

FARMING MATTERS

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Youth and farming:

**“We take the
lead”**

■ Hans Herren and the IAASTD report ■ ICTs in Africa
■ “Anchoring” education in a rural context

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An important part of the family

This is Zeinab Awad el Karim Ahmed. She lives in Barankawa, a village in the state of Sinnar, in the Blue Nile region of Sudan. Notwithstanding her young age she plays an active role in the household and farm chores. One of her tasks consists in bringing the food that her mother prepares to her father and younger brothers when they are working harvesting bananas on their family farm, far away from home at the other end of the village. At other times she helps handling banana transplants in the field. One of the main problems in Barankawa, as in the whole region, is the lack of support for agriculture and the lack of infrastructure, although many villagers also mention the lack of social amenities and the general remoteness of the area. Zeinab's father describes the families in this area as poor

in resources, but rich in spirit. They use many strategies to cope with their harsh realities; pooling whatever resources they have to implement their projects. One of these included, for example, setting up the infrastructure to provide the village with electricity. In a situation where external support is limited, many neighbours have played a key role in different projects supported by the PROLINNOVA (Promoting Local Innovation) programme. This picture is one of the outcomes of the "farmer-led documentation" project in the area, which helped highlight the role that all villagers, including Zeinab, play. Seeing young people like Zeinab around a farm is thought to be a good omen. This project showed why.

Text and photo: Nageeb Ibrahim Bakheit



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Reclaiming agriculture for Pacific youth

Far more young people could engage in farming, but they need to see it as a good career option. That is the conclusion of a survey carried out among youth in the Pacific. Making agriculture attractive will require creating a “supportive environment”, an approach that needs to include, but go beyond, providing access to credit, agricultural inputs and extension services.



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“We know what to do”

Hans Herren, president of the Millennium Institute, talks about his efforts in promoting sustainable agriculture. This involves a constant struggle against the direction that many governments have taken in favour of biotechnology. Herren argues the case for supporting sustainable and organic farming, as this has proven to have beneficial effects on health, productivity, the environment and climate change.



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“Anchored” education promises better results

Several schools in Ecuador have embedded farming and rural life in the curriculum through a project that linked efforts of the education and agriculture ministries. Learning about traditional varieties, materials and fertilisers is now a part of the daily activities. This has led to higher enrolment and attendance rates, showing that schools gained more relevance for the rural youth.



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Meeting a region’s broad development needs

Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools help rural youth develop entrepreneurial and agricultural skills, helping them become familiar with procedures such as registering land and establishing farmer associations. FAO has successfully promoted this concept in several countries, collaborating with different ministries, local farmer organisations and women associations.

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Agriculture is sustainable if it can attract future generations of young farmers. But the overwhelming tendency of young people is to move out of farming, in search of a more comfortable life and better income. Does it mean that within the next few decades farming as a livelihood will cease to exist, and that all agricultural activity will be concentrated in highly mechanised, large scale enterprises, with as little human labour involved as possible? How sustainable is that option? One of the things lacking in today's agriculture is imagination. Today's generation of farmers, teachers, agricultural scientists, policymakers and also the media have collectively failed to trigger the imagination of young generations. "Yes, there are major challenges, farming is not an easy or glamorous option, BUT there are ways of doing agriculture in a sustainable and rewarding manner". This could have been their message, but who has been able to give it hands and feet? We heard only a few concrete positive examples from you, dear readers!

Yet, in this issue of Farming Matters we see glimpses of hope. Recently I landed up in the "heartland of the Indonesian Green Revolution" (see p.35). I met a lively group of junior high school students participating in a four months intensive course on organic paddy cultivation. They shared their hopes for a better agriculture. "But", they told me, "we need magazines like Farming Matters that can show us how to make our hopes a reality. Our parents have lost touch with agriculture and therefore we need to re-learn what they forgot, and connect with other sources of knowledge." In a similar vein, a Kenyan teacher told me about the *Maarifa* centre he had set up in his native village. This centre, which houses a few computers and has internet connectivity, is making all the difference for the local youth. They now easily connect with a much larger world of knowledge on agriculture. It helps them to re-value agriculture and discover new ways of making agriculture profitable and sustainable. The teacher himself confided that his decision to return from Nairobi to his native village was one of the best things he did in his life.

Edith van Walsum

Edith van Walsum, director ILEIA



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Farming Matters welcomes comments, ideas and suggestions from its readers. You can e-mail us at ileia@ileia.org or write to P.O. Box 2967, 3800 CB Amersfoort, the Netherlands.



A helpful perspective

I have just read the “Opinion” in the December 2010 issue of Farming Matters, and I was delighted by Mr Caporal’s insightful and effective rebuttal of *The Economist’s* portrayal of the Brazilian agricultural model. Here in Uganda, most economists, politicians, technocrats and, unfortunately, lecturers, are either too greedy to care about the social and environmental consequences of the agricultural development models being propagated by multinational corporations, or do not have the analytical tools to unearth the sad truth. This column has given me an appropriate perspective from which to view agricultural policies. I would like to read more from Francisco Caporal. Thank you so much.

Ferdinand Kaddu-Mukasa, Director, Academic Programmes, Menta University Project, Kampala, Uganda

Useful information

Thank you very much for the magazine. Currently I’m working on a thesis which looks at the factors influencing the sustainability of development projects in my village district, and Farming Matters has been very inspiring. The December copy of Farming Matters could not have come at a better time. I had recently resolved to start rearing chicken in my village this January and was interested in gathering more information. Your magazine and the CD ROM that came with it provided all the information I needed and more. Bravo.

George Ocarl, Anglican Church of Kenya, Nakuru, Kenya

Family farmers and bio-fuels 1

There are many other ways of producing “agro-fuels” which do not in any way harm or compete with the production of food production. Why not focus more on producing manure or hay? I think that farmers are being misled by corporations to cultivate crops like jathropa. It is the poor farmers who will get played-out in the long run and be compelled to purchase their food at higher prices. The poor are shown carrots to work for the rich: this is something that has to change.

Siethamparapzillai Kathieravelu, ESKAY FARMS, Vavuniya, Sri Lanka

Family farmers and bio-fuels 2

Can family farmers gain from bio-fuels? This depends on the context. I would say that smallholder farmers can benefit if they are part of production chains targeting local markets and for local use, where the crude vegetable oil is used to operate small stationary machines or to produce electricity. This is a cheap process which can easily be made available, and which doesn’t require high technology. In remote areas, where there is no electricity and where it is very difficult to get access to fossil fuels (such as paraffin), the production of bio-energy crops like *Jatropha curcas* can help reduce the pressure on biomass (wood) extraction for energy purposes.

Nascimento Nhantumbo, Instituto Superior Politécnico de Manica, Faculdade de Agricultura, Chimoio, Mozambique

A huge contribution

Thanks for renewing my subscription to Farming Matters. Your latest issue has been a great source of inspiration. I notice that your articles consider all type of actors, but sometimes I wonder if we sufficiently recognise the role of field practitioners in rural development organisations – especially when I see the work that all our international students do. A detailed analysis of the constraints and difficulties they face can help us see, and value, the enormous contribution they make.

Loes Witteveen, Rural Development and Communication, Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, Wageningen, the Netherlands

More than land grabs

Your interview with Anuradha Mittal (on your September issue) encouraged me to write, as there is currently much more than 800,000 hectares being taken in Ethiopia, as she states. And the problem is even worse, as the so called “investors” are destroying the local flora and fauna, and creating favourable conditions for illegal hunters and poachers. In my district, Damot Weyde, more than 15,000 hectares of natural forests are being exploited by people who work for an American company, and many wild animals have been killed. By killing our fauna, they are destroying the planet. And now we hear that the government wants to lease three million hectares in different parts of the country during this new year!

Elias Eshetu Zeleke, Wolayita Zone, Ethiopia

For more letters, see www.ileia.org

The starting point: Youth's perceptions about sustainable agriculture

Researchers and politicians are increasingly recognising that young people have opinions about the problems facing the world, and that in many ways they are working to address them. Studies from different parts of the world show many similarities in the views of youth about sustainable agriculture and local food systems, regardless of ethnicity, race, sex, or geographic location. These perceptions need to be the starting point of any effort around their current and future roles and responsibilities.

Text and photos: Laura Anne Sanagorski

The results of different studies about sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and the role that young people play show that, in spite of differences in terms of ethnicity, race, sex, geographic location or simply the country where

they live, young people all over the world share opinions and concerns. A number of common perceptions about agriculture and the environment can be found among young people:

- A great apprehension regarding the environmental problems that they will inherit. Youth around the world are aware of the state of the environment and are concerned about the problems they face and will face as producers, consumers and caretakers of the planet. Concern over issues such as air, water and soil pollution can sometimes make them feel pessimistic and helpless;
- An overwhelming support for the principles of sustainable agriculture and local food systems. In many countries, in both the developed and in the developing world, youth support and embrace sustainable farming practices, whether they have had any formal training, experience or exposure to these

approaches or not. They seem to have an innate ability to appreciate the importance of sustainable methods of production. The majority recognises the importance of looking at our lifestyles and the sources of the goods we use as an important step towards solving environmental problems;

- An understanding that changes in labour and management practices need to be made at the farm level. Youth recognise that conventional, high-input farming may generate high yields for the short term, but can destroy the land over time. They understand the need to change labour and management practices.

Different reports highlight the shared concerns of global youth: they understand that they are inheriting environmental problems and they know about the benefits of sustainable agriculture. Isn't it high time they participate more actively in the discussions, programmes and efforts promoting sustainable agriculture?

Rural youth and agriculture But the interest of youth in agriculture has been declining, and one can only imagine this trend continuing. While most developing countries are still experiencing high population growth rates, the youth are migrating in significant numbers to urban areas. This is because of a lack of jobs and opportunities in rural areas, and a view that working in farming is low status and does not offer good future prospects. Urban migration results in overcrowding in cities, inequitably divided resources, and a heavier workload for those who remain active in agriculture in the countryside. And those who want to remain in their rural hometowns and make a living in farming can face many difficulties. Young people play an important role in all family farms. But education or training programmes are not always readily available, technologies are

not accessible, inputs may be scarce, and soils may be of poor quality. Further, marketing channels are poorly developed. The lack of rural development services frequently leads to people employing farming techniques that further degrade the environment, and which result in lower yields and lower incomes. Better services and education, especially designed for the rural areas, can contribute to increasing food production and to higher profits, but comprehensive efforts are needed. Modern Information and Communication Tools (ICTs) can be an important way of addressing this, as we are already seeing in many countries (and the article on p. 18 shows).

benefits of an agriculture that nurtures both people and the planet. Educational programmes can be used to teach youth about food choices, sustainability, local agriculture and land use. But more than “telling” them how things are and what to think, such programmes need to be developed from the existing perceptions that youth have about farming, food production and sustainable agriculture, and the contributions they are already making. Numerous studies have shown that young people are already involved in many ways and take on many responsibilities. Others indicate that youth can easily recognise that a change towards a more sustainable



As elsewhere, American students are also “connecting” with farming and with the food they’ll eat.

Youth as consumers Yet young people also demand products and, in the near future, they will be the world’s largest group of consumers. As such, young people can play another key role: as consumers, a group that is already recognised as a potential driving force for change in our food (and other) systems. Change will not take place if consumers do not demand sustainably produced foods. A large portion of the global population is made up of youth: nearly one fifth of all the earth’s inhabitants are between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. But youth are becoming less connected with their food, often making little or no association between the food that they eat and the place where it was produced. They may not see beyond the store or market, nor make the connection between the food they are eating and the efforts made by farmers to grow it. This growing “disconnection” with agriculture implies an uncertain future for sustainably produced foods. It is important to make the link between food and agriculture visible again, and help increase the recognition given to farmers. The article on youth and the Slow Food movement in this issue provides an example of the role youth can play (p. 36).

The importance of education The key to this lies in highlighting – and sharing – the

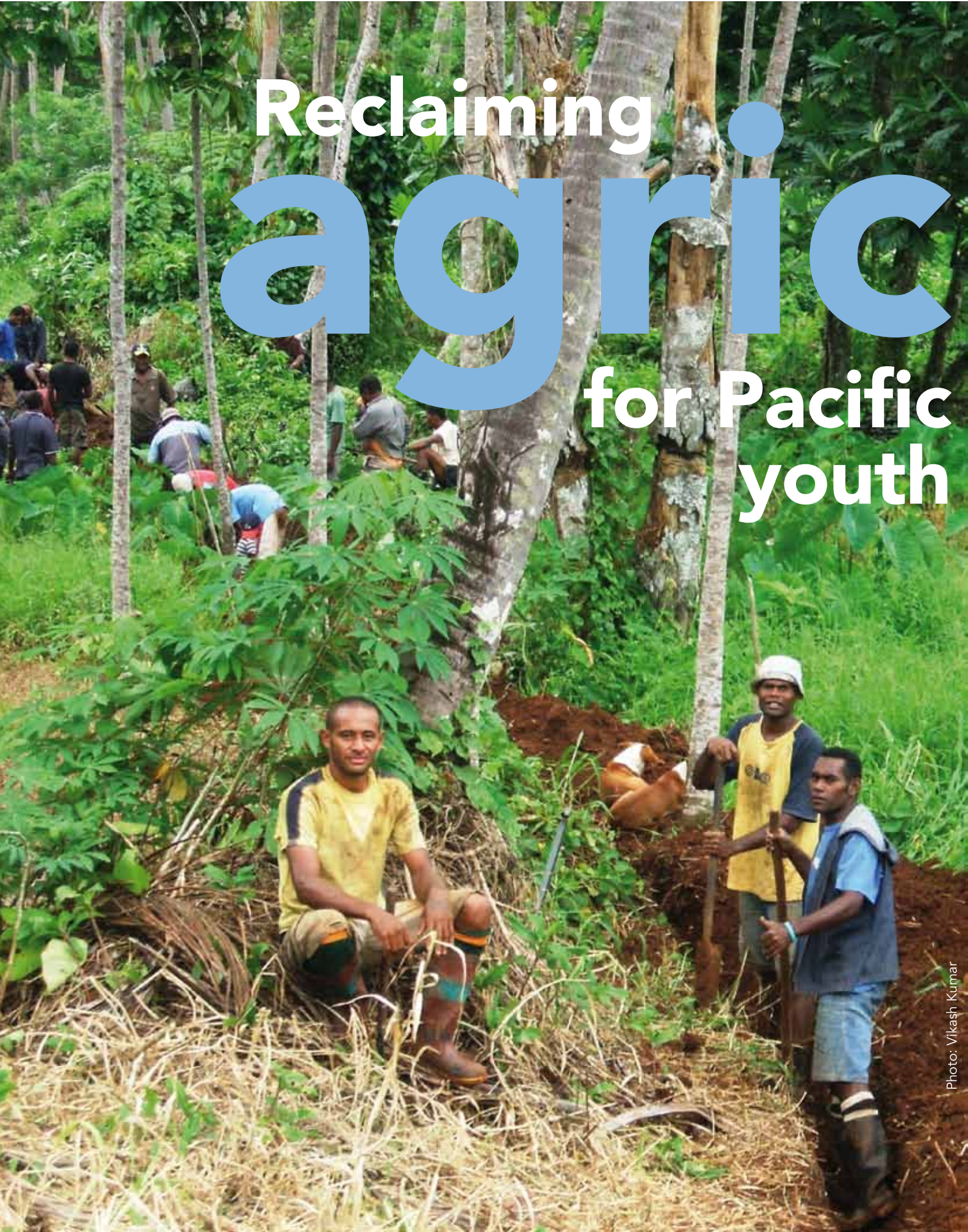
agriculture means making changes at the farm level. Developing educational initiatives that bring about these management changes will also empower youth.

The picture of youth’s participation in agriculture and the “connection” they have with their food is not bleak, but represents a great opportunity. The development of learning programmes can be a powerful starting point for making youth more aware about sustainable agriculture and the world’s food systems. Building on what young people think and do, these programmes can then be linked to programmes that improve access to credit, extension services and practical education about sustainable production techniques, helping develop an “enabling environment”. There are exciting opportunities for engaging youth, and this can have enormous benefits. It is up to us, the current stewards of the earth, to engage and inspire our youth, as future consumers and producers, to participate (even more) in the development of sustainable agriculture.

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YOUTH AND FARMING > AN "ENABLING ENVIRONMENT"

Reclaiming agric for Pacific youth



ulture

Are young people interested in farming? This depends on the possibilities they see in terms of work, wages and livelihoods. A thorough survey has shown what young people in the Pacific think, and different efforts are already showing positive results.

Text: Miriama Brown, Marita Manley, Vikash Kumar and Danny Hunter

The important role which young people play in farming was recently highlighted in a new study by a group of eminent experts and representatives from the world's major agricultural organisations to identify the top 100 questions of importance to the future of global agriculture (Pretty *et al.*, 2010). Among the questions asked was "what steps need to be taken to encourage young people to study agricultural science?" An important question, but surely only part of a larger question we should all be thinking about and acting upon. If we are looking at "the future of global agriculture", the question needs to be framed differently. What we need to ask is: what is the capacity of farming to attract and absorb young people, to provide them with fulfilling work, a decent wage and a rewarding career and livelihood?

What do people in the Pacific think? In 2008, the Ministers of Agriculture in the region asked the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and its partners to explore this

key question. It was already known that farming is often regarded as a fall-back option – something to do if you don't find anything else. A commonly heard opinion in the Fiji islands is that "from a young age we have been programmed to think that a job in town or a job in an office is the ultimate aim". Yet in the Pacific, as elsewhere, young people struggle to find formal employment when they leave the education system. High youth unemployment results in increasing migration, stretching already limited infrastructure and services, increasing social problems and unrest. So as a first step, the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet), hosted by the SPC, carried out a survey in November 2009 of young people in Fiji, Tonga and Kiribati to explore their relationship with farming and see what needed to be done to encourage, support and empower young people to seek a career in farming. The survey found that many young people are engaged in farming activities, making a significant contribution to the family's labour and food security. However, young people need support if they are to see farming as a career option: they need to be able



Exploring young people's relationship with farming. Photos: Danny Hunter and Miriama Brown

to develop appropriate financial and business skills, be empowered to access land and credit and have control over the resulting financial returns from their activities. This reflects some of the objectives already adopted by MORDI, the Mainstreaming of Rural Development Innovations Programme. While a significant number of young people are involved in independent agricultural activities and providing agricultural support to their families, it was also noted that young people learn and benefit from communal agriculture, either through the local traditional systems or as members of youth groups. Such communal endeavours help the youth to build up self-esteem and a sense of community. The emphasis that young people place on the importance of their immediate support groups – family, community, church and school – highlights the need to improve the institutional “enabling environment” provided by these groups if young people are to develop as agricultural entrepreneurs.

Key factors The survey attempted to determine the conditions that are important for the success and sustainability of youth development programmes. The responses indicated that key factors include ensuring that young people are actively involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of programmes, and that their needs are identified and addressed. Another vital step is providing a forum within agriculture programmes for young people to discuss their needs

with their families and community elders. This helps increase awareness and understanding among the older generations about how they, together with others, can support young people starting up agricultural ventures.

Although the usual factors of better access to credit, more frequent visits by extension officers and access to affordable agricultural inputs were raised as key constraints facing young people, a positive environment emerged as an even more important factor. This suggests that agricultural extension services need to broaden their traditional horizons if they are to better support Pacific youth in agricultural activities. This will involve working with communities and partners to carry out participatory appraisals of youth needs, and providing trainings aiming at financial literacy, confidence building and empowerment.

A key element of this “enabling environment” is the need to reverse the often negative attitudes to farming embedded at an early age during school. Many young people commented that the school system often contributes to instilling negative perceptions by using agricultural activities as a means of punishment or discipline, or by impressing on young people that agriculture is less worthwhile pursuing than other subjects. Clearly, schools can play a role in instilling more positive attitudes towards agriculture, including being involved in extension work. This is paramount to reversing such attitudes and encouraging young people back into farming.

Building on results The outcomes of the survey have been used to inform the development of a regional Pacific Youth and Agriculture Strategy, endorsed by the Heads of Agriculture and Forestry Services (HOAFS) and Ministers of Youth in 2010. Together with the positive examples which have already been seen in the region, this is helping define a road map for Pacific countries to encourage better partnerships, policies and programmes that support the active engagement of youth in farming across the region and the nurturing of young agricultural entrepreneurs.

Miriama Brown is based in the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and is the Pacific Agricultural and Forestry Network (PAFPNet) Coordinator (miriamak@spc.int). Marita Manley managed the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network (PAFPNet) at SPC until July 2010 and supervised the research and the development of the Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy. She now works as a Technical Adviser for GIZ - Deutsche Gesellschaft

für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Vikash Kumar is the Learning Unit Coordinator of the MORDI program at FSPI and is involved with the learning, sharing and knowledge management activities of the programme (vikash.kumar@fspi.org.fj). Danny Hunter was former Team Leader of the DSAP project based at SPC and was involved in the early development of the youth strategy. He is now based at Bioversity International (d.hunter@cgiar.org). The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Anju Mangal and Emil Adams to this article.

More information

The Pacific Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2011–2015 can be requested from Ms Miriama Kunawave Brown, PAFPNet Coordinator, or downloaded from the PAFPNet section of the SPC website. Readers may also find information on the blog “Improving youth livelihoods through agriculture”: <http://youthlivelihoods.blogspot.com>.

Advantages of a participatory extension system

DSAP, or Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific, is a programme that ran until 2010 in 16 countries. Following farmer-led approaches and modelled by what is known as Participatory Technology Development (or PTD), the programme worked closely with farmers and rural communities to identify priority problems and appropriate solutions. After a series of consultations, DSAP staff worked with farmers and communities to test and evaluate innovative ideas, assisting them in the process of monitoring and evaluating their work. DSAP represented a major collaboration between the national agricultural research and extension services of different countries, various NGOs, rural communities and farmers. While its focus on local innovations has been described as successful, its main results have been a major re-alignment of the regional extension services, all of which have become more sensitive to the needs and problems of farming communities and now pay special attention to vulnerable groups, such as youth. The experiences of the DSAP project have been documented in two manuals, “A participatory toolkit for sustainable agriculture programmes in the Pacific” and “Case studies – Lessons from the field”.

Mobilising youth to mobilise change

Both the DSAP and MORDI programmes have allowed the voice of Pacific youth to be heard, listened to and acted upon – with youth being the main drivers of the process. Both programmes followed participatory approaches, helping young people have a prominent role in different projects and interventions which were designed and carried out by young people themselves. The results have been clearer in communities such as those in the districts of Wailevu and Kubulau (in Vanua Levu, Fiji), where the traditional hierarchical village structure means that little importance is given to the opinions of youth. This situation changed somewhat after a series of Participatory Learning and Planning consultations, which helped create safe spaces for youth to articulate their feelings about and ideas for the future. The approach involved arranging separate consultations with groups of men, women and youth. The village leaders and elders were so impressed with the proposals of the youth that they were incorporated into larger village development plans. Village youth have used the many project management skills that they learned from the MORDI programme, including proposal writing, to successfully design, implement and monitor a range of projects co-financed by MORDI and by funds raised through youth group activities.



Hans Herren is president of the Millennium Institute, an international NGO providing tools and methods worldwide that facilitate decision making for sustainable development. The driving force in all his activities and professional choices is the concern for a more sustainable world where there is a future for everybody.

Interview: Mireille Vermeulen

Next to his work at the Millennium Institute, Mr Herren is co-chair of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). The publication of “Agriculture at a Crossroads” in 2008 sought to bring about real change in policies for agriculture and development. Fifty-nine countries have endorsed the report and many other states and organisations have noted the importance of the assessment. The report pictures possible scenarios, looks clearly at policy and institutional issues, and provides decision makers with a range of options for action. It has a great potential – but things have been quiet in the past two years.

What happened with the IAASTD report?

My big disappointment was that after the report was finished and the plenary in Johannesburg in 2008 was over, there was no money left for a good PR and media launch, not even to promote it among international bodies, governments, research institutes and donor organisations. I am trying to promote IAASTD through my own activities and those of my foundation (www.biovision.ch). Fortunately, some of the report’s authors and supporters have also taken up promoting the report and see the need for a next step. Yet at the same time the International Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is being seen as an alternative to IAASTD, something with which I don’t agree. It has taken us a long time to get agriculture recognised as the key issue in international development. With the IAASTD we managed to put it back on the agenda; now we need to do even more.

What is the status of agriculture on the international agenda at this moment?

Agriculture is still at a crossroads, very little has happened at any government level. Even countries which have endorsed the agreement are doing nothing. In England, for instance, Parliament endorsed the report, but it has done little to implement its findings. Instead it commissioned a new report, which came out with basically similar conclusions, but suggesting that GMOs may be needed to cope with food security issues in the future. In the IAASTD report we specifically wrote that genetic engineering has not yet solved any problem in agriculture and food security, that research is needed on its health and ecological impacts, and that this should not be at the expense of research, extension and the implementation of sustainable and organic farming.

Why is it so difficult to change anything here?

Governments are under pressure from the U.S., Canada and Australia, who did not endorse the agreement because of their views on trade and GM crops. These three countries are major donors and they have a large influence on the development agenda. Another reason is the pressure from the private sector and some large private foundations. Companies like Monsanto, Syngenta and Bayer raise the sceptre of unemployment and hunger to get support for their GM technologies. But there is also a general problem that people do not understand: the potential of sustainable agriculture to solve food security problems. Many policy makers have been led to believe that sustainable or ecological agriculture will not be productive enough to nourish the world. But experiences from the field, published in peer-reviewed journals, show increases in production by a factor of two and more after a transition to sustainable, ecological or organic agriculture.

Should politics not play a more important role then?

I have become more and more convinced that we cannot count on politicians or politics to make the decisions that will bring about the needed changes in consumption patterns and the way we do agriculture. There are too many lobbies out there, and politicians always put the need to be re-elected ahead of the common good. They don’t dare to take unpopular decisions today that would make the world a better place tomorrow. Against my earlier thinking, some private sector companies and people may be the best option for leading change. We need to find out who these people are and what companies they lead, and then work with them. It is a big job to inform them about the findings of the IAASTD report, so this is why it is important that the IAASTD process continues. We also need to include a much broader range of stakeholders and work with groups of people who can see the broad range of problems and help to solve them. The way forward with IAASTD may be to set up a permanent panel like the IPCC, to inform the public, politicians and the private sector about policies for food security and sovereignty.

Where should we start?

We keep on measuring CO₂ levels and these are going up, no matter what we do. Even if we would stop driving cars today, this will continue, and the consequences will be quite dramatic. But we keep on talking, referring to new reports, organising new meetings, and the CO₂ levels keep on rising. Sustainable agricultural practices could absorb a third or more of the CO₂, instead of being a source

of emissions. One way to change that is to reward sustainable farmers for the positive externalities they create, rather than charging them with extra labelling costs. Globally, some 800 million dollars every day is spent on direct and indirect subsidies for farmers in developed countries. These subsidies promote cheap food and enormous waste (up 60 % from production to consumption) along the value chain. It is time to sell food at the true cost that includes the externalities and, where necessary, assist the poorer segments of the population with something like food stamps. This would make industrial food more expensive and sustainably produced food cheaper.

Don't we just need more food for a growing world population?

The fact is that we have to change our lifestyles, and that's tough news. We keep driving on in our SUVs, we keep on over-consuming cheap meat, and every year we listen to the experts say that economy and technology will fix these problems. This is the general mindset. But will it? I don't think so, and many others agree. We have reached the ecological limits and need now to reconsider the way we produce and consume food and other products. When it comes to food production we know exactly what to do: transform 1.5 billion hectares into agro-ecological farming and increase the rate of change with factor 37, and then it can all be sustainable by 2050. Today we produce 4,600 calories per person per day. That's already enough to feed the highest estimates of 12 billion people predicted to be on this planet then.

But is that really possible?

The potential is enormous. We can produce more rice with less water, using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). We can use methods like push-and-pull, intercropping maize with repellent plants which "pull" the insects. We need to put life into the soil again, and have at least five or six different crops in rotation. It's also about having animals back on the farm and using the manure well. These agronomic options are in line with our requirements and needs for food security. It's not a bleak picture. We all want a better, healthier and more rewarding life. But the Gates Foundation, for example, is still pushing for a Green Revolution with more fertilizers, more hybrid seeds and more dependency, while ignoring local solutions that have shown great impact.

What's the role of youth in this?

We need to take them on board in our search for a better future, for they are the producers and

consumers of tomorrow. It's their world that is at stake and they are concerned. Youth have to be involved and empowered so they can really do something. The IAASTD report is based on information collected in 2006-2008 and was published in 2008. It is already getting old. So we want to publish new material and we need a new assessment in a couple of years. This time we need to try to involve the next generation of policy makers. We could have a competition at universities to find the best solutions and to choose the best reports. You have to be a bit more creative to attract young people, but they are interested as we are talking about their future. In the last assessment procedure, I also tried to convince the IAASTD Director to involve film schools on every continent by asking them to produce a short film about crucial sustainability issues at a local level. That would have provided wonderful PR material, but it didn't work out for lack of funds. In the next phase of the IAASTD we really have to make better use of the media, in particular the new social media such as Facebook and Twitter. As we prepare to take the IAASTD process to the Rio+20 meeting and assure that sustainable agriculture will be high on the agenda, the importance of youth participation cannot be over-emphasised.



Photo: ICIPE



Photo: Peter Lüthi/Biovision

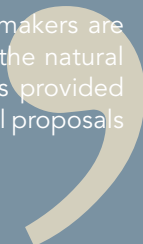


Although researchers and analysts are showing that deforestation rates have decreased sharply in recent years, we feel that the situation is not as good as the figures that they present would indicate. First, because they focus on regions like the Amazon rainforest, paying less attention to other areas where the cultivation of soybeans or sugarcane, for example, is on the rise. Industrial agriculture is expanding in order to remain competitive, and this growth does not consider environmental concerns. But the biggest worry today is that many are pushing for changes in the existing legislation – especially those laws and regulations which have proved to be effective.

The Brazilian Forest Code has served as a model for legislation in many countries. Although it has undergone several modifications since it was signed in 1934, it is still seen as the pillar of the country's environmental legislation, and has helped protect – even if not completely – the country's tropical and sub-tropical forests. Over the past decade, however, the Brazilian agribusiness sector and their representatives in Congress have increasingly attacked the existing limits on deforestation, complaining about the possibilities of being penalised for “environmental crimes”. Their main argument is that the existing environmental legislation is holding back the development of the country's agriculture sector.

A proposed new code was approved by a parliamentary commission in 2010, and Congress will debate its approval in the coming weeks. This proposal has already been criticised by researchers, farmers' and civil society organisations – all of whom question the economic and political interests behind these proposed changes to the Forest Code, and the possible environmental and social impacts that may occur as a result of them. This new legislative proposal “forgives” all deforestation which occurred before 2008, releasing those who have destroyed the forests from any obligation to restore them. It also reduces the total number of Permanent Preservation Areas in the country. This will have serious consequences. On the one hand, it will eliminate any sense of responsibility or accountability. On the other hand, it is an invitation to deforesting new areas, something which will generate a new wave of environmental destruction, with immeasurable impacts.

It is clear that, once again, politicians and policy makers are forgetting that future generations will depend on the natural resources, biodiversity and environmental services provided by our forests. It is worth fighting so that nonsensical proposals such as this one are not approved.



Francisco Roberto Caporal, lectures at the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco, Brazil. He is also President of the Brazilian Association of Agroecology
Email: caporalfr@gmail.com



Worth fighting for

Let's talk about... the

Communication is crucial in human interactions. The use of social media has become widespread, especially among young people. Modern communication tools can also be used to make agriculture more appealing and more effective.

Text: Anthony Mugo and Mireille Vermeulen



Though neglected for a long time, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are now seen as an important tool for development, especially in Africa. There are many available options, and different factors need to be considered in selecting the most appropriate and effective tool or medium for communication. According to Francois Laureys, the West Africa Programme Manager at the International Institute of Communication for Development (IICD), the most important factor is the type of information to be sent out: "In Africa, radio is still the cheapest and most efficient tool for spreading messages about a broad range of issues, like farming, democracy or lifestyle. By building in feedback-loops via the internet or telephone, it can also offer two-way communication."

Using ICTs in farming, for example for spreading information about practices and market prices for agricultural products, requires other tools like mobile phones or computers. But in many parts of Africa, mobile phones are not (yet) widely used to support farming: most farmers who have mobile phones only use them as a social communication tool. Part of the problem is that there are still practical problems in the use of ICTs on a large scale: large areas of the continent are still not connected, and the

communication costs are very high: an average person in Africa pays (relatively) ten times more for mobile communication than somebody in Europe. Practical ICT applications for farming are still limited. And illiteracy is still widespread, especially among the elder generation, which limits the full use of digital ICTs. But, according to Mr Laureys, there is a huge potential for using visual multimedia, such as video and photography, for training and learning about agriculture.

Container knowledge ILEIA's Kenyan partner in the AgriCultures Network, the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN), has been promoting *Maarifa* centres (Kiswahili for "knowledge") for the last five years. These are housed in recycled sea containers that have internet access and where the staff provides different services. They serve as valuable information hubs in remote areas, helping provide farmers and pastoralists with information on new agriculture and animal husbandry technologies, promoting their adoption and thereby improving the livelihoods of poor communities. A typical *Maarifa* centre contains a small library of publications, CD ROMs, videos, DVDs, and five or more computers with broadband internet connectivity. Each *Maarifa* centre is managed by a field officer, a young woman or man with interest and training in information

use of S in African agriculture

management or agriculture. A young volunteer from the community, known as a Community Knowledge Facilitator (CKF), supports the field officer in running the centre. One key task is to ensure that everybody who visits the centre is well served, irrespective of their level of literacy. Although open to all villagers, the Maarifa centres make special efforts to engage the youth in learning about and using ICTs to search for agricultural information and for their broader communication needs.

The establishment of a Maarifa Centre is celebrated with an open day, bringing together the neighbouring communities, including representatives from the local government departments and civil organisations, community groups, schools, and the general public. An advisory committee, formed by the local community, co-ordinates the outreach activities around each centre, and each centre has a community focal group attached to it. This group will include some infomediaries with some expertise in extension. They are instrumental in supporting the field officers to package the information so that it is accessible to farmers. There are currently fourteen Maarifa centres; eight in Kenya, four in Uganda and two in Tanzania. Three of the centres in Uganda have only recently been opened, near the towns of Gulu and Moyo. In February 2011 one additional centre started near the Kenyan town of Elwak.



Connecting to the world in Gulu and in Kyuso. Photo: Alin

Information experts John Njue is the field officer at the Maarifa Centre at Kyuso, a dry part of eastern Kenya, where the centre “acts as a referral point for people interested in developmental content. The district does not have any community library and therefore students of agribusiness, crop production and horticulture come to the centre for reference.” One of his tasks, after learning users’ information needs, “is to repackaging the available

information. In November 2010, for example, many farmers sought information on indigenous poultry keeping after weather anomalies related to La Niña were predicted. Many young people wanted to raise poultry as an alternative farming enterprise". A year earlier, he helped many of the farmers who came to the centre looking for information on non-chemical pest management. Many women also come to the Maarifa centre: given the time constraints they face, many prefer to borrow i-Pods, with which they watch best practices carried out in other areas.

But John Njue is not directly involved in any agricultural enterprise. "I admire farming, but not the kind our forefathers practised. The reason why I don't farm is because my parents and neighbours would not listen to my views about the need to practice more modern farming techniques, and trying to farm as a business." According to him, most young people don't engage in agriculture because of a lack of support from the people around them. He feels that it would be beneficial if the government employed young agricultural extension officers. This would make it easier to communicate to young farmers and help them start an agricultural business, rather than continuing to see and practice farming as a subsistence activity. He also observes that many extension officers do not use modern technologies in their training, and thinks that this is a deterrent to youth participation.

ICT heroes, busy internet women

Estelle Akofio-Sowah is Google's country manager in Ghana. She attended the "Fill the Gap" conference organised by Hivos and IICD in Amsterdam in January, where she said that smart phones will soon be the main source of internet access in Africa. Mobile phones are already very significant communication tools, and prices for third generation digital technology are expected to drop significantly. But online content still needs to be developed. So there is much work for African web developers in making online services relevant to the local context and language. Internet offers many opportunities for women, she says, especially for those who overcome their fears about technology and who dare to use their "natural flair" in this male-dominated sector. She highlighted the work of two heroines of the African digital world, Esi Cleland and Florence Toffa, whose work is helping AFROCHIC and the Word Wide Web Foundation reach their objectives.

Samuel Nzioka is the newly appointed field officer at the Maarifa Centre in Nguruman, a very remote village in the south of Kenya's Rift Valley Province. He has a BSc degree in agriculture and strongly believes that ICTs can help promote agricultural production: "ICTs can be used to document what the farmers are doing in one region. This information can be shared through CD ROMs, short videos and pictures." He is also positive about Sokopepe, an application piloted by ALIN in order to "link farmers and agri-cultural commodities through an online mobile phone and an internet based marketing portal". A youth group in Nguruman was trained in the use of ICTs and have developed their own blog through which they're able to share what they are doing.

ICTs for organisation Samuel Nzioka thinks that there are a number of ways in which agriculture could be made far more appealing to young people: by giving them grants to help them start farming; by linking them with markets for agricultural produce; by setting up local processing plants for value-addition and employment; by training them on best farming practices to achieve higher yields and by organising exchange-visits to learn from others. ICTs can be useful in all these cases. Francois Laureys has seen the effects in Mali, where IICD supported a women's association for producing and marketing shea butter. Three computers, some solar panels, two photo-cameras and one video-camera permitted the women to present their products on a website. The use of computers, coupled with management and marketing tools, helped raise production levels and improved sales and revenues. The women also managed to strengthen their organisation, with better accountancy procedures and reports.

But Mr Laureys also warns against too much optimism: "Having a website and being provided with market information is not enough to help the individual farmer get out of the poverty trap. A certain level of organisation is needed." That's why better results are seen when working with farmers' associations and interest groups. The shea butter women's organisation has shown many positive results in Mali, and the Maarifa centres are playing an important role in strengthening and connecting rural organisations in remote areas of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. More than other villagers, young people are contributing to this.

Anthony Mugo works as Programme Manager at the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) and can be contacted at his e-mail: amugo@alin.net; Mireille Vermeulen is part of the Farming Matters editorial team. E-mail: m.vermeulen@ileia.org.

Regional food systems

If there is one thing that the world food crisis has shown us it is that heavily relying on global food markets can be dangerous – especially for the urban areas and where households rely on imported food. This is a strong argument in favour of strengthening local and regional food systems. These are characterised by fewer intermediaries, lower transportation costs and more personal forms of exchange, resulting in less risky transactions. Producers and consumers can exert a greater degree of control, allowing for quantities and prices to be negotiated locally, and for more value to remain within the region. Moreover, proponents of regional food systems argue that this contributes to increased food security, benefits the environment and increases the autonomy of farmers.

Regional food systems, however, run against the dominant paradigm that sees global markets and modern technologies as the way forward in agriculture. And they also run against another paradigm: one that considers global food security mainly in terms of the quantity of food available. But addressing hunger and malnutrition is not just about calories. It is about the

quality of the diet, which inherently means variety. In many parts of the world, regional food systems used to provide a large variety of local grains, tubers, pulses, green leaves, wild fruits and berries, meat and fish. Today, much of that diversity has gone.

We invite you to share your experiences in strengthening local and regional food systems. How to create the conditions that can support their development? What role can farmers, consumers, farmer organisations, the private sector, field technicians, government programmes and the media play to (re)create regional food systems? How do they contribute to improved food and nutrition security? We will examine initiatives taking place and ask what farmers and consumers think about them and what lessons we can draw from them.

We welcome your suggestions and contributions as articles, photographs, contacts of people you think have expertise in this area or ideas for other topics you think we should address. Please write to Jorge Chavez-Tafur, editor, before June 1st, 2011. E-mail j.chavez-tafur@ileia.org



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SEMEAR 2011

How do we make markets work for the poor?

The development community is embracing market-based approaches for reducing poverty among small-scale farmers. But how exactly do we make markets work for the poor? A series of “provocation” seminars is challenging conventional wisdom on how to include smallholders in markets and bringing fresh perspectives to the discussion on what works and why.



The idea of “pro-poor markets” is increasingly talked about in development policy, practice and research. Researchers study value chains and their benefits for the poor. Nongovernmental organisations work with smallholder organisations to build links with companies. Businesses work with civil society organisations to help farmers comply with standards so that they can become suppliers. And governments back programmes to get small-scale farmers into global value chains or regional trade.

Provocations Between September 2010 and September 2011, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Hivos

and collaborating organisations are hosting a travelling series of provocation seminars across Europe, to stimulate the debate on pro-poor markets.

The “provocations” will look at some of the big assumptions, impacts, benefits and risks of approaches taken by the development community to “make markets work” for small-scale farmers. For example, challenging the belief that by “making markets work for the poor”, small-scale farmers can survive and even prosper in the face of major changes ushered in by globalisation, economic liberalisation, and the partial withdrawal of the state. What are the risks in this approach? Is business a fickle ally of the poor—just the latest “social responsibility” fashion?

The seminars will provide new and challenging insights—grounded in work with small-scale farmers in the developing world—to “provoke” those working in the area of smallholders and markets to re-think how we can make markets work for the poor.

Agency and agendas The first provocation, held in the Hague in September 2010, stimulated debate on the links between market-based development and citizen empowerment as ways to connect small-scale farmers to markets.

Central to both market-based and citizen empowerment approaches is the idea of “producer agency”. In market-based development, this idea is generally described as the bringing together of smallholders into organisations or cooperatives that can link to private buyers and value chains. In empowerment approaches, agency means the capacity of small-scale farmers to take charge of their own development—to reflect on and shape the agenda for pro-poor markets to better suit their needs.

It is commonly accepted that by coming together in effective organisations, small-scale farmers can better engage in markets and improve their incomes. The problem with this assumption—that farmers can cooperate to compete—is that it turns a blind eye to the fact that the majority and poorest of small-scale farmers are not organised and do not represent a strong lobby. And that in many parts of the developing world, markets are still dominated by the elites and cartels that have economic and political clout.

Rather than focus on linking to individual producer organisations, a more effective approach may be to focus on improving whole sectors through, for example, export levies. In Columbia, for example, an export levy on coffee has improved the performance and inclusiveness of the whole sector, with benefits for all coffee-growers, regardless of how organised they are. The bottom line is that building agency to shape the institutions that can make markets for the poor can be at least as important as building agency to get individual products into markets.

Rights versus markets The second provocation, on 3 March in Stockholm, Sweden, tackled another split in strategies for developing small-scale agriculture: should we focus on rights-based approaches built on farmers’ human rights, or on market-based development that recognises smallholders as entrepreneurs?

Development debates are steeped in the language of human rights, which is commonly used by development agencies to frame their policies for reducing poverty among smallholders. But, in the increasing move to embrace business as a development tool, these same agencies often

find themselves pursuing a market-based approach in practice.

Is it possible to tread both paths? The Stockholm provocation brought together a range of academics, businesspeople, policymakers and representatives from farmer organisations to explore the opportunities for reconciling the two approaches and ask whether the distinction between the two is a valid one for smallholders.

More information

To find out more about the provocations visit www.hivos.net. Watch the “producer agency” seminar at www.iied.org/provocations, and the “rights versus markets” seminar at www.iied.org/provocation2

Provocation partners

Collaborating institutions working on the provocations include: • Centre for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA) • Empowering Smallholder Farmers in Markets (ESFIM) • Hivos • Institut de Recherches et d’Applications des Méthodes de développement (IRAM) • Institute for Development Policy and Management (IDPM), University of Manchester • International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) • Mainumby • Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) • Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI) • UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) • Vredeseilanden

Food for thought

The Hague provocation heard speakers pose key questions, identify major hurdles and suggest practical action. *“The idea... is to develop and deepen existing knowledge and develop new insights and seek linkages between the two approaches, of linking producers to markets and of civic-driven change.”* Carol Gribnau, Hivos, The Netherlands.

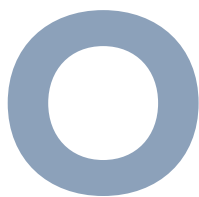
“The political tendency of ‘making markets work for the poor’ leads to a fragmented enabling environment for smallholders.” Giel Ton, Wageningen UR, The Netherlands.

“We [in Bolivia] now have completely different policies in place. The government wants to really work with .. organisations because they have political power and they represent more people. But they do not go down deep to see what the real market problems are from those small producers.” Diego Muñoz, Mainumby, Bolivia.



An “anchored” education promises better results

Governmental efforts aimed at rural children and youth can be more effective if the departments of education and agriculture co-ordinate their goals and policies.



One of the policy goals of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador is that young people master the knowledge and skills they need to incorporate themselves into the labour force.

However this goal is seriously undermined by the high malnutrition rates found in children of less than five years of age – a period where crucial brain development takes place, which cannot be compensated for later in life. So a nation-wide nutrition programme was designed, hoping to reach all schools in the country. But this programme is forcibly changing young people's diets and helping dilute traditional knowledge and skills at a time when they are most needed in the rural areas. Although its objectives are clear, the implementation of the School Breakfast Program (PAE) contradicts some of the basic principles of nutrition practice itself, as well as the government's own political agenda. PAE boasts that it reaches even the most remote communities in the rainforest with the same flavoured porridge and individually packed white flour biscuits being distributed across the country. Yet, the country's 2008 Constitution and related laws explicitly endorse traditional knowledge, organic agriculture and agrobiodiversity, as well as the "culturally appropriate and healthy self-sufficiency of communities", "the purchase of produce for social programmes from small-scale farmers" and "the distribution of food that promotes equity between rural and urban spaces". Can't PAE be better connected to the situation and needs of the remote rural communities?

Positive attempts Similar linkages and interrelations are also visible (in more positive ways) in other examples. One of these is the Ministry of Education's support for an alternative agricultural education programme. The

"Improvement of Technical Agricultural Education" programme, or PROCETAL, ran in the southern province of Loja between 2003 and 2008.

Implemented with the support of two Flemish development organisations, it was the result of extensive research conducted by the Centre for Experiential Education of the University of Louvain (Belgium). PROCETAL aimed at improving learning results in secondary schools by "anchoring" education in the reality of farming students. By the end of 2008, more than 160 teachers had been trained in rural pedagogy; different agricultural manuals and teaching handbooks were developed and published; and school farms were equipped. Production and business plans were drafted in 17 technical schools in the province with the aid of specialists trained by the Ministry of Agriculture. Hundreds of students benefited directly from the programme.

The development of specific skills and the motivation shown by teachers, students, their families and the local educational authorities made those in neighbouring provinces demand the expansion of the programme. In 2008, the Ministry of Education decided to increase its financial contribution to the programme and to expand it, developing what came to be known as BATAAC (or the "Competitive Agro-Technical School Graduates" programme). This new programme was officially meant to run in Loja and other six provinces until the end of last year, but equipment is still being delivered and personnel is still in place. To help ensure the sustainability of the programme, special attention has been given to strengthening local capacities and leadership.

Closer to farming More than half of the 65 technical secondary schools in Loja were paying attention to agriculture and rural issues before PROCETAL started, but, according to surveys undertaken to inform the design of the programme, activities hardly ever took place

This article contrasts the incongruities in a national initiative of the Ministry of Education in Ecuador with a regional programme that purposefully sought to strengthen such connections and links, with successful results.

Text: Irene Torres

outside the classroom. This does not mean that the teachers were at fault: for decades, policies and regulations paid little attention to the needs of farming communities or the general context in which the schools find themselves. In contrast, PROCETAL encouraged students and teachers to work closely with farming families. Links were sought with organisations such as INIAP (the National Institute for Agricultural Research –until recently a division of the Ministry of Agriculture), involving them in activities such as seed handling and soil preparation, and getting their support in order to “recover” the almost forgotten practice of farming with local varieties, materials and fertilisers.

Expanding success While the national goal of improving school enrolment and attendance was not one of the programme’s objectives, it may very well turn out to be one of PROCETAL’s most important results. The lack of relevance of school activities has often been considered to be a significant cause of low enrolment and retention rates in Latin America, which have remained lower in rural areas. Although the exact figures are not available, Pablo Bustamante, Director of Technical Education in Loja, claims that enrolment rates have increased in the past few years, just as the emigration of school-aged youth is reducing. This is no small matter. A mainly agricultural country of 14 million people, Ecuador saw more than one million migrants leave

the country between 1998 and 2008, with 30 per cent of them coming from the rural areas. Loja, a primarily agricultural province, has one of the highest emigration rates in the country.

Pablo Bustamante has been working at the Technical Education Department in Loja for 18 years, and sounds as enthusiastic as a recent graduate on his first day of work. He talks of the need to “revitalise the agricultural labour market” and to “promote agrarian entrepreneurship” – echoing both PROCETAL’s and BATAAC’s objectives – and argues the case for continuing and expanding these two programmes. They provide younger populations with training and a market for their products, and introduce (or re-introduce) their parents to simple technologies. Farmers working with BATAAC’s students are building pigsties and chicken coops in new ways but with traditional materials (straw and wood instead of cement and zinc). The cumbersome traditional methods of tilling or ploughing are being alleviated by mechanical tools that are available in the schools. Finally, the programme has established vegetable and meat processing plants and fully equipped kitchens, which are expected to help to thrust production into hitherto unexplored markets.

Way to go Without explicitly saying so, the programmes’ success may very well lie in the recognition of young people’s agency and efforts, and the way these relate to the community; the context in which schools are found and the efforts of other programmes (such as those run by the Ministry of Agriculture). While rural schools generally experience a chronic lack of formal resources (financial, pedagogical, and others), the “experiential” methodology of PROCETAL and BATAAC engages students in learning activities that take place in a variety of situations, often outside the classroom in the students’ immediate reality. The results show, once again, an increased involvement of students and participation, and better overall results, when what they are learning feels “close” to them. The next step should be to ensure that these young women and men are able to offer their products (some of which have been lost due to marketing difficulties) to their school friends and primary school students who, instead, are currently eating rations of biscuits and imported food delivered by the central government.

Irene Torres has worked with rural education programmes in Ecuador for 15 years. She is currently Technical Director of Fundación Octaedro (www.octaedro.org), and also a PhD candidate at the Communication and Innovation Studies Group at Wageningen University. E-mail: irene@octaedro.org

Still a lot to do

Although initiatives like PROCETAL are multiplying in both industrialised and developing countries, a visitor to most schools in the rural areas will still usually see schoolteachers standing before a group of students sitting behind their desks. To many authorities, the concept of “quality education” is not carried through to recruiting teachers with specific skills (or providing them with these skills) and does not recognise the diversity of students and their families. Knowledge and skills are all too often measured and compared using international standards which reflect a “modernising” agenda (such as the widely used PISA test, developed by the OECD, a consortium of 30 of the most developed nations). While specialists and educational authorities in Ecuador may publicly claim to support alternative methods, they often contradict themselves when discussing what students “need” to learn. The educational benchmarks are based on priorities which hardly take into account the needs of farming students and their families.

Teaching around the globe



Edukans is a Dutch non-governmental organisation which aims to facilitate access to education, and improve its quality. Miet Chielens, one of its Programme Officers, explains that the organisation “aspires to give disadvantaged and marginalised children in developing countries a chance to build a better future for themselves and their society”. What distinguishes Edukans from other NGOs is its exclusive focus on education, which it sees as “the most efficient investment for international co-operation, because when individuals get the opportunity to learn basic life and literacy skills, economies grow faster and poverty rates decline”.

Text: Nicola Piras Illustration: Fred Geven

Many NGOs share the aim of contributing to the development of knowledge and skills in developing countries. But Edukans’ objective is twofold: besides promoting the education of marginalised children, it also aims to improve the Dutch education system. This twofold objective is exemplified by the World Teacher Project (WTP), a two-year pilot project that was launched by Edukans in 2009 and which, thanks to its positive results, is continuing during the period 2011-2013. In Ms Chielens’ words, the WTP “links Dutch teachers with teachers in the South so as to improve education in a co-operative way”. One major problem with the educational system in developing countries is that “although a significant number of the poorest children are going to school, too few are really learning something”. It is therefore not only necessary to make sure that every child goes to school, but also to guarantee the quality of the education they receive. “Of course, it is very difficult to give a precise value to ‘quality’, as it always depends on the context”, she says. “The quality of education has different meanings for different people”. Not all subjects are taught everywhere, nor are they taught in the same way in different countries and regions, so an objective evaluation of what pupils and students learn is not always possible — especially from the perspective of an outside observer. Edukans’ perspective on teaching and learning assumes that “individuals develop themselves on the basis of their own identities and cultures, and through the use of their own talent and potential”. A bottom-up approach

is essential, and this is one of the main strategies of the project. “The general purpose of the WTP is to study the local education system and to co-operate with local teachers, with a focus on quality issues”, and therefore paying attention to issues such as child-centred learning, active learning, or multi-class teaching. In short, this is carried out in face-to-face meetings between Dutch and local teachers. These meetings are mutually beneficial: teachers in countries like Peru or Malawi get ideas that help them develop their teaching abilities, while Dutch teachers acquire expertise. An additional outcome is seen in the chances that teachers in the Netherlands get to improve their classes and activities, helping Dutch pupils and students develop competencies such as dealing with differences, cultural empathy, social initiative, and flexibility. As Miet Chielens puts it, these are indispensable skills for developing a “global citizenship”.

Edukans is based in Amersfoort, the Netherlands. At the moment it is collaborating with schools and organisations in six countries: Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malawi, Peru and Uganda. More information about the organisation and the World Teacher Project can be found in Dutch, English and Spanish on their website <http://www.edukans.nl/english>. Readers are also invited to write to Miet Chielens (miet.chielens@edukans.nl) or to the programme co-ordinator, Mildred Klarenbeek (m.klarenbeek@edukans.nl).

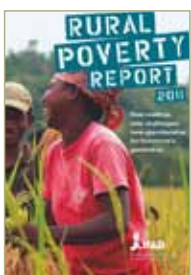
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Global food security: Ethical and legal challenges

C.M. Romeo Casabona, L. Escajedo San Epifanio and A. Emaldi Ciri3n (eds.), 2010. Wageningen Academic Publishers, Wageningen. 532 pages.

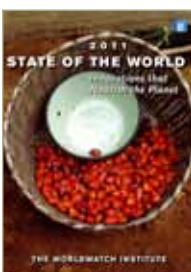
Global food security is a hot issue. A contribution from ethics, unexpected as it may be, sheds new light on this topic. The book argues that technology alone is not enough to ensure global food security, as it implicitly assumes ethical stances that do not take societal values into account. The book places food security in an ethical framework based on the principles of equity, justice between current and future generations, respect for human dignity and sustainable food production. The different chapters cover the issues of climate change, sustainable agriculture and aquaculture, biotechnology, patenting, nutrition, food labelling, bio-energy and animal welfare. A great book if you're not frightened by academic speech.



Rural poverty report 2011. New realities, new challenges: New opportunities for tomorrow's generation

2010. IFAD, Rome. 317 pages.

Smallholders are strongly risk averse. This is the starting point of the 2011 edition of IFAD's annual reports on rural poverty. Smallholders allocate their resources to minimise risks related to health, climate variability, markets and poor governance, but current trends of natural resource degradation, climate change, insecure access to land, and food price volatility exacerbate insecurity. The authors' approach to help farmers and reduce risks focuses on capacity building activities, increasing the reliance of markets and adopting non-farm activities. Overall the report gives a fresh and original outlook that goes further than traditional economic approaches.



State of the world 2011: Innovations that nourish the planet

L. Starke (ed.), 2010. The Worldwatch Institute, Washington. Earthscan. 270 pages.

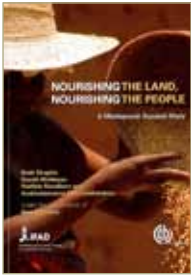
If you have become disillusioned with the large number of development projects and programmes that have failed to address local needs, then this book is for you. The book presents successful local innovations that could help solve the global food crisis. It not only looks at issues that are typically associated with food security, such as production, but also engages the reader with food processing, trade, school feeding programmes, gender issues, resilience to climate change and biodiversity. The significance of these themes is illustrated using on-the-ground case material. Overall, the book provides a great source of inspiration based on strong empirical foundations.



Who benefits from GM crops? The great climate change swindle

R. Hall, S. Fleet and K. Chandrasekaran (eds.), 2010. Friends of the Earth International, Amsterdam. 35 pages.

This is the right source if you are looking for a critical, though perhaps somewhat one-sided, view on the current state of affairs related to GM crops in the world. The authors present some interesting findings, including (1) that opposition to GM crops is growing, (2) that despite promises, there is no evidence of GM crops being able to solve problems of hunger, poverty or climate change, and (3) that the expansion of GM crops is being accompanied by increased herbicide applications, deforestation and the displacement of peasant and indigenous communities. The report proposes using agroecological approaches to combat the array of global problems we face today.



Nourishing the land, nourishing the people: A Madagascar success story

B. Thierry, B. Shapiro, A. Woldeyes, H. Ramilison and A. Rakotondratsima, 2010. IFAD, Rome/CABI. 202 pages.

The great thing about success stories is that they offer hope in a sometimes gloomy landscape of failed projects. This book describes a project in the Upper Mandrare river basin in Madagascar, which resulted in increased harvests, improved infrastructure, improved literacy and a higher standard of living. This was done through collaboration between different levels of government, involving farmers and addressing issues beyond production. A very interesting book which could have been of even more value for development practitioners if it had elaborated more on how project staff negotiated with farmers and dealt with conflicts.



Farmer-led joint research: Experiences of PROLINNOVA partners

C. Wettasinha and A. Waters-Bayer (eds.), 2010. PROLINNOVA, Leusden. 87 pages.

Many argue that the best type of innovation is farmer innovation. Why? Because it works! But what role can and should scientists, extension officers and development agents play? This new book in the series on promoting local innovation argues that farmers should take a leading role in research projects. Rather than being the designers and initiators of change, scientists should become a source of inspiration, information and facilitation for farmers. This approach ensures that innovations fit local circumstances and contribute to livelihood aspirations. The book highlights several projects in Africa and Asia where this genuinely participatory approach has led to modest changes in practice which have, nonetheless, had significant impacts on farmers' livelihoods.

More on youth

Several online resources show the important role that youth play in rural areas. Some of these are collected on the site of the ARDYIS project (Agriculture, Rural Development and Youth in the Information Society), put together by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). Two other websites that are worth a visit are those of the 19th edition of the Brussels Briefings and the "Youths and Agriculture" section of the Future Agricultures website. Both elaborate on the potential of rural youth; the latter includes a four-page policy briefing on youth aspirations and African agriculture. FAO and

ILO have jointly developed a web site focusing on issues such as child labour in agriculture and youth employment, which contains general information and specific articles and reports. ILO, FAO and UNESCO (2009) have also published a report entitled "Training and employment opportunities to address poverty among rural youth". Another document, published jointly by FAO and UNESCO, is "Education for rural development: Towards new policy responses" (2003). Though not available online, two comprehensive publications are "Giving youth a voice" (Marilyn Minderhoud-Jones, 2006) and



"Young people, education, and sustainable development: Exploring principles, perspectives, and praxis" (edited by Peter Corcoran and Phillip Osano, 2009). (LvdB)

Meeting a region's development needs

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO, works to raise levels of nutrition, improve agricultural productivity and the lives of rural populations, and to contribute to the growth of the world economy. The Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) supports FAO's efforts to promote the economic and social well-being of the rural poor. To address the specific challenges faced by youth, this division initiated and has been following the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) approach since 2004. As seen in Palestine, the results can have a broad impact.

Text: Francesca Dalla Valle
and Peter Wobst

The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) combine support to vocational educational training opportunities with employment promotion. They are a concrete manifestation of the increasing recognition of the linkages that exist between rural employment, poverty reduction and food security. The schools have a unique methodology and curriculum, providing agricultural, life and entrepreneurship skills in an experiential and participatory learning approach. There is also an employment-oriented component which encourages and helps JFFLS graduates to form Youth Farmers' Associations (YFAs), through which they can more easily access resources and place their produce in the markets.

A complete approach The JFFLS-YFA process is structured into 3 consecutive phases: a learning phase, an employment phase, and a market access phase. During the learning phase, FAO works closely with a country's Ministry of Education in formal schools, the Ministry of Youth (via youth clubs or vocational education training centres) and with the Ministry of Agriculture. During the employment phase, FAO works with the Ministry of Labour, farmers' associations and co-operatives and agri-business and marketing experts. Efforts are made to register associations, or to open youth branches within established farmers' co-operatives. This

enables the associations to register the land they use for farming under their own name. The third and last phase is the market access phase, during which FAO works closely with the Ministry of Trade and with rural finance and micro-credit institutions, aiming to connect the associations with potential lenders so as to allow them to expand their activities and production. In many countries, co-operation with the Ministries of Trade and Agriculture has helped the youth associations reach high quality standards in, for example, organic farming products.

The programme has been successfully introduced in several African countries as well as in the Middle East and Asia. The JFFLS-YFA have more recently been included as one of the main activities in the United Nations Joint Programmes for “Youth Employment and Migration” in Malawi, Mozambique and Sudan, as well as in the UN’s “Jobs for Peace” programme in Nepal. Field evaluations have shown that the JFFLS-YFA approach has been

helping develop the entre-preneurial and agricultural skills of the youth as well as their self-esteem, helping them become healthy and positive young adults.

Capacity building in Palestine

One of the most interesting applications of the JFFLS-YFA approach has been seen in the Palestinian territories (in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). The situation in these territories has prevented the free flow of goods and services, and disrupted the stability needed for an orderly life. The further division of the West Bank into separated areas (as a result of the “Oslo Accords”) has contributed to the fragmentation of UN interventions and has been an impediment towards a holistic approach. Palestinian youth face a number of handicaps and disadvantages: a lack of rural employment opportunities; vulnerability to an increasingly tense crisis and the lack of appropriate agricultural training facilities.

Reduced access to land is increasing food insecurity among many households. Youths are particularly vulnerable to this as they need access to nutritious food in order to grow and develop. It is essential to invest in Palestinian youth in order to facilitate the evolution of a Palestinian state. The development of a youth workforce is one of the most important priorities and challenges towards a peaceful and prosperous society. Vocational training and employment opportunities are essential to allow the youth to make a contribution to promoting Palestinian national development. The main goal of the JFFLS-YFA approach in Palestine has been to build local capacities to meet the development needs and priorities of Palestinian youth, while responding to the need for sustainable environmental, economic and social development.

Two specifically trained facilitators (chosen among extension officers, teachers, social workers and/or farmers’ cooperatives members), used this participatory methodology to share agricultural knowledge and life and business skills with 15 girls and 15 boys in different schools. These 2 to 3 hour sessions were given twice a week; each taking place in the field after regular school hours. The learning programme lasts a school year and follows the crop cycle; participants are taught about the links between agriculture, nutrition, gender equality and life and business skills. The course not only teaches them how to grow healthy crops, but also how to make informed decisions for leading healthy lives. Local women’s associations were put in charge



of preparing and distributing meals for the students attending the lessons. The selected associations also benefited from trainings in good nutrition, health, agricultural value chains, entrepreneurship skills and on the fundamentals of the JFFLS approach.

Broader opportunities Since 2008, approximately 2,000 youth have been trained in the JFFLS approach in the West Bank and Gaza. They have subsequently been grouped into more than 20 youth farmers' associations, and become involved in activities that range from honey processing to

Students enjoy learning about agriculture

Basel Yousef is 15 years old and one of the students selected to participate in the Junior Field Farmer and Life Schools Programme. Basel is from Salem village, one of two villages in the school catchment area in the district of Nablus, in the northern part of the West Bank. The Der Al Hatab School has 600 students, aged 9 – 15. Basel enjoys learning how to work with the land at school as part of the JFFLS approach. He now knows the implications of seasonal changes for agriculture, how many days particular vegetables need to develop, when to water and irrigate the land, and the purpose of using fertilisers. Basel lives at home with his mother, 3 brothers and one sister, about 2 km from the school, and his family was enthusiastic about his involvement in JFFLS. Basel hopes to continue learning about agricultural practices in school and eventually go on to university.



horticulture and livestock. All the young farmers are full members of the associations and receive a share of the profits from their association.

One of the most successful examples of the employment phase comes from the Hebron district in the West Bank. Here, the JFFLS graduates came to join the Al-Shiva Hive Co-operative Society. The co-operative is renowned, nationally and internationally, for producing and exporting organic honey. The students were trained in the honey value chain and learned about agricultural value chains, beekeeping, maintaining bee hives and honey processing. They were given full membership of the Co-operative Society and share in the profits like all the other cooperative members.

Marketing exhibitions or “khayrat blady” are organised once a year in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and bring together all the associations involved (representing both women and youth). The exhibitions not only provide a concrete marketing opportunity, but also a chance to exchange ideas and skills among themselves. These events allow the associations to display and sell their goods (including breads, vegetables, cakes, cheeses, embroidery work, handicrafts and jewellery) and to develop short and long term contracts with different clients.

Throughout the process, FAO developed and maintained strong partnerships with several ministries, the Youth Development Association, and with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). These linkages have proved crucial in strengthening the capacities of the public administration and civil society. They have also been fundamental for the institutionalisation of the JFFLS approach and the entrenchment of mechanisms for addressing rural youth unemployment. The linkages between groups of JFFLS graduates, existing youth clubs, women's associations and local farmers' groups have proved essential to ensuring the continuation, replicability and sustainability of the activities.

There is a continuing discussion with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education about including agricultural lesson within the national curriculum, which the Ministry appears to favour. FAO's involvement led the Ministry of Youth to pilot agricultural lessons and the Palestinian Authority has now seen the benefit of this approach and opened a unilateral fund agreement with FAO to institutionalise this approach.

Francesca Dalla Valle works as Youth Employment-Development Expert at the FAO's Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (e-mail: francesca.dallavalle@fao.org). Peter Wobst works as Senior Economist at the same division. E-mail: peter.wobst@fao.org

Whether we look at rural farming and extension work, or at international agricultural research, we see an “ageing” global agricultural system, with an increasing lack of interest among young people across the globe in pursuing agriculture-related careers. This is further compounded by an agricultural research system which has a limited capacity for engaging young professionals in dialogues that address critical development issues. Thus, as there is minimal input from youths into the system, there is less innovation in developing programmes that are of relevance to young professionals. This further reduces interest among young people to enter the agricultural research for development field. While this problem is well documented, the plausible strategies for addressing it are not. Youth inclusivity in the system remains an unsolved problem, made more critical by the fact that the changes that we manage to implement today will not produce results for decades to come. But we must address it, and in doing so we must ensure that youth, the key stakeholders in this process, are involved.

The first step in attracting future young professionals is nurturing the ones we have now. This can be done through a variety of means, including focusing our capacity building opportunities on younger professionals, or ensuring that there is real youth representation in key debates over agricultural research for development debates. Similarly, creating opportunities for and fostering innovation among young people, or creating a sustainable mentoring system for the youth and providing networking opportunities among youth, especially between disciplines.

Furthermore, we need to provide more young role models for future agriculturalists to look up to and so change their perceptions of agriculture. Changing perceptions requires changes in the system itself, but we can start by highlighting a “new” agriculture like one that makes use of ICTs, for example, to show how agriculture is also a progressive field. We can also make further efforts to demonstrate the links that agriculture has with those subjects that do attract young people, such as climate change, environmental sustainability and organic farming. Agriculture must make clear its linkages with both the business and the environmental spheres. This challenge is one of the reasons for the creation of YPARD – the Young Professionals’ Platform for Agricultural Research for Development. YPARD works with organisations to develop tangible means of ensuring that agricultural research for development is more inclusive of youth, mainstreaming them in programmes and giving them the opportunity to develop professionally. Only when young professionals are actively engaged in shaping the sector’s future will we be able to work towards a responsible agriculture that is able to meet global needs without depleting its resources.

Courtney Paisley is the YPARD co-ordinator. Readers are invited to register as a member of YPARD at www.ypard.net or contact her for more information at courtney.paisley@ypard.net



Youth, farming and research

Young people can contribute enormously to farming and agriculture production – and in many cases they already do so. How to strengthen or support their efforts? These are some of the many interesting examples we have found.

Finding sources of inspiration

Empowering young farmers takes on many forms – from giving them the tools they need to getting them to give their views about future agriculture policies. One interesting method is to get young farmers to meet and exchange and share ideas, and thereby inspire each other. This is what farmers like Prem Bahadur Rajali and Samsher Rajali are doing in Nawalparasi, Nepal. They are following the example of Mr Rabindra Rajali, a young farmer from Deurali. In less than five years he has increased his land under cultivation to almost two hectares, growing off-season vegetables such as tomato, potato, cabbage, cauliflower and cucumber and selling them for a profit in Kathmandu. Although he didn't finish school, he now owns a tractor, two pairs of bullocks, and more than 20 goats. He also leases three hectares of land from the local school, and provides work to four neighbours. Those who visit his farm hear that “to be successful, young people have to forget about their pride”. His

neighbours are encouraged by his example which shows that agriculture is not a poor man's job. “And if that is sometimes the case, then that is certainly not a crime!”

More information? Write to Dinesh Panday, student at IAAS, Nepal. E-mail: relorteddinesh@gmail.com



Photo: Dinesh Panday

Showcasing the “Growing Talents”

The ICT-KM Program of the CGIAR aims to strengthen information and knowledge exchange processes between the world's agricultural research institutions. With the launch of the International Year of Youth, the programme decided to highlight the work and opinions of some of the many enthusiastic and talented young individuals they regularly interact with, considering that “while there is no substitute for the experience, knowledge

and wisdom that comes with age, young people can add a different perspective and offer fresh ideas”. The result is a series of interviews which present these young people's perspectives, experiences and aspirations. These are organised into a number of chapters, which can all be found online. To date, these chapters include interviews with an intern at ICRAF, a specialist with the World Fish Center, or with a GIS expert working in Kenya. With the debate and discussions that follow, every interview helps the programme in its mission of facilitating the exchange of information.

More information? Write to Enrica Porcari, Chief Information Officer for the CGIAR and Leader of the ICT-KM Program (e.porcari@cgiar.org), or visit their website: <http://ictkm.cgiar.org/youth-in-agriculture>



Photo: Wangari Mathenge - WOB

Indonesia

Having nature as a teacher

The heartland of Indonesia's Green Revolution can be found a few kilometres north of the city of Karawang. Farmers use fertilisers and a large number of pesticides, while their children want to migrate to the city. This is where, in 2006, Kaliaget Organic Farm started an informal community school for children. Up to 24 children follow the growth of paddy rice, meeting once every week in the 3.5 hectare farm. The teaching materials are based on training manuals prepared for Farmer Field Schools. Although activities with children are carried out in a more playful way than the "regular" FFSs, the children perform the same observations and do very similar analyses. After only a few weeks all the participants realise how much there is to "discover" in a rice field, giving them a totally different idea about what is otherwise seen as "routine work" (according to some farmers) or "dirty work to be avoided" (as most children used to think). The work in Kaliaget shows how a small investment can help develop a positive



Photo: Paul ter Weel

and inquisitive attitude, contributing to children learning from, and loving, nature.

More information? Write to Paul ter Weel, at the Kaliaget Organic Farm and School, West Java, Indonesia. E-mail: paulterweel@gmail.com

Linking participation with income

Farmers in many countries in the European Union have stopped producing pickling cucumbers as it is a highly labour-intensive activity. So farmers in the eastern part of the continent are making good use of the opportunity, and are producing these cucumbers for the western market. These farmers are receiving the support of

organisations such as the Lutheran World Federation, with positive results. Different projects are helping develop efficient marketing strategies, strengthening farmer organisations, and also providing loans through revolving funds. As a result of these efforts, three co-operatives in the Cazinska Krajina region, close to the border with Croatia, are producing and exporting large quantities of cucumbers. More than 2,000 farming families are part of these co-operatives. The cucumber-picking season lasts two months and is always during the summer school vacation; so many children are actively involved in picking the cucumbers or sorting them on different categories. In this way they bring some extra money into the household and also support themselves: many farmers say that the children use the money they earn for their school books.

More information? Write to Enes Kurtović, field agronomist at Terra Sana, Association for Economic Development and Employment, Sanski Most, Bosnia-Herzegovina. E-mail: enes.kurtovic@terrasana.com.ba



Photo: Enes Kurtović

A delicious **rev**

Favourite dishes are a matter of taste, and each person's taste differs. Young people's tastes are often thought to be for fast and easy food. But there is an alternative trend: many young people want good food on their plates.

Text and photos: Petra Bakewell-Stone

In the United States, an energetic and positive youth movement has been pioneering a "delicious revolution". Amongst American students there is a sense of rage about the purely economic and non-sustainable choices provided by the food industry and by multinational companies like Monsanto. In 2000 a group of students at Yale University heard that pesticides were being used on the food that they were being served on campus, and they opened discussions on food procurement.

"Slow Food on Campus" has now spread to many colleges and universities and is reportedly having a real impact on food consumption across the U.S. Activities include "boycotts" of meals not including fair-trade, local produce, "buy-cotts" which offer opportunities to buy local products, "eat-ins" where local produce is shared on campus, and also "cook-outs", during which students provide meals to local farmers to thank them.

British students are also getting more active around food, trying chiefly to maintain quality through hard times. Decent, well-sourced food is particularly a high priority for hungry students descending into debt. Slow Food activism also resonates with a renaissance in foraging, bush crafts, home-brewing and baking. Students' appetites for healthier and locally-sourced food is also shown in the success of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) co-operative shop in London that sells competitively priced, organic and fair-trade foods. Such enterprising activities directly challenge the monopolies of the enormous multinationals that dominate institutional catering.

Worldwide concerns Although those behind these different efforts may not know each other, and may not co-ordinate their activities, they all respond to similar interests and concerns: they want to know where their food comes from, how it is produced, and by whom. Young people play a key role in schools and universities, but also – increasingly – as part of international movements like Slow Food and several others.

Slow Food was founded to promote the gastronomic heritage of different places. For Carlo Petrini, its founder, young people will play a key role, as the generation who will reunite mankind with the earth. And young people are also taking key roles within the movement itself. Since 2008, Slow Food's vice president is John Kariuki, a 23-year-old farmer's son from Kenya.

Last October, at the latest Slow Food meeting known as "Terra Madre" (held every two years in Turin), John Kariuki showed that young people from his



olution

own country, and elsewhere in Africa, are equally concerned about the global food industry and its impact on food habits and consumption. In Africa, young people are also starting initiatives and projects to offer alternative ways to relate with food. Mr Kariuki highlighted the growth of school gardens in Kenya and described the importance of teaching children about food and farming. Many children who experience school gardens go back and teach their entire households and communities about local foods and sustainable farming.

Gardens and schools These experiences from Kenya have inspired a Slow Food project called “A Thousand Gardens in Africa”, which is promoting gardens as platforms for education. School kitchen gardens are being developed in order to exchange knowledge about local produce, share seeds, preserve agrobiodiversity, safeguard local recipes and learn how to transform food through preservation, storage and cooking. There is also an emphasis on intergenerational learning, such as bringing in elders to tell children stories and transmit their time-honoured knowledge of the land and growing food. School Gardens have already been set up in 17 countries, including Congo, Guinea Bissau and Madagascar.

In Uganda, Slow Food co-ordinator Eddie Mukiibi (23) stresses the importance of food and taste in education: “If a person doesn’t know how to eat food,

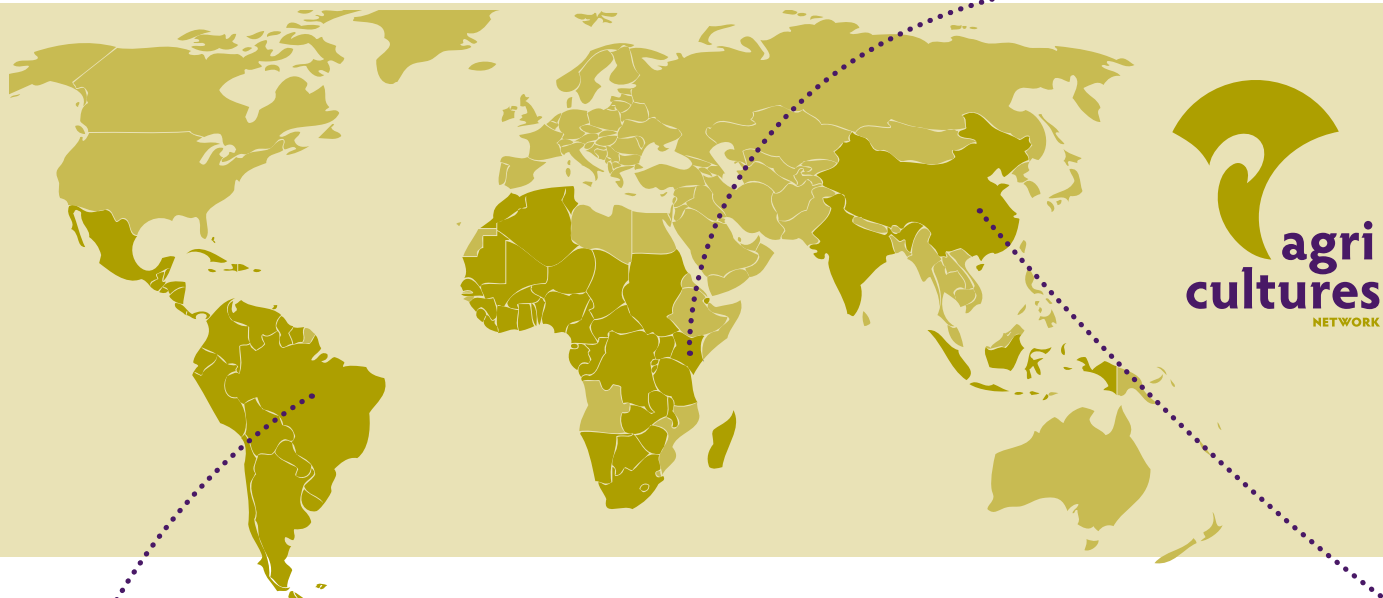
he won’t grow food”. As part of the project he runs, “Developing Innovations in School Cultivation” (DISC), children learn how to cook and prepare traditional foods, and how to grow local crops like amaranth, aubergine, sukumawiki and maize from local seeds. He works with each school, helping them to plan, construct and know how to care for their garden, looking for the best ways to deal with local climatic challenges such as drought and erosion. Produce from the gardens is used in the school meals, or sold at local markets. Some schools transform produce into preserves and jams.

Food and farming Food and farming do not formally feature in most educational curricula, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In many countries farming has been used as a form of punishment in schools, and becoming a farmer perceived as the last option, after one has failed to get an education or a job. So school gardening projects in Africa often meet with initial resistance from parents and teachers who think that it will detract from children’s studies. But children need to know how to survive economic downturns, by learning the right skills, knowledge and attitudes for becoming autonomous and self-sufficient. It is important not only to raise awareness about the value of gardening, but also to raise its prestige and highlight the enjoyment and even therapeutic benefit that can be gained from interacting with plants.

In the end, these youth activities will propel students into a new realm of activism around food and mobilise people to go back to nature, communal farming and growing food. Terra Madre 2010 was a testament to the fact that young people are our greatest hope for creating a new, sustainable agri-food system. Worldwide, young people are recognising the connections between good food, good health and flourishing communities. Food education is an education for life; learning to grow one’s own food and cook, the ultimate declaration of independence.



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The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization has reported that world food prices are at a new historic peak. The Food Price Index, an international indicator of the wholesale price of basic foods, has risen for seven consecutive months. In January, the Index registered strong increases for all the commodity groups it monitors, except for meat. Does this mean that small-scale farmers, or those who produce these products in general, are receiving a better price? Our partners from Kenya, China and Brazil shared their opinions on the situation in their countries.



Photo: André Telles, ActionAid Brasil

Paulo Petersen: "No benefits go to farmers"

Over the past decade, Brazil has become one of the world leaders in agricultural production and trade, satisfying the country's needs in almost all sectors while exporting approximately 25

percent of its produce. Paulo Petersen, Director of our partner organisation AS-PTA, points out that, in spite of the large quantities of foodstuffs produced, neither policy makers nor farmers have any influence on the prices paid. "International markets define the price of food. It is influenced by global issues, and is not regulated by individual countries. What farmers are paid depends basically on the international market prices." This is because most farmers, even those in the remote rural areas of Brazil, are part of an international value chain. The biggest problem is that these chains include many intermediaries. "They are the ones who appropriate the riches produced by agriculture in Brazil. Although prices may

fluctuate and farmers lose out when they fall, they also lose out when they rise." Farmers must therefore try to find other ways to access markets, preferably through short chains. This means paying attention to local markets. Selling in local markets helps reduce the number of intermediaries, which means that a larger percentage of the price paid by the consumer goes to the producer. Local markets also provide opportunities for commercialising a wider diversity of products. Additional benefits can also be found by lowering costs. "This is not impossible: lowering costs while maintaining or increasing production levels is one of the many advantages of an agro-ecological approach".

Anthony Mugo: "A burden on rural taxpayers"

Countries like Kenya import much of the food the population consumes, particularly grains and edible oil, and are even more reliant on imports when the rains are insufficient or other factors affect production. Higher global food prices mean that more money is spent on importing food, resulting in a higher burden on Kenyan taxpayers, most of whom (approximately 70 percent) live in rural areas. Ideally, higher food prices should also mean a better income for poor farmers in rural areas, but unfortunately this is rarely the case. Farmers face numerous barriers when trying to access the market: poor infrastructure and a general lack of market information

Photo: Karen Hampson



leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen, or by those who have the means to transport food to urban areas. According to Anthony Mugo, Programme Director of the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN), ICTs offer a possible solution. ALIN is promoting an online market access portal known as Sokopepe (the virtual marketplace - www.sokopepe.co.ke), which can link farmers with the national market via mobile phones and the internet. This can help to better inform farmers about where and when to sell their produce.

Qian Jie: "The intermediaries benefit"

Over the past few years, China has become increasingly involved in the trade of agricultural products, both as exporter and importer. But these growing linkages with international markets are not necessarily beneficial for the country's small-scale farmers. The Director of CBIK, Qian Jie, says that when food prices rise, the costs increase – something that also happens when prices fall in the international markets. "Rising food prices also mean that the inputs which farmers need are more expensive. So when prices rise, the farmers' net income



Photo: Fernando Belli

is smaller". As part of their efforts to tackle the current financial crisis, the Chinese government is providing subsidies to consumer groups in the cities, some of which are known as the "Fair Price Vegetable Groups". These subsidies help urban consumers buy more expensive products, yet the benefits of these transactions never reach the producers: "Even when consumers pay more for their products, the farmers still do not benefit." As in many other countries, the presence of many intermediaries plays a very important role in this as they are able to overcome the transport and information barriers that face rural farmers. Helping such farmers access the market is increasingly recognised as the best way to increase their profits, but this will mean implementing specific support policies. (WH)

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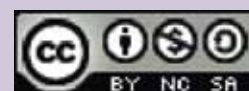
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"WE ALL KNOW THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AMONG THE MOST AFFECTED BY THE KEY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME, BUT THEY ARE ALSO AT THE FOREFRONT OF DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS"

Joint statement by the heads of the different UN entities for the launch of the International Year of Youth, 12th August 2010.

"FARMER ORGANIZATIONS ARE A KEY CHANNEL FOR YOUNG RURAL PEOPLE TO DEVELOP ACTIVITIES, GET ACCESS TO SERVICES AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND MAKE THEIR NEEDS AND CONCERNS HEARD IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES"

Philippe Remy, IFAD's Policy Coordinator, on the IFAD social reporting blog. August 12th, 2010.

"We need more detailed and systematic empirical research to explore the aspirations of young Africans in different social, cultural, economic and political contexts, and the implications in terms of agricultural policy and rural development"

Jennifer Leavy and Sally Smith, on "Future farmers? Exploring youth aspirations for African agriculture", Policy Brief 037, June 2010. Future Agricultures Consortium

"Many young people have left to find work somewhere else... That's not good. It is really my wish that many women would manage to do the same as me and that we are all successful"

Microfinance can positively support young people, as shown by Mama Coulibaly, from the Malian town of Yebe. She received a microfinance loan of 30 euro, with which she bought a sack of corn and sold it for a profit. Now she runs a small shop. "Mali: Small loans, big input", a film by Inge Altemeier. ViewChange.org, October 2010.

"WE EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN IN SUSTAINABLE OR UNSUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOURS"

Christiana Figures, Executive Secretary of the COP, pointing to the many different responsibilities that women have and calling for the empowerment of young women. Quoted at a side event at the 16th edition of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun, 10th December 2010.



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