

UN scientists urge stronger action to control global warming

By Emily Beament and Brendan Montague

The world is heading for a cataclysmic 3C of global warming or worse, scientists from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warn.

According to the report, goals agreed by countries to limit temperature rises to 1.5C or below 2C as a way to avoid the worst impacts of climate change cannot be fulfilled unless there are rapid, deep and immediate greenhouse gas emissions cuts in all areas.

It calls for 'substantial reductions' in the

use of fossil fuels to curb emissions and stave off dangerous climate change.

Threats

Jim Skea, co-chair of the team behind the report, said the world was 'definitely not on track' to limit warming to 1.5C, beyond which the threats of severe floods, droughts, hits to crop yields, rising seas and wildlife die-offs will loom larger.

'Unless there are immediate and deep emission reductions across all sectors,

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Zanzibar IIABA-PGS group sees big future in organic vanilla production

By Constantine Akitanda, Zanzibar

Tushawazoea Plus is a farmer group based in Mangapwani town in Unguja, the main island of Zanzibar.

It is on the northwest coast, almost 25 kilometers north of the Zanzibar Stone Town.

Chairperson Jafari Said Hamis says currently the group has 22 members (12 men and 10



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Organic cotton farmers in Simiyu Region, Tanzania. Photo by Dinesh Khanna and Laudes Foundation

Cotton sustainability in Africa at a crossroads

By Sandra Marquardt

Cotton plays a vital role in the African economy, particularly in the sub-Saharan region. It is both a significant export crop

and a fiber extensively used in the domestic textile industry, thus making it a key factor in sustaining farmers' livelihoods and boosting state revenues.

However, over the last few years there has been a push to expand genetically modified (GM) cotton production on the continent without robust research into the long-term effects on these livelihoods and the environment in general.

Evidence from India and other GM cotton-growing countries points to higher economic, social and financial risks plus the potential for increased use of unproven pesticides brought about by crop resistance to commonly used pesticides and outbreaks of secondary pests.

The introduction of GM crops also poses concerns over seed sovereignty, biodiversity, and uncontrolled contamination of non-GM crops. Currently, seven countries in Africa have chosen to allow GM cotton production while four have opted out of it. Many more are in the process of testing or policy development.

In its new white paper 'Cotton in Africa: Sustainability at a Crossroads', the Textile Exchange Pan-Africa Sourcing Working Group outlines the regulatory status of GM cotton in African countries, benefits of organic and preferred cotton production, and concerns about GM technology.

It also urges policymakers to create an enabling environment for preferred non-

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Cotton sustainability in Africa at a crossroads

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GM cotton production to thrive on the continent in response to consumer and industry market demand, given that organic rules prohibit genetic modification.

The use of GM cotton was slow to start in Africa, with South Africa being the first country to permit its use in 1997, followed by Burkina Faso 11 years later in 2008 (that country has since suspended its approval) and Eswatini and Sudan in 2012.

In 2018 four more countries – Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Malawi – approved the use of GM cotton and Eswatini formally started growing the crop. And in 2020 Kenya planted GM cotton for the first time commercially.

Genetic modification in general, or GM cotton specifically, has been specifically forbidden in at least four African countries – Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt and Madagascar.

There is increasing interest from within the textile industry, as well as pressure from consumers and NGOs, to commit towards sourcing more sustainably grown cotton as evidenced by the textile industry's involvement in the 2025 Sustainable Cotton Challenge and other initiatives.

Leading designers, manufacturers, and retailers are increasingly making formal commitments to use more organic cotton as they develop their sustainability strategies, often focused on climate change mitigation.

In so doing, they are supporting the more than 182,000 farmers growing organic cotton worldwide – including the more than 36,000 in Africa.

These companies also are looking to fulfill product standards requirements such as Textile Exchange's Organic Content Standard and the Global Organic Textile Standard, which prohibits the use of GM cotton.

With increased production and vertical integration, Africa has

the potential to become a significant hub for ethical and sustainable textile-based development. There are numerous benefits to sourcing organic cotton and GM-free preferred cotton from the continent.

Eight African countries grew over four percent of global organic cotton production in 2017/18, a 20 percent increase from 2016/17. Tanzania is by far the largest organic cotton producing country on the continent, followed by (in order of volume) Uganda, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal.

Countries that prohibit genetically modified seed will avoid the difficult and complex issue of crop contamination through genetic drift and handling, which has become a concern in countries such as India and the United States. This puts African countries at an advantage when it comes to organic production which prohibits genetic modification.

Prohibiting GM production means that African farmers, national research institutes, and ginners will continue saving and breeding their own locally adapted seed rather than have to purchase seed every year from foreign multinational corporations.

Africa's proximity to European and Turkish manufacturing facilities makes it an increasingly appealing sourcing partner for several reasons, not least the lower carbon footprint of

transportation to both mills and consumers in those countries.

Increasing manufacturing capacity within Africa will provide added value to the organic cotton fiber produced on the continent (rather than it being exported in raw form).

Africa's total population is expected to double from 1.25 billion to 2.4 billion by 2050, and in some African countries half the populations are under 25 years old. Developing organic cotton production and manufacturing in Africa provides crucial potential for the economy by providing local jobs and reducing rural depopulation and the incentive to emigrate.

Today, Africa is at a crossroads. Textile Exchange's Pan-Africa Sourcing Working Group urges policymakers and the textile industry to take a path toward resilient and healthy rural communities and capitalize on the growing demand for preferred cotton production and manufacturing. The time is ripe.

Textile Exchange's Pan-Africa Sourcing Working Group supports and encourages the growth of organic and preferred cotton programs (such as Fair Trade and Cotton made in Africa) that prohibit the use of genetic modification.

These programs also embrace practices that build organic matter in soils (increasing carbon sequestration), support smallholder farmers, and protect human health and the environment.

Key to expanding preferred cotton production and manufacturing is creating institutions, networks, and related infrastructure to help governments, industry, farmers, civil society organizations and foundations come together with a common goal.

This includes having organizations funded and in place that can organize and train the farmers and manage internal control systems, among other roles.

Until these additional needs in management capacity and technical expertise are addressed, increased demand will not automatically translate into increased production.



Editorial Note

Food is so essential yet few people are really aware of its origins

A food is something that provides nutrients; substances that provide energy for activity, growth and all functions of the body from breathing and digesting food to just keeping warm. They also provide materials for body repairs and maintaining a healthy immunization system.

In short, healthy food helps us to develop and grow, to stay active, to move, play, work, think and learn.

Foods are directly related to physical, mental and social health because each solid or liquid intake contains particular nutrition elements such as carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, minerals, fats, etcetera which are all necessary for maintaining that health.

But then again, there are many things we eat that do not have any nutritional values. On the contrary, they lead to health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. Therefore you should choose healthy and balanced foods that can provide enough nutritional value for the body and, above all, be aware of how those foods were grown or made as a matter of principle.

Food is the third most important necessity for living beings after air and water. It plays an important role in the promotion of health and disease prevention. Some of the most nutritious foods are in the form of grains, pulses, fruits, vegetables and edible oils.

Organic food products in particular are essential for reducing health risks among farm workers, their families, and consumers in general by minimizing their exposure to toxic and persistent chemicals in the soil where they work and play, the air they breathe, and the water they drink.

Children, for example, are especially vulnerable to pesticides. Thus bringing more organic and fiber foods produced without the use of these toxins to the marketplace gives parents a healthier option for their kids.

Mounting evidence shows that organically grown fruits, vegetables, and grains are richer in key nutrients such as Vitamin C, iron, magnesium and phosphorus and are lesser exposed to harmful nitrates and pesticide residues when compared to conventionally grown products.

In short, food is so essential and necessary for our daily lives, yet many people know very little of its origins.

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With organic agriculture policy now in place, Uganda is ready to go places

By Moses Aisu, Kampala, Uganda

The Ugandan Organic Agriculture sub-sector stands a better chance to break into the global market following the long awaited adoption of a formal National Organic Agriculture Policy.

Available information shows that the government has also already supplying organic fertilizers itself in Busoga Region, something that I have been hoping against hope would eventually happen.

This means organic farmers in that region will no longer need to use synthetic fertilizers secretly, and the push now should be to convince the government through relevant authorities to supply organic pesticides to organic farmers.

Such a move will allow farmers to do away with conversion after use of chemical fertilizers. In this way and with the Uganda Organic Certification agency (UgoCert) revived and active again, the country can soon be producing more organic food for domestic use and export.

Although conversion takes three years, some herbicides, pesticides and chemicals take a longer time in the soil to be detoxified naturally, while artificial treatment is too expensive for most of our local farmers. Ugandan farmers still tend to use many chemicals that were banned in Europe and the US, with our systems still not serious enough about banning their importation.

To know more about the effects of chemicals, read more about 'Agent Orange' that the US military purportedly used to kill mosquitoes in the jungles of Vietnam during the 1960-70s invasion of that country.

Agent Orange still remains in the ecological system of Vietnam soils with many cancerous side effects for people living in the areas it was sprayed. Although the Americans claimed it was meant to kill mosquitoes which were killing their soldiers in the jungles, it also significantly helped to clear vegetation for easy visibility against the Vietnamese soldiers who used such vegetation cover to down US army helicopters. But I am very sure they knew its side effects to humanity.

So, in short, the mission to establish organic farm produce as the healthiest food choice out there shouldn't be weakened by negative, pro-chemicals theories being bandied about, but focus on ensuring better and cleaner agricultural systems just like we are keener to eat natural chicken than broilers.

The next level is to fight for labeling of domestically-consumed organic products, which could be best done by providing buyers with certified bags, paper wrappings and/or disposable bags starting with the weekly organic markets run by the National Organic Agriculture Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) and her partners around Kampala and Entebbe.





Is organic food a basic human right?

By Jill Ettinger, New York

Pesticides and herbicides are big business. And they're all up in your business, too - like it or not. They dictate most of modern farming: The chemical agriculture industry was valued at \$58.38 billion in 2019 and anticipated to expand at a CAGR of 3.3% between 2020 and 2027. In other words, we eat a lot of chemicals designed to kill things.

Europe, which leads the shift away from chemical agriculture, is planning to reach 25 percent organic production by 2030. This shift is already underway in France's wine regions, with 100 percent compliance targets in some regions. But the US still lags behind; less than one percent of total farmland in America is certified organic.

Kendra Klein, a senior scientist from Friends of the Earth US, told New Internationalist how that needs to change. She says that access to organic food - food that's free from most synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers - is a human right.

A recent study on diet and chemical exposure confirms Klein's leanings. It found that trace residues of the herbicide glyphosate, best known as Bayer-Monsanto's Roundup, decreased 70 percent in people who went on an all-organic diet. The peer-reviewed study looked at chemical levels in four American families over the course of six days. They were compared to a non-organic diet for the same period. In just six days, glyphosate levels dropped 70 percent when non-organic foods were replaced with organic options.

Chemicals in food, even in small doses, have big consequences. A recent landmark

court decision awarded to a California man, Dewayne Johnson, who was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma as a result of exposure to Roundup.

According to Klein, the UN rapporteur on food released a report a few years ago on freedom from pesticides exposure as a human rights issue all throughout the supply chain. 'Farmers and farmworkers are on the frontline of exposure,' she said. 'Farmworkers are vulnerable because they don't have decision-making power over what pesticides are being used and often don't know what they are being exposed to.'

She said those working close to chemicals experience higher rates of diseases such as cancer, asthma, and Parkinson's disease. 'And when we move through the food chain and we think about consumers who don't have access to organic food, that's a human rights issue.'

While pesticide and herbicide producers have long argued that small doses in food aren't damaging, data continue to point to the contrary.

'At different points in our lives we're more vulnerable to toxic exposures, and that's in utero, childhood and adolescence when our bodies are rapidly developing,' Klein says. 'At those points of development very small exposures can actually lead to lifelong problems. These factors are often not accounted for by safety regulations because they are set for a healthy adult eater.'

Damage from these endocrine-disrupting chemicals can include metabolic issues, reproductive issues, neurological disorders, and cancer. And scientists say the 'chemical soup' most of us are exposed to on a daily basis is

possibly an even bigger concern.

'We know exposure to multiple pesticides can amplify the negative impacts of each one. Another reason why we are concerned about small exposures is the science on endocrine disruptors - chemicals that can mimic, block or scramble the hormone messages of our body,' says Klein.

These chemicals tend to affect BIPOC communities at greater levels, too. 'BIPOC workers and rural communities suffer disproportionately from unsafe pesticide use on conventional farms,' reports Greenbush. 'Organic soils tend to be healthier, increasing their resilience to extreme weather events such as floods and droughts - an essential consideration as the impacts of global warming will intensify over the coming decades.'

'In low and middle-income countries, moving to industrial agriculture doesn't tend to deliver an overarching improvement in local communities' social, economic and environmental conditions.'

There are other exposure risks, too. Some aren't so easy to avoid, such as in parks and playgrounds, or chemicals in home gardens and lawns. But exposure in food is a big issue and one we can most easily address. So why are we still using these chemicals in food production?

'That is the fundamental question about industrial agricultural systems,' Klein says. 'In the past three of four decades, the use of toxic pesticides has increased despite having a growing body of scientific evidence telling us how harmful these chemicals are.'

Myth

Klein says there's a myth that we pesticides are needed in order to feed the world. She says it's a pervasive belief and wholly untrue.

She refers to studies that have shown smaller, organic producers can be more beneficial to local food systems and ecosystems as they produce healthier soil and sequester more carbon as well as produce higher quality food.



KCOA takes shape in Southern Africa

By Ryan Jagesar, South Africa

Knowledge Hub Southern Africa (KHSa) is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA), a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and non-governmental organizations across Africa.

The KCOA aims to scale up adoption of organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa over a four-year period. The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports project implementation in southern Africa.

Activities are focused in Zambia led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia; in Namibia by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association (NOA); and in South Africa by the South African Organic Sector Organization (SAOSO).

The project is set to extend to Malawi this year (2022). Other hubs are implemented by GIZ in North, West and Eastern and Central Africa, says Esther Kagai of the Community Sustainable Agriculture and Healthy Empowerment Program in Kenya.

According to Kagai, Participatory Guarantee



System (PGS) was established in Kenya in 2017 motivated by a desire to change the way that organic food is certified and promote equity and fairness through the value chain. It now has five certified groups with several more being trained.

'PGS is appropriate to smallholder agriculture with principles and values that reflect the culture of the producers and farmer groups while emphasizing on recognized standards and mechanisms to ensure that farmers comply with the rules,' she explained.

PGS South Africa currently has 13 registered farmer groups and 16 more in the process of being established. They all bring together 632 farmers, of whom 335 are certified, tilling 415 hectares of land under organic production.

According to PGS South Africa's Sasha Mentz, they operate a decentralized system and groups are self-governed but aligned to key common principles.

'PGS SA provides guidance on how to establish farmer groups, supports networking and provides access to an organic certification landscape with nationally recognised seals and logos reflecting quality control,' said Mentz, adding: 'PGS groups are obliged to share any deviation from the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) standard.'

Ana Luiza Meirelles of the Centro Ecológico-Ecovidia Network in Brazil says her organization involves about 5,000 families, 400 farmer groups, 30 NGOs and 400 local street markets.

'We currently have 32 regional nuclei that have autonomy but are supported by various committees handling coordination, ethics and verification,' Ana said.

Karthik Gunasekar of PGS Organic India said they envisioned 'a future of socially, ecologically and economically just food systems guaranteed by trust and participation, driven by traditional ecological knowledge systems, and co-owned and controlled by communities adhering to principles of co-operation.'

'PGS is about building social capital and community engagement which forms resilient communities,' he added.

The webinar allowed a wide-ranging exchange of experiences and knowledge with the aim of strengthening organic networks in the region. It is the first part in a series with the second webinar planned for mid-2022.

Other speakers included Ousmane Labodja, an IFOAM-OI Facilitator in Togo, and Herve Bouagnimbeck from the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in West Africa, Cameroon.



Some members of a group on a Vanilla farm in Mangapwani. Photo by AfrONet

Zanzibar IIABA-PGS group sees big future in organic vanilla production

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women), up from just eight in 2018 when it was established under the supervision of Milele Foundation, a member to the Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM).

Farmer groups are used as avenues for smallholder farmers to market their produce, access inputs and get extension advice. They are normally characterized by a higher proportion of male members and tend to focus more on producing export crops with high income potential.

According to Jafari, Tushawazoea Plus is essentially geared towards growing more organic products and enabling easier markets access for its members, given the difficulties for individual organic farmers to sell their products market in Zanzibar.

“We started by growing vegetables, fruits and spices with support from the Milele Foundation, but we did not get very far because to be recognized as an organic producer you have to undergo some training and be able to employ a system that shall take you through the certification stages,” he told AfrONet Newsletter.

Subira Mohammed Hamis, the group treasurer, is grateful to the Institutional Innovations for Organic Agriculture in Africa (IIABA) project, which is being implemented by

TOAM, for picking Tushawazoea Plus for its intervention in Zanzibar.

“Through IIABA our membership numbers have grown. We were deployed in a Farmer Family Learning Group (FFLG) and Farmer Learning School (FLS) and now we are more than ready to move forward. We thank IIABA project for capacity support, it has helped us work closer as a team to supervise, lead and coordinate all our affairs by ourselves,” Subira says.

Last December, the group was awarded with a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certificate that mandates it to use the East African Organic Mark on its products. Members of the group are now working to set up a short market circuit along the main road and establish a one-stop organic market in the two districts of Northern A and B in Unguja North.

Along with normal spices, group members have interestingly decided to dabble for the first time in the production of vanilla, a popular flavoring agent worldwide favored for its pleasing taste and calming aroma.

Vanilla extract and vanilla beans are used in food, perfumes, and pharmaceutical products. It's among the top three most expensive spices in the world, alongside saffron and cardamom which are also grown in Zanzibar.

The Tushawazoea Plus group members

believe that in a few years to come they will be realizing big profits as a result of vanilla sales in Zanzibar and elsewhere.

In addition to its versatility and importance in the culinary world, vanillin may benefit your general health. Research shows that it has powerful antioxidant properties and further evidence suggests it may also have anticancer properties.

However, most studies into the effects have remained limited to test tubes and animals, focusing on specific compounds, and more research is needed to qualify all the various hypotheses.

The bottom line for the Tushawazoea Plus group members is that global demand for natural vanilla has skyrocketed amid decreasing vanilla orchid production, raising the price of the crop astronomically.

The IIABA project is financed by the French Development Agency (AFD) and coordinated by African-based International Non-Governmental Organization (I-NGO) and the African Organic Network (AfrONet) headquartered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

IIABA is focused on growing the scale of organic agriculture in Uganda, Morocco and Tanzania, and in so doing to facilitate OA development more generally across Africa.

The project is based on the premise that in order to encourage organic agriculture, it is not enough to just increase organic agricultural production, but also necessary to develop appropriate institutions in terms of markets, certification processes for the “organic” quality of products, and public OA policies.

From 2020 to 2023, AfrONet and its partners are looking to identify institutional innovations in these three areas and promote them at the national and continental levels.

Of the IIABA project and its far-reaching scope for OA development in Africa

By Constantine Akitanda

The African Organic Network (AfrONet) is a continental organization of organic actors established in 2012 to facilitate development of the organic sector through policy dialogue, capacity building, information dissemination and organic value chain development and trade.

Organic and agro-ecological production is increasingly recognized for its role in addressing food and nutritional security challenges in rapidly growing populations. It is also considered an essential element of African strategies for climate change mitigation and biodiversity adaptations.

Unfortunately, agricultural chemicals are still widely used and often in inappropriate and dangerous ways. The development of organic agriculture in Africa therefore also responds to a public health challenge.

Despite this, many obstacles still exist. Stakeholders in the sector have therefore felt the need to create synergies across the continent to help organic agriculture take its proper place in African development. It is for this purpose that AfrONet was developed, being a network of National Organic Agriculture Movement (NOAMs).

AfrONet is a lead institution in the implementation of the Institutional Innovations for Ecological Organic Agriculture in Africa (IIABA) project that is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD).

It got an award in 2019, and the signing of the project agreement was done in April 2020. AfrONet has been able to implement a number of IIABA project activities in collaboration with various partners despite the Covid-19 pandemic that brought negative impacts across the board globally.

“Our dreams must be fulfilled despite the pandemic. The pandemic to some extent generated fear that led to delays in project implementation, yet we continued working and a lot of what we set out to do has been done,” says Mgeta Daudi, IIABA Senior Project Coordinator.

The IIABA project aims at identifying institutional innovations that will allow a raised scale of ecological and organic agriculture in the three targeted countries (Morocco, Uganda and Tanzania);



Tushawazoea Plus IIABA-PGS group members in one of the group meetings.

consolidation of the capacities of AfrONet and its members; and wider dissemination of targeted institutional innovations to partner countries and within AfrONet.

The project is currently being implemented in Tanzania, Morocco and Uganda; countries that were selected due to their diverse situations in terms of agro-ecological zones, numbers of organic farmers and surface area of converted agricultural land.

The three countries are at different stages of building market and guarantee schemes, integrating their smallholder organic farmers into export and domestic markets, and setting up institutional and

policy frameworks for the organic sector.

These differences make it possible to contextualize specific innovations that can be compared and set up tools to make them workable for all AfrONet members, and the results can be used to facilitate learning and exchange like sharing of best practices, collective advocacy and stakeholder exchanges at the continental level.

Achievement of these goals will contribute to the expansion of ecological and organic agriculture (EBA) across Africa by feeding and supporting AfrONet's existing advocacy efforts with continental actors like the African Union, CAADP, EBA Initiative.



Negotiating for prices of organic produce.

PMCA: The way to go in further expanding Africa's organic sector

By Irene Kadzere, Thomas Bernet and Martin Kimani Njoroge

The organic agriculture sector in Africa is expanding steadily as reflected by annual global statistics. There are both push and pull drivers for this expansion. As smallholder farmers look for more sustainable farming methods that build resilience to climate and socioeconomic shocks, they are more willing to engage in organic and agro-ecological practices.

An increasing number of consumers want safer and healthier food produced in a sustainable way. Businesses along the value chain are also looking for an approach that makes them more competitive and sustainable in the long term.

These factors are driving horizontal and vertical expansion of the organic sector, creating new and meaningful opportunities throughout the value chain. It is becoming increasingly apparent that improving smallholder farmers' access to appropriate and sustainable markets is key to growing their competitiveness and critical to further organic sector development.

The Participatory Market Chain Approach (PMCA) is a promising methodology in this regard, creating innovation along value chains with a focus on capitalizing on demand trends

and market opportunities.

PMCA was first used and tested in Peru as part of a project to enhance the competitiveness of small-scale potato producers in the Andean region, and later validated in Bolivia, Ecuador, Uganda and Indonesia.

It is a participatory business orientated approach that is inclusive of all actors; producers, processors, traders, retailers, consumers, NGOs and government service providers.

It is also business-orientated and facilitators are on hand to lead and support the process. Actors, with facilitation from trained PMCA facilitators, identify, analyze and implement business opportunities collaboratively. PMCA can be used for both local and export markets.

PMCA in Kenya has been applying the approach since November 2019, in collaboration with Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Switzerland, Kenya Organic Agriculture Network, the Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya, the Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization, and Germany-based Africrops, among other stakeholders.

The Kenyan project links smallholder organic farmers from Murang'a County to local and export markets. To date it has led to the formation of at least three farmers groups focused on fruits and vegetables for local markets, herbs and spices for local markets,

and avocados for export markets.

These groups initially met to share their business ideas and discuss continuous implementation strategies plus how to address any emerging bottlenecks to building successful links to targeted markets.

The process has so far helped establish two local organic markets in Kangari and Gatanga, serving more than 196 farmers.

In these areas the farmers, with support from other stakeholders, negotiated with local leaderships to obtain space for setting up their local Organic Farmers' Markets which have made it easier for consumers to access organic produce despite restrictions induced by Covid-19 pandemic concerns.

A total of 44 farmers sold 16.5 tons of organic produce through these markets, making more than Kshs 550,000 (about \$4,800) in 2021. Improvements are now being made to enhance the market stalls and improve the presentation, packaging and quality of products in line with consumer expectations.

The farmers are also making in-roads to markets in the capital Nairobi, and the Herbs and Spices group in particular has made progress in ensuring local value addition to satisfy buyers of both raw and value-added products.

The Avocado Export group is developing branding for Kenyan organic avocados which is planned for launch at Biofach 2022. These initiatives have proved how the continued coherence of business groups is critical for success.

Such coherence can be achieved through regular interactions among the actors and emphasizing the common benefits or profitable outcome. Ongoing facilitation of the business group processes is equally important.

Supporting resources are necessary to leverage the groups to meet some of the financial demands that may arise in the development of their business models, for instance the costs of branding, installing market stalls, improving product packaging, and innovative value addition.

The social capital thus being developed among different organic stakeholders along the value chain is likely to yield benefits that go beyond the short-term and maximize the exploitation of all available business opportunities.

The pilot PMCA application in Kenya can be scaled out to other parts of the country and outside, which should be a boon for lasting business partnerships among value chain actors.

UN scientists urge stronger action to control global warming

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limiting warming to 1.5C will be beyond reach", Mr Skea warned.

He added: 'We know what to do, we know how to do it, and now it's up to us to take action.'

Jan Christoph Minx, one of the report's authors from the University of Leeds, said: 'We really need to change course, we need to end the age of fossil fuels and enter an age of climate policy. This has not happened yet.'

Debate

As the IPCC released the third part of its sixth assessment report detailing solutions to climate change, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres described it as a 'file of shame' of empty pledges made by countries so far, and accused governments of lying over the actions they were taking.

'Climate promises and plans must be turned into reality and action now. It is time to stop burning our planet and start investing in the abundant renewable energy all around us,' he urged.

The report, which draws on 18,000 studies and sources, pitches scientific findings on climate change into an already heated debate over energy supplies and costs prompted by rising oil and gas prices amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The UK government said it will set out a new energy strategy with expectations of support for offshore wind and new nuclear reactors, but not cheap onshore wind, amid debate over whether to speed up the shift away from oil and gas or boost domestic fossil fuel supplies.

Hemantha Withanage, chair of the Friends of the Earth International organization based in Sri Lanka, said: 'We cannot betray the promise of a 1.5 degree warming threshold. We are at a crossroads. The decisions we make now can secure a livable future.'

'If the IPCC's WG3 report does not contain any mitigation pathways that keep us from overshooting 1.5 degrees within the constraints of the current economic paradigm,

that is only proof that this economic system is incompatible with life on Earth.'

'The priority for our communities, movements, and decision-makers must now be to end the era of fossil fuels and transform our societies and economies towards sustainable systems designed to address peoples' needs, safety and wellbeing, not profit and greed.'

Dipti Bhatnagar, Climate Justice and Energy International programme coordinator, said: 'We do not consent to an overshoot of 1.5 degrees, and there is no justification for pursuing policies or pathways that allow for an overshoot.'

'We used to chant '1.5, we might survive' - 1.5 was already a compromise for frontline communities suffering the worst climate impacts. The IPCC's climate scientists told us only last month that breaching this guard-rail, even temporarily, could push us over a series of tipping points that would lead to uncontrollable warming.'

'It would be grossly negligent for economists to ignore those warnings and propose inequitable mitigation plans that allow for an overshoot, as is now on the table with this new report.'

Meena Raman and Sahabat Alam of Friends of the Earth Malaysia commented: 'The notion that we will be able to overshoot 1.5 degrees and then reverse warming later on through carbon removal and geo-engineering technologies - that are wholly speculative and unproven at scale - is anti-science, and anti-human.'

'It betrays the cowardice and recklessness of the same actors who have failed, time and again, to take action when it was needed. We have everything we need to solve this problem right now, we lack only the courage of so-called world leaders, especially from the global North, who are trying to hide their historical responsibility for creating the crisis.'

Code red

The latest IPCC study follows two previous installments of the overarching sixth

assessment report. The first set out a 'code red' warning on what humans are doing to the planet, and the second detailed impacts of climate change and options for - and limits to - adapting to rising temperatures.

A meeting to agree the 63-page summary of the report for policymakers, approved in a line-by-line process involving scientists and representatives of 195 countries, overran by more than two days as delegates wrangled over the text, which is now deemed to have been approved by governments.

But the world is well off track to make the necessary emissions cuts, with pollution continuing to rise, and there is more private and public money flowing into fossil fuels than into climate action.

Costs

The report spells out how the world can cut emissions by switching to increasingly cheap renewables, electric heating and transport, as well as boosting energy efficiency, capturing carbon and planting trees.

It highlights how consumers can be encouraged to make green choices in eating more plant-based diets, heating homes, taking up walking and cycling or driving electric cars, and how cities can be made greener, healthier and more habitable.

According to the report, the costs of solar and batteries needed for electric vehicles have plunged by 85 percent in the last decade and their deployment has soared, while wind power has fallen by 55 percent in price.

Some countries have brought in effective laws and policies that have led to falls in emissions despite a counter-argument that the economic benefits of cutting emissions exceed the cost of the actions needed while trillions of dollars of coal, oil and gas assets could become 'stranded' as the world takes action to limit global warming.

Crossroads

Based on policies implemented up to the end of 2020, the world faces temperature rises of 3.2C by 2100 and warming of 2.8C even if all the climate action pledges for the next decade are delivered on.

To give the world an even chance of limiting temperatures to 1.5C, immediate action is needed, with 43% cuts in greenhouse gases on 2019 levels by the end of this decade.

Emissions have to peak by between 2020 and before 2025 to limit warming to 1.5C or 2C, with rapid and deep reductions in the coming decades, including for methane which is produced through activities including farming and oil and gas production.

Bujumbura organic exhibition



During organic exhibition and sale in Bujumbura, Burundi.



After organic exhibition and sale in Bujumbura.



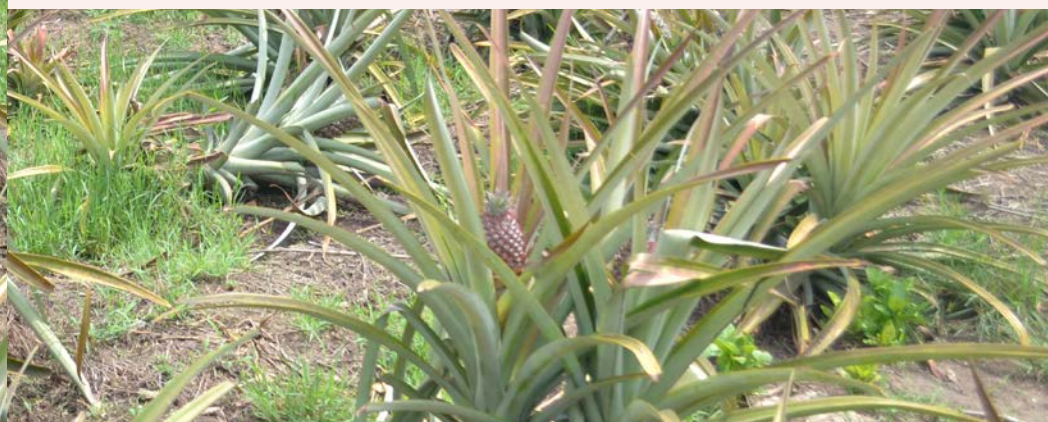
After organic exhibition and sale in Bujumbura.



BOAM in visit of organic pineapples in Bubanza Province, west of Burundi.



Certification of organic farmers in Mwaro Province, center of Burundi after a training in PGS.



After organic exhibition and sale in Bujumbura.



RECABIO strives to further establish organic farming in DRC

By Constantine Akitanda

The organic agriculture subsector in the Democratic Republic of Congo is run under the supervision of the Réseau Congolais D'agriculture Biologique (RECABIO) which offers technical support to women farmers in the territory of Ruchuru in the North Kivu province, among others.

The aim of this support is to speed up the adoption of organic farming across the country. RECABIO is spreading its wings so rapidly since it was established three years ago and it is now on the forefront in transforming agriculture in both North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

Rutare Cedrick, the Network Coordinator, told AfrONet Newsletter that many smallholder Congolese farmers are already practicing organic agriculture by default.

'We have partner organizations reaching 70 cooperatives in the period of three years since RECABIO came in. Women farmers have become amongst our key players, we continue to push this agenda forward and we are setting up the fundamentals of organic agriculture,' Cedrick said, adding:

'We are providing training on the importance of planting with furrows for organically grown crops in North Kivu. This is an ongoing exercise, we want to populate organic agriculture through practical training, and we believe working as a network you need as many partner organizations as possible to reach more people.'

Organic farming in the DRC has become a



topical issue with the national government showing more interest in promoting the concept. The initiative is reportedly led by the president of the Republic himself and it has seen the initiation of certification processes for organic products grown in the country,

'We anticipate that the African Organic Network (AfrONet) shall continue working with us very closely in terms of capacity building and further collaborations so that at the end of the day we are able to transform part of the DRC into organic farmland and increase the number of organic actors,' Mr Rutare said.

He added: 'The training aspect is paramount for the sector to be vibrant all over the country as it covers the principles of organic farming, conservation of soil and biodiversity. The participants and our local partners seem to be



motivated and want to see more efforts to make organic agriculture more widely known.'

He said the training also covered mulching techniques in organic farming.

'However much this method is being employed by both conventional farming and organic farming, but double impact is realized when a farmer adopts the organic farming method,' added Rutare.

Mulching is seen as important for soil and water retention. According to Rutare: 'Soil surfaces are covered by dead grass and leaves, and absence of cover causes a decline in soil health, biodiversity and productivity, leading to issues at all levels of many ecosystems, and resulting in large environmental consequences such as floods and mass migration. The mulch blanket provides such cover where it is needed.'



Morocco-Germany experts meet to consolidate cooperation.

Morocco, Germany move to consolidate cooperation in agri-food sector

By Our Staff Writer

A conference debate was held in the Morocco capital Casablanca on March 24, 2022 under the theme "The Future of Food", focusing on the challenges and development capacities of the Moroccan agri-food sector.

Organized by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Morocco (AKH) in cooperation with the Special Initiative Training and Employment (Invest for Jobs) of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the conference made it possible to draw up an inventory of the agri-food sector in Morocco while opening up a debate on new

development trajectories for the sector, integrating both the environmental imperative as well as inclusiveness.

Participants included Saida Ouarzane, head of the aggregation division of the Agency for Agricultural Development (ADA); Zhor Lahlou Alaoui, development director of Cartier Saada; and Dr Martin Baumgart, head of the dialogue mission Moroccan-German agricultural and forestry technique.

Speaking at the conference, AHK Morocco director Andreas Wenzel highlighted the importance of the agri-food sector in Morocco in the context of Morocco-Germany cooperation and said more intense work needed to be done.

"Themes that we can discuss further include organic food production, water sustainability

and innovations, especially with the significant drought that has impacted Morocco in recent months," he said.

Germany sees Morocco, due to its geographical proximity and the quality of its agriculture, as having great potential to be among the most important partners for the European continent.

On her part, Ms Alaoui noted the difficulties facing professionals in Morocco's agri-food sector due to the Covid-19 crisis and the impacts of the ongoing geopolitical conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

"We are suffering enormously from the repercussions of this war. Ukraine is the first producer of sand used to manufacture the glass jars on which we are extremely dependent. The war has caused a significant increase in the price of these jars due to the lack of that raw material," she said.

Panelists also discussed organic farming in Morocco where exports of organic products amounted to 18 kilotons in volume and could reach 600 kilotons by 2030.

This is mainly due to the country's new strategic plan, Generation Green, which aims to increase the value of organic products by around 70 percent and also offers a strategy of aggregation from agricultural upstream to industrial downstream by linking small farmers to new generations of investors.