, manage water, and sup-

port food security. COP17 is positioned as the delivery mechanism for pledges made in Riyadh.

The UNCCD's Prescription: Agroecology as the Answer

The UNCCD's Science-Policy Interface now explicitly recommends agroecology as a means to 'enrich biodiversity and improve resilience,' arguing that adopting policies that favor traditional practices can be a way of helping people to better cope with the effects of climate variability and desertification.

The UNCCD urges Parties to implement agroecological and sustainable land management approaches to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality.

India's Sikkim state transitioned to 100 percent organic farming, transforming food systems while protecting biodiversity and improving livelihoods.

Bhutan has similarly banned chemical pesticides and systematically

shifted toward organic agriculture, these are national scale proof that agroecology works.

A Warning to African Leaders

The UNCCD has been clear: a 'business-as-usual' approach is insufficient to address the magnitude of this challenge. For African governments still subsidizing chemical fertilizers and monoculture exports, this is a wake-up call.

Organic agriculture builds soil organic carbon, enhances water retention, and sequesters carbon, all essential for drought resilience. Draft decisions emerging from UNCCD processes urge parties to halt the conversion of natural areas and halt, or at least significantly reduce the artificialisation of land.

At COP17, the world will watch to see who is ready to move from ambition to action, and for Africa's 1.3 billion people, the stakes could not be higher.



In Kenya's Makueni County, a cabbage farm thrives where desert once threatened. Sand dams, built across seasonal rivers, store water beneath the sand, a low cost innovation that keeps crops alive through drought. With the UN projecting that 75 per cent of the world's population will face water scarcity by 2050; such solutions are no longer optional, they are essential. Photo by courtesy of Greenpeace

Africa's Food Future: Can the Continent Feed 2.5 Billion People by 2050?

Continues from page 2

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), feeding the world will require a 50 per cent increase in food production by 2050, with Africa's own food demand expected to rise by at least 50 per cent. The empirical evidence paints a sobering picture: while technically possible to meet caloric needs, doing so sustainably will require a radical transformation of Africa's agricultural systems.

The Population-Pressure Paradox

Research published through the FAO's AGRIS platform identifies rapid population growth as the leading cause of food insecurity and widespread undernourishment across the continent.

As urbanization accelerates, the FAO projects a global shift away from starchy staples toward more vegetables, meat, and dairy, and the 2023 Africa Agriculture Status Report confirms this trend, projecting Northern Africa's animal-source food supply to nearly double. This dietary transition, though a positive indicator, places significantly greater strain on agricultural resources across the continent.

The Natural Resource Bottleneck

The FAO warns that, across

the world, 15 out of 24 ecosystem services are being used at unsustainable rates.

In sub-Saharan Africa, "tired soils" are a primary threat to agricultural productivity and food security. Researchers warn that agricultural production could dip by up to 30 per cent by 2050 in some regions, with soil degradation halving key crop yields in East Africa alone.

While uncultivated land exists, the FAO cautions that net expansion will be limited, consequently, 90 per cent of crop production growth must come from agricultural intensification, higher yields, rather than land expansion.

The Productivity Challenge

According to an ex-ante evaluation of sub-Saharan Africa's soybean sector, consumption is projected to more than double by 2050.

Yet domestic production is only expected to rise by 80 per cent, meaning the continent would import nearly four times more than it produces. The study further concludes that conventional breeding alone would not be enough.

The FAO advocates for 'opportunity crops' traditional, climate-resilient species like millet and sorghum, but notes they remain under-researched. Dr. Chike-

FUTURE FOOD FACTS

75%

Increased in food production needed in Africa by 2050

Source: FAO, 2023

Ilu Mba of the FAO stresses that food insecurity and malnutrition continue to go up in Africa.

A Future of Contrasts

The FAO projects that by 2050, the average person will have access to 3,050 kilocalories per day, enough to meet nutritional needs on paper. But this global average masks deep regional disparities.

Reaching this target demands massive investments in agricultural research, rural infrastructure, and sound policies.

Even under the most optimistic FAO scenarios,

Sub-Saharan Africa would still face a 7 per cent chronic undernourishment rate, meaning nearly one in 14 people would regularly go hungry, this means that, production alone will not solve hunger; logistics, markets, and poverty reduction must advance together.

The next 25 years will define Africa's trajectory, feeding 2.5 billion people is possible, but far from guaranteed require a fundamental transformation of food systems and a shift from crisis to strategic resilience.



Maize farm planted through agroecological methods. (Picture from unsplash)

Why Is Morocco Winning the Organic Race While the Rest of Africa Lags Behind?

Continues from page 2

That country is not in Europe, not in North America, it is Morocco, and it is showing the rest of Africa exactly how to build a resilient, drought-proof agricultural future.

While most African nations continue subsidizing chemical fertilizers and monoculture exports, Morocco has quietly constructed one of the continent's most sophisticated organic agriculture support systems.

The North African kingdom has moved beyond pilot projects and declarations to implement a comprehensive strategy that integrates financial incentives, institutional coordination, and grassroots empowerment.

For a continent facing a future where three out of every four people will face drought by 2050, Morocco offers an urgent and replicable blueprint.

A national priority, not an afterthought

Morocco's commitment to organic farming is not a side project; it is embedded in the nation's core agricultural strategy. Under the "Generation Green 2020-2030" plan, the government has set an ambitious target: expand organic farmland to 100,000 hectares by 2030. This is not wishful thinking; it is a concrete roadmap backed

by serious investment.

The government has signed a contract-program worth nearly 1.5 billion dirhams (approximately \$150 million) with the organic sector's umbrella organization, Maroc Bio, to make this vision a reality.

The state and the private sector are contributing equally—a partnership model that ensures shared responsibility and shared success.

Financial support that actually works

Morocco understands that farmers will not transition to organic practices unless it makes economic sense. The government has introduced subsidies that cover up to 90 per cent of certification costs for smaller production units. Certification is one of the biggest barriers to organic farming across Africa, and Morocco has tackled it head on.

The government also provides hectare-based conversion premiums and maintains support for investment in processing units. This is not charity; it is smart economics that builds a self-sustaining sector.

Building the institutional framework

Morocco has systematically built the institutional architecture needed for organic agriculture to thrive. The National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA) conducts research

on organic production techniques, the National Food Safety Office (ONS-SA) oversees certification and control, and the Agricultural Development Agency (ADA) coordinates support programs.

This is not a fragmented approach – it is an integrated system where institutions work in harmony. Through the DIAF project, a German-Moroccan technical dialogue has further strengthened Morocco's capacity to build legal, institutional, and market frameworks for organic agriculture. The goal is not just production but a complete value chain.

Beyond policy

Morocco's organic revolution is also about people, especially women and youth. The 2023-2030 contract-programs prioritize the new generation of young entrepreneurs, rural women, and agricultural organizations.

Recent agreements signed with NGO consortiums in the Fès-Meknès, Oriental, and Souss-Massa regions aim to convert 8,000 hectares to agroecological practices while supporting 2,700 family farms.

This is where Morocco gets it right: policy is not imposed from above; it is co-created with communities on the ground.

A lesson for Africa

In 2018, certified organic farmland had more than

doubled in five years to over 9,300 hectares, with wild collection areas covering another 273,000 hectares. Organic production surged from 40,000 tons in 2010 to 120,000 tons in 2019. Moroccan organic products, citrus, olives, and tomatoes, now reach markets in the United States, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy.

Morocco's success is not accidental; it is the result of strategic planning, serious investment, institutional coordination, and genuine partnership with farmers.

As the continent faces a drought crisis that, by 2050, will leave three out of every four people facing water scarcity, organic agriculture should be trusted as it builds soil carbon, enhances water retention, and builds resilience.

The question is: will other African nations follow Morocco's lead, or will they watch from the sidelines as the crisis deepens?

“

Africa has the land, the people and the potential.

What we need now is unity, strategy and bold action.

—Youssef Elharrak
Organic Exporter &
Policy Advisor
Rabat, Morocco

Editorial Notes

Africa's Youth Hold the Keys to a Food-Secure Future

In this edition of AfrONews, we have celebrated two remarkable success stories. In Tunisia, Haitham Ben Ali sold his car to buy cows, gambled on a native plant called Sulla, and transformed not only his own life but an entire community.

In Sierra Leone, Mohamed Kawa lost his job during the pandemic, founded Helzee Farms with nothing but determination, and has since created over 200 jobs while planting more than 20,000 trees.

These are not isolated miracles; they are proof that Africa's youth, often dismissed as jobless and hopeless, are the continent's greatest untapped resource.

But here is the hard truth: for every Haitham or Mohamed, there are thousands of young Africans with the same drive who never get the chance. They lack access to land, credit, training, and markets. They are stifled by policies that favour imported food over local production and outdated systems that shut out new ideas.

To policymakers across Africa, we say this: invest in youth agri-entrepreneurs, create incubation hubs, provide affordable credit, and simplify land access.

Support the Haithams and Mohameds before they are forced to sell their last asset just to get started, because the returns are not just economic, they are social and environmental, rippling through communities for generations.

To the youth of Africa, we say: look at Haitham and Mohamed. They started with nothing but a dream and a willingness to fail. The land is waiting, the market is hungry for change, therefore do not wait for permission, go and small, learn fast and later scale up.

The future of Africa's food security is not in the hands of foreign donors or distant governments. It is in the hands of young Africans willing to get their hands dirty. The only question is: will we support them?

“The future of Africa's food security is in the hands of young Africans willing to get their hands dirty.”

Write to the Editor,

African Organic Network (AfrONet)

14128-Mbezi Juu Mtoni, along Goba Road,

P.O. Box 31168, Uyoga Street Kinondoni-Dar-es-Salaam, TZ

NOARA Elects New Governing Council to Steer Africa's Organic Agriculture Research

By AfrONet Writer



Professor Raymond Auerbach, Chair of the NOARA Governing Council, presents an Award of Appreciation to the SEKEM Group of Egypt during the recent African Organic Research Conference (AFROREC). The award was received by SEKEM CEO, Helmy Abouleish.

The Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA) has elected a new Governing Council to lead the continent's organic agriculture research agenda for the 2025-2028 term, signaling a renewed commitment to gender balance, regional diversity, and strategic growth.

The election took place during the NOARA Governing Council Meeting on March 17, 2026, via Zoom, bringing together representatives from across Africa's five regions and beyond.

Prof. Olugbenga AdeOluka, the Continental Coordinator, opened the proceedings by introducing the outgoing council mem-

bers and underscoring the critical importance of ensuring both gender balance and regional diversity in selecting the new executive team, guiding the entire electoral process.

In his address, Prof. AdeOluka, speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees, Governing Council, and the Secretariat of NOARA, expressed deep appreciation to the outgoing Governing Council members (2022-2025) for their dedication and leadership.

He particularly commended their efforts in successfully hosting the 2nd African Organic Conference (AFROREC), which showcased the continent's growing body of research and commitment to sus-

tainable agriculture and agroecological science.

“The outgoing council has laid a strong foundation; their commitment has positioned NOARA as a credible voice for organic agriculture research across Africa,” stated Prof. AdeOluwa.

He further encouraged the newly appointed members to be more supportive of NOARA’s mission and objectives, emphasizing that the network’s research is more urgent than ever as Africa faces escalating climate challenges, land degradation, and food insecurity.

The New Governing Council

The newly elected Governing Council reflects a deliberate effort to achieve continental representation and gender inclusivity.

Leading the council is Prof. Raymond Auerbach from South Africa, representing Southern Africa, who assumes the position of Chair. Dr. Tatiana Kouura from the Republic of Benin, representing West Africa, takes on the role of Vice-Chair.

Prof. Olugbenga AdeOluwa retains his position as statutory Secretary, ensuring continuity in the network’s coordination, and Dr. Yvette Umurugi from Rwanda, representing East Africa, steps in as Treasurer, bringing financial stewardship to the council.

The council also includes

thematic leads that will drive NOARA’s strategic research priorities. The Research and Training Thematic Area will be led by Dr. Azim Khalid (Morocco/North Africa) as Chair and Dr. Minani Bonaventure (Burundi/Eastern Africa) as Co-chair.

Policy and Stakeholder Engagements will be chaired by Dr. Never Mujere (Zimbabwe/Southern Africa) with Dr. Jelili Adebisi (USA/North America) as Co-chair.

Conferences and Information Dissemination will be steered by Dr. Sylvere Dida (Cameroon/Central Africa) as Chair and Dr. James Adebayo Ojo (Nigeria/West Africa) as Co-

chair.

Networking, Advocacy, and Awards will be led by Dr. Irene Kadzere (Switzerland/Europe) as Chair and Dr. Coulibaly Gninwele Anne (Côte D’Ivoire/West Africa) as Co-chair.

A Pivotal Moment for African Agriculture
With the UNCCD’s COP17 convening in Mongolia later this year under the theme “Restoring Land, Restoring Hope,” and Africa facing projections that three out of every four people will face drought by 2050, the continent’s organic agriculture researchers have never been more critical. NOARA’s mission is to advance organic agriculture research, training, policy

advocacy, and networking across Africa, aligns directly with the continent’s urgent need for sustainable, climate-resilient food systems.

The new council’s composition, with its emphasis on regional representation and thematic expertise, positions the network to influence policy, drive research, and empower farmers across Africa.

As the 2025–2028 term begins, all eyes will be on this newly constituted council to deliver on its promise: to place organic agriculture research at the heart of Africa’s agricultural transformation.



Agroecological Vegetable farms in Rwanda. (Picture from unsplash)

Cameroon's New Organic Law Sets the Stage, but Will Small Farmers Be Left Behind?

By AfrONews Reporter, Yaoundé



Organic farming advocates, policymakers, and civil society representatives meet in Yaoundé, March 2026, to chart a path toward affordable certification for smallholder farmers. The working session, convened by INADES-Formation Cameroon, explored low-cost participatory guarantee systems to make organic accreditation accessible to all. Photo courtesy of INADES-Formation, Cameroon.

For years, organic farming in Cameroon lived in the shadows, stripped of rules, denied recognition, sustained only by farmers who did the right thing simply because they believed.

They grew naturally, as their grandparents had done for generations, while exporters struggled for credibility and consumers remained unable to tell what was truly organic from what was simply a label.

Then came 17 December 2025, on that day, President Paul Biya signed Law No. 2025/013 governing organic agriculture after decades of informal practice, Cameroon finally has a legal framework.

The new legislation sets clear rules for production,

certification, labeling, and traceability. It covers crops, livestock, aquaculture, beekeeping, and even processed products.

Genetically modified organisms are out, excessive synthetic chemicals are banned, and for the first time, anyone caught falsely claiming their product is organic can face real penalties.

This law closes many loopholes, it creates a state supervised certification system, and for the first time, Cameroonian organic producers can point to a legal standard, not just good intentions and hope.

The global organic market is worth about €136 billion—roughly FCFA 89 trillion, without a legal frame-

work, Cameroon could not compete. Exporters saw shipments rejected. International buyers asked for proof that simply did not exist. “The law is not just about regulation,” an agriculture ministry official told us, speaking on condition of anonymity. “It is about unlocking markets.”

Josephine Atangana AfrONet’s Treasurer knows this struggle better than most, a longtime advocate for organic farming and founder of a women-led cooperative in the Centre Region, she has spent years fighting for recognition, not for herself, but for the women she trains.

Since 2018, she has trained more than 500 women in agroecological practices, watching them struggle, save, and slowly build better lives; Atangana sees both promise and caution in the new law.

“For many years, we have farmed organically without recognition,” she said, her voice steady but firm. “This law finally gives us an identity, however the real work begins now, training our farmers, building affordable certification, and ensuring that smallholders are not left behind, if we get this right, organic agriculture can lift thousands of families out of poverty,” She hinted.

“A law on paper means nothing if the farmer in the field cannot afford the cer-

“

“A law on paper means nothing if the farmer cannot afford the certificate.”

—Josephine Atangana

tificate,” she added quietly. You could hear the weight of experience in those words.

In February 2026, INADES-Formation Cameroon brought everyone together in Yaoundé, with a goal to strengthen the Cameroon Organic Agriculture Movement as a national certification framework.

That movement is now exploring low cost participatory guarantee systems, a simpler, cheaper way for smallholders to get certified without breaking the bank.

Three things need to happen, and quickly, the first, the implementing decrees must be published, second, affordable certification pathways must be established, and third, farmers need real training to meet the new standards.

Cameroon has taken the hardest step, enshrining organic agriculture into law, a feat worth celebrating, and yet the coming year will reveal whether this legislation transforms the lives of the farmers who actually feed the nation or merely remains a beautiful document that never touches the soil.

By AfrONews Reporter

South Africa's Organic Pioneers Cultivate a New Future

South Africa's farmers are tearing up the rulebook. In the Cederberg mountains and the rolling hills of the Eastern Cape, they are walking away from chemical fertilisers and embracing something older, namely nature.

That is the finding of a growing movement of organic pioneers who have discovered that going green is not just about growing food differently, it is about selling it differently too, according to farmers, industry leaders, and agricultural experts across the country.

Citrus Leads the Way

Vegetables remain the most common organic commodity, alongside herbs, deciduous fruits, and subtropical varieties, however, if one crop symbolises the sector's potential, it is citrus.

Organic citrus has emerged as a significant export market for South Africa, with buyers in Europe and North America increasingly willing to pay premium prices for pesticide-free produce. In the Kirkwood region, SOGA Organic operates as the country's only certified organic citrus juice producer, exporting roughly 2,000 tonnes of not-from-concentrate juice to Europe and Canada each year.

Paul Marais, Managing Director of SOGA organic, the only certified organic citrus juice producer in

South Africa, says there always a way that nature fights pests and diseases, and we look for that way, if the soil is healthy, then the tree will automatically be healthy too.

This nature first approach is not idealism but a market necessity, as European and North American consumers, increasingly conscious of pesticide residues, are driving explosive demand, with Volkert Engelsman, CEO of organic supplier Eosta, noting that organic lemons can command prices up to four, five times the conventional price.

The Challenge: Market Access

Organic farmers face formidable hurdles, from lower yields and pest control challenges to limited market access, an official government response acknowledged.

Smallholder farmers are hit hardest, with a 2025 Limpopo study revealing that while 86.6 per cent see high-profit potential in organic farming, a staggering 88.4 per cent find certification standards too restrictive.

Innovative Solutions

To overcome these barriers, a new support ecosystem is emerging. The SA Organic Sector Organisation and Participatory Guarantee Systems SA are making certification more



Evidence linking pesticides to health risks has made consumers more conscious of what they eat. SOGA Organic has responded by committing to certified organic production, ensuring their produce is free from synthetic chemicals and trusted by buyers worldwide. Photo by courtesy of SOGA Organic.

accessible, while companies like Wild Coast Foods aggregate smallholder produce and connect farmers to markets.

NGOs like Thanda, retain 85 per cent of vegetable produce within local communities through 'Agri-Hubs,' while SaveAct's savings groups help over 110,000 members, mostly women in finance their operations. Eosta supports conventional farmers shift to organic through composting and carbon credits, and we are working with them right from the beginning," says Engelsman.

A Fertile Future

The success of organic farming in South Africa rests on a powerful synergy: growing global demand

for sustainable food must be matched by robust local systems that empower farmers.

By reimagining the value chain making certification accessible, aggregating smallholder produce, and connecting farmers directly to markets, South Africa is building a more resilient agricultural sector.

While the Daily Dispatch notes that, this kind of ecosystem does not build itself, but requires deliberate coordination and institutional support, and the growing recognition of its potential suggests a bright future for South Africa's organic farmers.

A seed law for farmers, not just for corporations

In conversation with Daud Ngosengwa Manongi

AfrONews held an interview with Daud Ngosengwa Manongi, a Programs Lead Biodiversity Conservation at the Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity (TABIO). He is also a Steering Committee Member of the Global IFOAM Seed Platform, the Secretary General of the Seed Working Group in Tanzania, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), expert representative on Advisory Committee on Seed Unity (ACSU) under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), to understand the legal framework surrounding Farmer-Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) in Tanzania. Excerpt

AfrONews: What exactly is a farmer-managed seed system, and why does it matter more to ordinary Tanzanians than the formal seed system that the law currently favors?

Manongi: A farmer-managed seed system is simply the practice where farmers save seeds from their own harvest, exchange them with neighbors, or buy them from local grain markets. This is not a small or marginal practice. In Tanzania, it accounts for more than eighty percent of the total area planted with subsistence crops.

Why does this matter? Because these local seed varieties have been developed by farmers over generations. They are resilient to drought, resistant to local pests, and highly nutritious. Studies have shown that ninety-seven percent of maize landraces are resistant to storage pests, and eighty-five percent are drought resistant.

Compare that to hybrid seeds, which are expensive, often unavailable in remote areas, and can fail under harsh conditions. The farmer-managed seed system is not backward. It is the backbone of Tanzanian agriculture.

AfrONews: The Seed Act of 2003 prohibits the exchange and sale of farmers' seeds, yet more than 80 percent of Tanzanian smallholder farmers depend on this practice. How do you explain this contradiction between the law and the reality on the ground?

Manongi: The contradiction is stark and deeply problematic. The Seed Act of 2003 was designed primarily for the commercial seed industry, focusing on certified improved varieties, plant breeders' rights, and formal quality control mechanisms. It simply did not consider the reality that the vast majority of Tanzanian farmers would continue to rely on their own saved seeds, local exchanges, and grain market purchases. As a result, the law technically prohibits the very practices that feed the nation.

This means that a grandmother saving maize seeds from her harvest for the next season is operating in a legal gray area.

A farmer buying a sack of beans at a local market and planting them instead of eating them is technically breaking the law. A community seed fair where farmers exchange local varieties is not recognized or protected by any legal framework.

This cannot be right. The law was written for a formal seed system that serves only a small fraction of farmers, yet it criminalizes



Women holding seeds. Photo from Unsplash.

es the system that serves the majority. The consequence is that farmers are left vulnerable. They have no legal protection when their seeds are confiscated.

They have no recognized rights when they want to sell surplus seeds to neighbors. And they have no recourse when policies designed for commercial agriculture undermine their traditional practices.

We cannot have a situation where the majority of farmers are technically lawbreakers simply for feeding their families.

AfrONews: The National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (NEO-AS) 2023-2030 now recognizes farmer-managed seed systems for the first time. What practical difference has this recognition made, and what still needs to change?

Manongi: The adoption of the National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (NEOAS) 2023-2030 was a significant breakthrough.

For the first time, a government document explicitly recognizes farmer-managed seed systems and acknowledges their importance for food security, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience.

This recognition did not happen by accident. It was the result of twenty years of relentless advocacy by TABIO, the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM), and our partners. The strategy now contains a dedicated chapter on seeds, which is a major achievement.

However, recognition in a strategy document is not the same as legal protection. The Seed Act of 2003 remains unchanged. There is still no distinct legal framework that specifically recognizes and protects farmer-managed seed systems.

What we have seen are pilot initiatives for example, the Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI) has officially registered twelve farmer varieties. Twelve varieties out of thousands that farmers depend on. That is a start, but it is not enough.

What still needs to change is the legal framework itself. We need a separate legal instrument dedicated to farmers' seeds one that recognizes the right of farmers to save, use, exchange, and sell their seeds without unnecessary legal or bureaucratic restrictions. NEOAS opened the door. Now we need to walk through it.

AfrONews: Some argue that formal seed systems guarantee quality, yield, and food safety, while farmer-managed seeds are unpredictable. How do you respond to that concern?

Manongi: I understand that concern, and it is a fair one. Critics argue that formal seed systems guarantee quality, yield, and food safety through certified varieties that have been tested and approved.

They worry that farmer-managed seeds are unpredictable that a farmer cannot know whether saved seeds will germinate well, resist disease, or produce a reliable harvest.

There is some truth to this. Formal certification does provide a level of assurance that informal systems cannot match. But here is what the critics often miss. Farmer-managed seeds have been tested not in laboratories, but in the real world over generations. A maize variety that has survived fifty seasons in a drought-prone village has proven its resilience in ways that no laboratory trial can replicate.

Studies have shown that ninety-seven percent of maize landraces are resistant to storage pests, and eighty-five percent are drought resistant. These are not unpredictable seeds. They are the product of centuries of farmer-led selection and adaptation. Furthermore, the two systems are not enemies. They can coexist. What we are advocating for is a pluralistic seed system where farmers have genuine choice. A farmer should be able to choose saved seeds from her own harvest, buy seeds from a neighbor, or purchase certified commercial seeds.

Each option has advantages and disadvantages. Farmers are intelligent people. They are best placed to make these decisions for themselves, their families, and their land.

AfrONews: If TABIO and its partners, like Tanzania Conservation and Heritage Initiatives (TCHI), could change just one thing in Tanzania's seed policy tomorrow, what would that one thing be, and why?

Manongi: If I could change just one thing in Tanzania's seed policy tomorrow, it would be this: create a separate legal framework specifically for farmer-managed seed systems that recognizes the right of farmers to save, use, exchange, and sell their own seeds without requiring certification or registration.

I would not touch the Seed Act of 2003. That law serves the commercial seed industry well, and it has its place. But the commercial system serves only a small fraction of Tanzanian farmers. The majority operate outside it. They need their own law, one that fits their reality, not one that forces them into a system designed for large-scale commercial agriculture.

This single change would do more than any other to protect Tanzania's agricultural biodiversity, strengthen food security, and respect the rights of millions of smallholder farmers who have been feeding this nation for generations. The law should work for farmers, not against them. That is what we are fighting for.



“

“The law should work for farmers, not against them.”

—Daud Ngosengwa Manongi

FARMERS SEED RIGHTS

Manongi advocates for farmers' rights to:



Save

Save their seeds for future planting



Use

Use their seeds on their own farms



Exchange

Exchange seeds with other farmers



Sell

Sell their seeds in local markets

Key FMSS Facts



97%

of maize landraces are resistant to storage pests.



85%

are drought resistant

How South Sudan's Organic Farmers Are Defying the Odds

By AfrONews Reporter

In a country where conflict has displaced millions and hunger stalks every village, a quiet agricultural revolution is taking root.

South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, is embracing organic and climate smart farming, not as a luxury, but as a survival strategy.

Since gaining independence in 2011, the country has faced immense challenges, yet amidst the difficulties, farmers, international agencies, and local organisations are proving that sustainable agriculture can rebuild lives, restore dignity, and plant seeds of peace.

A Sector in Crisis

South Sudan's agricultural sector is predominantly subsistence based, with over 80 per cent of the population relying on farming, fishing, or herding. The country's fertile soils and abundant water resources offer immense potential, but climate shocks have turned abundance into vulnerability.

For farmers like Adwok Jud in Malakal, flooding submerged his fields and forced him to borrow money just to survive. Yet with training from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), he learned good agricultural practices, row planting, crop rotation, and proper irrigation, and saw his income soar by 80 per cent.



Once struggling to survive, Adwok Jud now beams with pride as he holds a tomato plant on his farm in Makal boma, Malakal county. FAO training in climate smart farming has transformed his yields and his livelihood. Photo by courtesy of FAO/Mayak Akuot.

Non-State Actors Role

In the absence of a formal national organic agriculture movement and organic agriculture certification organ, a robust network of international organisations, local NGOs, and community based initiatives is building capacity for sustainable agriculture.

According to Anglican Overseas Aid, the South Sudanese Development and Relief Agency (SSUDRA) has developed agroforestry program that replenish land and protect remaining farmland. By planting vegetation, managing bush land, and cultivating crops, communities are restoring soil health and creating wildlife habitats.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) supports the Malakal Farmer Cooperative Group, providing hands on agricultural train-

ing, quality seeds, and solar powered water pumps to returnees and refugees.

According to UNHCR, Oyuoh Dak Awang, a father of eight who fled conflict and returned with nothing, has expanded his farm from half an acre to twelve acres, now employing 35 labourers.

"My life has transformed completely," Oyuoh told UNHCR. "I can now pay my workers, feed my family, send my children to school, and afford medical care when needed," he noted.

The FAO, through its Building Resilient Livelihoods to Climate Change (BRLC) project, supports 1,000 vulnerable households in Malakal to produce cereals, legumes, and vegetables year round using flood and runoff waters as a climate adaptation strategy.

According to the Agroecology Map, Empower Youth in Africa & Livelihood (EYAL) runs an agroecolo-

gy farm in Magwi, Eastern Equatoria, serving as a living classroom for youth, women, and farmers in regenerative practices like composting and crop rotation.

The Strømme Foundation empowers over 1,200 farmers through partners including the Organic Farmers Advisory Organization (OFAO), while Slow Food International supports organic gardening networks promoting food that is good, clean, and fair. Recently, GOAL Global introduced floating gardens in Fashoda County, a low cost, community led innovation to grow vegetables on floodwaters using local materials.

According to the FAO, one notable success story involves Nilotic shea butter producers in Rumbek, who, with FAO training and value addition technology, saw their organically produced butter reach shop shelves in South Sudan for the first time.

FAO South Sudan is focused on value chain development, to ensure farmers add value to their products and have money in their pockets, affirmed Meshack Malo, FAO Country Representative.

These initiatives are not charity; they are investments in resilience, FAO supported farmer group that earned SSP 2,463,500 (USD 751) in just three months from surplus vegetable sales.

Continues to page 13

How South Sudan's Organic Farmers Are Defying the Odds

Continues from page 12

The Policy Landscape

According to South Sudan's Initial National Communication to the UNFCCC, several policy frameworks provide a foundation for sustainable farming. The Agricultural Sector Policy Framework (ASPF) outlines a 'green agriculture policy' promoting practices that minimize environmental pollution and encourage agroforestry.

The Food Security Policy promotes land conservation, soil fertility improvement, and protection against agrochemical pollution. The Comprehensive Agricultural Master Plan (CAMP) serves as the investment framework to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture. The ASPF also mandates the development of a plant genetic resources conservation programme and a biosafety framework to reduce risks from genetically modified organisms, principles that align with organic agriculture's commitment to preserving biodiversity.

Despite these supportive frameworks, implementation remains weak, to date no specific organic law exists, and certification is still not regulated. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, a review of the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Policy was launched in September 2025 with FAO support to strengthen and modernize the country's extension services.

For now, farmers like Adwok and Oyuoh are leading the way, proving that even in the world's most fragile states; organic agriculture can cultivate not just crops, but hope.



Tomatoes on the Vine. Photo from online.

The Farmer Who Had Refused to Give Up

By AfrO News Reporter, Manica, Mozambique

The sun is brutal over Manica province. It beats down on red earth and tired backs, but John Moteriuua doesn't mind. He's too busy inspecting his crops, checking leaves that no longer bear the scars of chemical burns, feeling the soil that has grown darker and richer under his care.

His hands, once stained by synthetic pesticides, now work with compost and natural enrichers. The results, he says, speak for themselves.

"These new practices reduce spending and increase profits," he says, wiping sweat from his brow.

Moteriuua is not alone, across Mozambique, a quiet agricultural revolution is unfolding, one rooted not in costly chemical inputs, but in the wisdom of organic farming and agroecology. From the flood, ravaged fields of Gaza to the rural cooperatives of Niassa, smallholder farmers are reclaiming their land and their livelihoods.

In Manica, farmers have learned to create their own pesticide using leaves from the Muquina plant, combined with ordinary bar soap, hot pepper, and tobacco. They soak the mixture for a day, drain the liquid, and dilute it with water, it's simple, it's cheap, and it works.

Artur Tunguza, president of a local farmers' club in Vanduzi district, explains it with the pride of someone who has watched his neighbors thrive. "We combine all these ingredients, adding 200 grams with a one inch size piece of soap to create a strong pesticide that helps combat resistant pests," he says. The movement is spreading in Niassa province, under the SABIO project run by We Effect Mozambique in partnership with local farmers' unions and backed by the Liechtenstein Development Service is strengthening farmers' organisations and promoting biodiversity, food security and climate resilient farming.

"The core of SABIO is about building capacity from the ground up, starting with the least reached communities," says Aires Afonso Mbanze, the project manager.

Omar Salimo, president of one revitalised farmers' association, remembers the old days. Before SABIO, very few farmers grew vegetables collectively. Now, we produce together, especially for selling, and many farmers have replaced chemical inputs with organic fertilisers," he says.

At Niassa's agricultural institutes, something remarkable is happening, instructors are training students to use effective microorganisms, a type of biofertiliser mixed with organic waste, and the results have stunned even the most skeptical.

Almiro Hugo Cardoso, an agricultural technician, can barely contain his excitement. "We're harvesting up to 10kg of tomatoes per plant, compared to an average of 5kg that we used to produce in our demo plots," he says.

Mozambique's government is beginning to pay attention, whereby in April 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries was established with a mandate to promote sustainable development and regulate actions that support sustainable agriculture, it is a significant step, but formal recognition is still a work in progress.

Alberto Ndala, a project officer from the Union of Farmers and Associations of Niassa, is candid about the difficulties. "Combating pests with botanical

pesticides can be expensive. Sometimes more costly than the additional yield itself," he admits. The search for affordable, locally sourced alternatives is ongoing.

Through initiatives like SUSTAIN, supported by the Norwegian and Swedish development agencies, over 1,200 farmers have gained skills in climate smart agriculture, agroforestry, water conservation and biodiversity protection.

But for the farmers themselves, the shift is about more than yields or profits, it is about something deeper, Chumine Saide, a farmer in Niassa, puts it simply; "It's not just about money, instead about knowing that we can manage on our own."

In a country where so much has been taken, that sense of independence is priceless. Mozambique's organic movement is not a luxury; it is a lifeline one that promises healthier soils, more resilient communities, and a future worth planting for, he concluded.



Famers attending to their crops in Mozambique, Photo by the courtesy of IUCN

Organic Farming Gets Market Boost as Value Addition Takes Root

By AfrONews Reporter, Nyeri, Kenya



Nyeri youth open organic produce shop. Photo by Alice Waitthera, Kenya

From dedicated farm shops to high-value exports, Kenya's organic sector is finally getting the market infrastructure it needs as farmers move beyond production to processing and branding.

In Nyeri, a group of 11 young entrepreneurs have opened the county's first organic produce outlet at Skuta area, selling vegetables, herbs, and tubers grown on their one-acre farm.

Operating under Nyeri Organic Herbs and Eco-fuel Enterprise (NOHEFE), the group also runs a solar dryer that preserves produce through drying before packaging for sale.

"We started by consuming the products ourselves, then our families and neighbours embraced them before we expanded," Pauline Kariuki, group chairperson, told AfrONE-

ws.

The group has since ventured into coffee roasting, selling a kilogram of roasted natural coffee at 19.30 USD. They also process guava, soursop, and stinging nettle powder, with products now reaching Nyeri, Ruiru, Karatina, Nanyuki, and Nairobi.

In Kiambu, farmers have launched an exclusive organic market in Githunguri constituency, serving as a hub for storage, value addition, and sale of organic produce sourced strictly from registered farmers. The initiative, facilitated by PELUM Kenya, aims to give consumers confidence by distinguishing genuine organic products from conventional ones.

"With this market, buyers will have no doubts as it is strictly organic," said George Boro, a PELUM Kenya representative.

Value addition is also attracting significant investment. Limbua Group, a Kenyan company sourcing macadamia nuts, mangoes, and avocados from nearly 10,000 smallholder farmers, recently received a €2 million loan from BIO to expand its processing facilities.

All produce is 100 per cent organic certified and exported to premium markets in Europe, the company employs over 60 field agronomists who train farmers and ensure traceability back to individual crates.

The Accelerating Organic Market Development project, implemented by FiBL, has further strengthened the sector by supporting value-added products such as dried herbs and

spices, avocado oil, orange-fleshed sweet potato flour, cassava flour, mango juice, and dried herbal powders.

The project also strengthened the Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) and its Kilimohai mark, with brand recognition reaching up to 48 per cent in some retail outlets. George Boro noted that farmers who once struggled to sell organic produce in general markets, where it was undervalued, are now finding reliable buyers.

With county governments developing agroecology policies and a national strategy in place, Kenya's organic sector is demonstrating that sustainable farming can also be profitable farming.

A Life Giving Seed: How One Man's Chance with a Modest Plant Transformed a Tunisian Community

By Our Correspondent, Zaghuan, Tunisia

Haitham Ben Ali's story begins not with success, but with despair. A young man with no land, no cattle, and no clear future in Tunisia's arid Zaghuan Governorate, he watched as his neighbors struggled against a relentless enemy: barren, lifeless soil.

Overgrazing and drought had turned once productive pastures into dust, while livestock were dying and most families were vacating the area.

"My father used to tell

me stories of green hills," Haitham recalls. "I thought they were just fairy tales." He notes.

But on a dusty afternoon in 2022, everything changed; Haitham attended a community meeting where researchers from ICARDA and the Tunisian forestry department introduced a simple idea: a native plant called Sulla, a resilient forage legume that had once thrived in these lands.

They had tested it on degraded state land and were witnessing miracles, land dead for years was springing

Continues to page 16

A Life Giving Seed: How One Man's Chance with a Modest Plant Transformed a Tunisian Community

Continues from page 15



Restoration of degraded agrosilvopastoral site in Central Tunisia using forage legume species Sulla (*Hedysarum coronarium*) that feeds the cattle too. Photo by ICARDA

back to life, then Haitham visited the trial plots, knelt down, and ran his fingers through soil that had not held moisture in decades, it was cool and dark,” he says softly, I could smell life again.

A Desperate Leap of Faith Inspired but penniless, Haitham sold his only possession of value, a battered Peugeot 504 used for odd jobs. “My neighbors thought I had lost my mind,” he laughs, but with the money, I bought four cows, it was a terrifying leap of faith,” “for three months, I barely slept, I had no feed, no grazing land, and no experience,” Haitham affirms. With permission from the community committee, he began grazing his small herd on the restored land for just a few hours each day, the results were immediate seen, and within weeks, his cows were shining and were more energetic. Their milk production nearly doubled.

In just four months, he saved 900 Tunisian Dinars per cow in feed costs. “My mother cried when I showed her the accounts,”

he shares. “She said, ‘You have given us back our dignity.’”

A Community Transformed Dalila, a mother of five and a farmer with a tiny plot, was among the first women to join the initiative. “Before the project, I had never planted anything on my own,” she confesses. “My husband did the farming. I stayed home.”

Through the Conservation Agriculture in Crop-Livestock Systems project, Dalila and 24 other women received handheld seeders, simple tools that reduced planting time from days to hours.

But more importantly, they received training and trust. “On the first day, a man from the project told us, ‘Women, you are the future of agriculture in Tunisia,’” Dalila recalls. “I almost laughed. Who had ever told us that?” Today, Dalila grows Sulla on half a hectare of her own land and the forage feeds her goats and the surplus she sells to neighbors. Her children no longer go to bed hungry, and for the first time, she has her own savings.

“

“The land is green again, my children are healthy, I am no longer invisible.”

—Dalila

“The land is green again, my children are healthy, I am no longer invisible,” she attests.

The Science Behind the Miracle

Sulla (*Hedysarum coronarium*) is a native legume that thrives in degraded, dry soils while fixing nitrogen from the air, essentially fertilising the land as it grows. Pilot projects in Zaghuan recorded breathtaking results: biomass production increased by 440 per cent, plant cover improved by 330 per cent, and species diversity doubled.

“Everything our researchers told us came true,” says Dr. Mohammed Rezgui, one of the scientists who led the trials. “Sulla was not just feeding animals; it was waking up the soil. Microorganisms returned, insects returned, birds returned, and the entire ecosystem began to heal itself,” he reveals.

Why This Story Matters

Across Africa, farmers face the same harsh reality: climate change is degrading soils, traditional methods are failing, and hunger is spreading, but Tunisia’s Sulla experiment offers a beacon of hope, proof that solutions do not have to

come from expensive laboratories.

“We are not asking for charity,” Dalila insists. “We are asking for knowledge! If someone shows us what works, we will do the rest,” she insists.

Today, the pilot project has expanded to six governorates, covering over 6,000 hectares. A women’s cooperative now produces and sells Sulla seed to neighboring communities. The area has become a living laboratory, drawing researchers and farmers from across the region.

For Haitham, the change is deeply personal. “My daughter came home from school and said, ‘Papa, my teacher asked us to write about something beautiful.’ She wrote about our land. She wrote about the green hills I used to think were fairy tales. My daughter sees them as real, and that, to me, is everything,” he adds.

As Haitham says with a smile: “I sold a car to buy a dream. Now I have more than I ever imagined.” Then he poses a question that lingers: “What would you sell to find yours?”

“

“I sold a car to buy a dream. Now I have more than I ever imagined.”

—Haitham Ben Ali

From Job Loss to Job Creator: How One Young Man Is Transforming Agriculture in Sierra Leone

By Our Correspondent,
Zaghuan, Tunisia

Mohamed Kawa had never imagined himself a farmer, but when the pandemic stripped away his job and his plans, he found himself standing on a patch of dusty land in Sierra Leone's Kailahun District with nothing left to lose.

Instead of succumbing to despair, he saw opportunity and founded Helzee Farms in 2022 with nothing but determination and a deep conviction that Africa should not rely on imported food.

From Scratch to Success
Starting from nothing, Mohamed focused on organic production and local processing, and he began cultivating cassava, rice, and vegetables, transforming them into locally branded products like Kailahun Gari and fufu flour. He also processed palm kernels into oil and cosmetics, turning agricultural waste into wealth. Though the journey was brutal, Mohamed's commitment to making farming 'fashionable among the youth' kept him going, and he insists that "as fertile as our lands are in Africa, it is unsounded why we should rely on importation of foodstuffs."

Though the road was rough and the odds stacked against him, Mohamed's fire never dimmed his mission to make farming 'fash-

ionable among the youth' fuelling his steps and he reflects, with a shake of his head.

"As fertile as our lands are in Africa, it is unfathomable why we should rely on importation of foodstuffs," he insists.

Mohamed's mission extends beyond personal success, he cultivates watermelons organically with zero synthetic pesticides and is constructing a poultry farm for 1,500 layer birds in Segbwema Town, and at this point in time, his goal is to inspire other young people to embrace agriculture as a viable career across the continent.

A Turning Point

A key breakthrough came when Helzee Farms was

selected for the FAO HASTEN business incubation programme, a four-day intensive workshop delivered in partnership with SEED. The programme provides technical support and mentorship to youth-led agribusinesses.

"The mentorship helped us see our business through the eyes of an investor, not just a community implementer," Mohamed recalls. The guidance sharpened his business model, helping him clarify target markets, identify pathways to scale, and embed the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the core of operations.

"We realized that our impact is strong," he says, "but we need to explain

more clearly how we grow sustainably without overstretching," emphasized Mohamed.

Helzee Farms now aims to increase participating farmers' incomes by at least 30 per cent by year's end. Plans also include training up to 500 youth and women in organic farming techniques by 2027 and planting up to 70,000 trees on degraded lands.

Mohamed Kawa's story is proof that with determination, the right support, and a willingness to learn, young Africans can build businesses that solve real problems of feeding communities, creating jobs, and healing the land.



Mohamed Kawa, a visionary young farmer from Sierra Leone, with his colleagues is leading a movement to transform agriculture into a sustainable and rewarding career path for the youth.

Why Organic Poultry Deserves a Comeback

By AfrONews Reporter

Imagine a steaming plate of rice, golden and fragrant, topped with a piece of chicken that has been simmered slowly in spices. As you lift the first morsel to your lips, the aroma hits you rich, earthy, and deeply satisfying. The meat is firm yet tender, with a depth of flavour that lingers on your tongue long after the meal is done. Now, ask yourself: when was the last time you truly tasted chicken like that?

Across Africa and beyond, we have lost something precious without even noticing. The local chicken, the spirited, free-roaming bird that scratched the earth, chased insects, and soaked up the sun, once graced every homestead. Today, it is a rare sight on our dinner tables.

In its place stands the broiler, a modern agricultural marvel bred for one purpose: rapid growth.

The broiler chicken reaches slaughter weight in just six to seven weeks, making it efficient and affordable, but to put it bluntly, tasteless.

Bred for speed and breast meat, these birds barely move, confined to crowded houses, fed formulated rations, denied sunlight, and reduced to pale, soft, watery flesh that depends entirely on marinades and sauces for flavour.

These birds roam freely,



Under the cool shade of an old tree, these free-ranging local chickens take a moment's rest from their daily foraging. Raised naturally, they scratch the earth for insects and greens, developing the rich flavour and firm texture that modern broilers have lost. This is the taste of tradition, patiently growing

scratching the earth for insects, seeds, and greens. They take six months or more to mature.

Their muscles work, their bones strengthen, and their meat develops a complex flavour profile that no commercial marinade can replicate.

Scientists say organic chicken contains higher levels of omega 3 fatty acids, lower levels of saturated fat, and none of the antibiotics or growth hormones routinely used in commercial poultry production.

A 2024 study published on the FAO's AGRIS platform found that organic chicken meat contains a significantly better ratio of omega 3 to omega 6 fatty acids, with an 11.13% increase in saturated fatty acids, a 7.57% decrease in

omega 6 fatty acids, and a 0.8% increase in omega 3 fatty acids compared to retail chicken, while also containing 3-5% less total fat.

Similarly, a 2018 study on native chicken ecotypes in Benin recorded that chickens reared under organic systems had the highest monounsaturated fatty acid content and provided additional health benefits for consumers.

These nutritional differences are complemented by the foundational regulatory distinction that organic production prohibits the routine use of antibiotics; a critical advantage given those studies in countries like Uganda estimate the commercial poultry sector uses approximately 63% of imported antibiotics, with residues exceeding maximum limits in a significant

proportion of farms.

The meat is firmer, darker, and more nutritious. When cooked, it releases a natural broth that is golden and rich, the foundation of soups and stews that have nourished generations.

The decline of local chicken is not just a loss of flavour but a loss of resilience, for indigenous breeds are hardier, more disease resistant, better adapted to local climates, require less expensive feed, and can survive on kitchen scraps and foraging, offering smallholder farmers a sustainable path to food security and income generation. Yet these birds are disappearing, displaced by imported hybrid breeds promoted for their productivity, leaving many young

[Continues to page 19](#)

Why Organic Poultry Deserves a Comeback

Continues from page 18

people who have never tasted a truly free-range chicken unaware of what they are missing.

The revival of organic poultry is not just about nostalgia but about choice, for by choosing local chickens we support farmers who practice sustainable agriculture, preserve genetic diversity, and reject a food system that prioritizes speed over substance.

It is time to bring back the taste of real chicken by seeing out local breeds, supporting the farmers who raise them, cooking them slowly, and savoring every bite, because a meal is not just fuel but memory, culture, and love served on a plate.

Imagine a plate of fragrant, golden rice, each grain

glistening with flavour, crowned with tender, locally raised free-range chicken, slow-cooked to perfection, telling a story of open fields and natural living, with an aroma that promises a taste so profound it will have you craving another bite long after the plate is empty.

This dish is a testament to the unmatched richness of organic poultry, a culinary treasure that makes every meal an unforgettable occasion, reminding us that real food, raised with care, connects us to the land, our heritage, and one another, and that is a meal worth savoring and a tradition worth reviving.



Local chicken in a farm, Photo by unsplash

The Cocoa Comeback: Inside Ivory Coast's Bold Plan to Restore Its Soils, and Its Future

By AfrONews Reporter, Côte d'Ivoire



Cocoa farm in Ivory coast, Photo by unsplash

As climate change and degrading soils push the world's largest cocoa producer to a breaking point, an ambitious plan to turn waste into gold offers a radical new blueprint for African agriculture.

This quiet transformation in central Côte d'Ivoire is not about expensive technologies, but, it is about something simpler: turning organic waste into life giving compost. It is a bold plan that could reshape the future of chocolate while securing the livelihoods of five million people.

Ivory Coast produces nearly half of the world's cocoa, yet farmers are losing the fight against climate change, exhausted soils, and rising costs. The old solutions, chemical fertilisers and hybrid seeds, are no longer enough.

A Sector in Crisis

Production has plummeted from 2.3 million tonnes in 2022/2023 to an estimated 1.75 million tonnes for 2024/2025, a 24 per cent drop in just two seasons.

Climate change has added about 40 extra days of excessive heat each year, above what cocoa trees can tolerate.

Erratic rains and punishing droughts have ravaged plantations, while decades of monoculture have left soils barren.

Farmers are too poor to afford chemical fertilisers, can only watch helplessly as their trees wither and poverty deepens with each passing season.

Only 16 per cent of Ivorian cocoa farmers use fertiliser, a key reason for the productivity gap with Ghana. A 2026 survey found that 73

Continues to page 20

The Cocoa Comeback: Inside Ivory Coast's Bold Plan to Restore Its Soils, and Its Future

Continues from page 19

per cent of farmers had not bought any fertiliser for the upcoming season.

A National Roadmap for Change

A coalition led by the Dutch government has developed a five-year national roadmap to make organic compost the standard input for cocoa farming.

The roadmap was formally validated by the Ivorian government, including the Ministry of Agriculture.

A randomized trial on 120 farms, published in March 2026, found that organic fertilization with composted poultry litter increased harvest productivity by 38 per cent, outperforming mineral fertilisers.

Organic fertilization showed a value-to-cost ratio of 3.08, meaning every dollar invested returned three dollars in value.

The roadmap aims to increase compost adoption to 35 per cent by 2030, targeting a 25 per cent productivity gain and regeneration of degraded soils.

There is no regulatory framework giving compost

the same policy weight as mineral fertilizers, which receive direct subsidies. Logistics are also challenging: compost must be applied at up to three tonnes per hectare, making transport expensive.

A Phased Approach

The first two years will establish a steering committee led by the Ministry of Agriculture, develop a national "Cocoa Compost" quality label, and identify reference farms across nine regions.

Years three and four will deploy 50 village-level composting units at co-operatives, solving the logistical challenge of the last kilometre. Year five targets full institutionalization through a National Soil Fertility Plan and a network of 200 composting units.

Crucially, the strategy integrates biochar, charcoal produced from cocoa pods, which locks carbon in the soil for centuries.

This also opens the door to carbon credit markets, whereby a UN-backed project is already working



One of the cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire. (Picture from unsplash)

with 1,000 farmers in the Soubré region to convert agricultural waste into biochar and generate verifiable carbon credits.

"It is no longer a question of transforming compost into a simple technical option, but into a truly viable economic solution for all actors in the sector," says the

Directorate of Plant Health and Protection, Mr. Adjoumani Koffi.

The eyes of the agricultural world are on Ivory Coast, watching to see if this bold bet can rewrite the future of food.



75%

DROP

Cocoa production fell from 2.3 million tonnes in 2022/2023 to an estimated 1.75 million tonnes in 2024/2025

“

"It is no longer a question of transforming compost into a simple technical option, but into a truly viable economic solution for all actors in the sector."

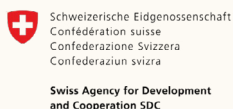
Mr. Adjoumani Koffi
Directorate of Plant
Health and Protection



6th African Organic Conference

Lusaka, Zambia - 1 to 4 December 2026

Our Partners



↳ Contact Us

African Organic Network (AfrONet),

14128-Mbezi Juu Mtoni, along Goba Road,

P.O. Box 31168,

Uyoga Street,

Kinondoni-Dar-es-Salaam,

Tanzania

Email: info@afro.net.bio

Tel/WhatsApp ++255 712 344 989

www.afro.net.bio



@afro.net.bio



@afrONet



@Afronet

AfroNet



African Organic Network