

Farmers' of East Africa prepare for the future.

A Voice from Africa Today

Evidence produced during the Tanzania Farmers' Dialogue and farm visits demonstrated that small farmers in the tropics can provide high production per acre, use little or no chemicals and use minimum amounts of non renewable energy. One of the biggest challenges is to provide reliable sources of water through times of drought and protect land in time of flooding. Examples given during the Farmers' Dialogue and farm visits shows that small farmers are able to play a major role in providing food security. It was recognised that hand in hand with technical development a change of motivation was also needed

- Delegates looked at the challenges ahead for farming and society as a whole.
- 9.5 billion mouths to feed by 2050 - double food production to adequately feed everyone.
- World oil and gas reserves drastically reduced by 2050 - be energy efficient and provide clean energy
- Climate change - farming to improve the environment, conserve water, plant trees and conserve the soil.
- Water supplies - invest to conserve water supplies
- Stimulate governments to plan for the long-term
- Develop markets that serve everyone in the food chain

Dr Joseph Lykurwa from the Ministry of Livestock opened the Dialogue on behalf of Dr Nyamrunda, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Livestock development, and spoke of the need for training that equipped farmers to play their part in today's globalised world. He also commented that this was an East African Dialogue although it was held in Tanzania. He stressed the need for such groupings, which would hasten the coming of the East African Federation. The event was held at the Buhuri Livestock Training Institute near Tanga. Discussions included. How Rural Development can be enhanced, development of small-holder coffee growers, food for all! water, energy, climate change, the vital role of the farmer, value added products and marketing, farmer to farmer cooperation, perspectives from Zimbabwe, Democratic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, France, Netherlands, Switzerland and Kenya



Dr Joseph Lykurwa and Mr Francis Nyakya Buhuri Principal



George Kamau

George Kamau spoke with passion about his own one-acre farm, "For many years, farming has been considered a dirty job, being left to the old and uneducated people. This low opinion of farming leads to inadequate farm produce and low prices with people relying on aid from governments and donors." He has a four-part approach, environment - rainwater harvesting - agriculture - dairy farming. The environment, involves agro forestry, planting trees on agricultural land for animal feed, domestic use and protecting the environment. Rainwater harvesting consists of roof catchment, run-off catchment, building new dams and restoring old ones, building shallow wells and underground tanks. Organic agriculture uses natural methods in order to keep the crops, soil and livestock in a healthy condition. It involves the successful management of resources for agriculture to satisfy human needs while maintaining or enhancing quality environment and conserving natural resources. Dairy farming has recently become a major source of income for Kenyan farmers where previously the dairy industry had come almost to a stop. In 2002 a small group of farmers, saw a milk cooling plant, understood how farmers benefited and decided to start one themselves. They set up the cooling plant in Ndaragwa. Since it started the standard of living locally has changed dramatically. Farmers, young and old are busy and other forms of employment have developed. George's talk was followed by Duncan Nduhiu, a close neighbour who had played a key role in the launch and expansion of the cooling plant.

A notable contribution came from one of the 20 farmers from the coastal region around Dar es Salaam who had been greatly helped by Mr Christian Chembilu and Dr Kessey working with CARITAS, a Catholic organisation. He talked of the transformation that had taken place in their farming methods and lifestyle over the past ten years, changing from a slash and burn type of agriculture to one largely built around organic farming with livestock and careful use of compost. One of the big changes is the role of women becoming as important as that of the men in managing the farms. The help they have received came through training courses in the leadership role of men and women,



Gutrude Mattee, Christain Chembilu and Dr Kessy CARITAS with Martin Simtenda Conference Organiser

prioritising, planning and implementation of development, training in creating and running cooperative societies, in record and account keeping as well and HIV Aids awareness and prevention.



Isaac Mushi and Felician Swai

Felician F.B.Swai and Isaac Mushi from the TaCRI (Tanzania Coffee Research Institute) told how Southern Tanzania produces some of the finest mild Arabica coffee that accounts for 40-50% of the total Tanzanian production. Production is 23,000 tons. About 99.5% is produced by small holders and 0.5% by estates on 73,000 ha of land. Their aim is to improve the sustainability of farm families in coffee growing regions. Quality has suffered in recent years due to low prices and incidence of insects & diseases. TaCRI has put emphasis on organizing smallholder coffee growers into farmer groups, each group consisting of 25-30 members organized around production and primary processing to improve productivity, quality and marketing, to develop training courses for stakeholders, facilitate two-way linkages between research and growers, and support multiplication and distribution of improved coffee hybrids. Group members monitor one another to ensure best practice for improving productivity and quality. Production has increased from 10,000 to 21,000 tons in their area per year. Quality has improved and incomes increased from 57% -200% Farmers have improved their houses, they can afford to pay school fees for their children and improved the nutritional status of their family

Jamil Ssebalu, Principal of the Namasuba College of commerce in Kampala, gave a powerful presentation listing the resources of Africa and the action that needs to be taken to benefit from them. He produced a map of the continent of Africa with the sixteen countries carrying the burden of conflict colored in red. (Over half the area of the continent) The most important task in feeding the continent he sees as the end of conflict with stable government, and capacity building programs for farmers covering the basic areas of life from business discipline to conflict resolution.



Countries in Conflict since Independence

Alphonse Bisusa and Bagalwa Bahati gave a graphic account of the situation in their part of DCR Congo, speaking of restoring order to society after years of conflict, helping women who had been abandoned by their husbands, enabling them to make a living out of small scale farming, restoring essential supplies of seeds, chemicals and fertilizer. They talked of many initiatives taking place to improve livestock, drain swamps and to grow and harvest trees.



Mheza Womens group with Juliana Primus on the left

Farm visits took place after the conference; we saw small milk processing in Tanga, met farmers groups around Mheza, Lushoto and Arusha. Many of the most heartening improvements are a result of the work of committed individuals, one of these being Juliana Primus. She works for local government and has helped some of the women in Mheza who have fallen on hard times. The group we met are now efficient dairy farmers with up to five cows each and obviously financially sound. This from a start made only about eight years ago.

Our visits finished with walks round two small farms, both organic, both demonstrated high production with little or no outside inputs, We wish everyone could witness the enthusiasm of the farmers. Possibly the biggest challenge facing farmers like these in East Africa is the supply of water and much thought is being given to this issue.

Buhuri and Tengeru Livestock Training Institutes deserve a mention. Buhuri focuses on dairy cow management of both large and small herds and is now extending its work to include small scale milk processing. Tengeru is where we stayed at the end of our visit, it has over 400 fulltime students and over 1000 farmers who attend short courses through the year. They offer degree courses and have a large farm on which they practice large and small scale farming in ways appropriate for their students.



Tengeru Dairy Herd

A theme that ran through the conference and brought a response from most delegates was that the kind of world we want to can see starts with each one of us, and there is a source of wisdom – the wisdom of the creator – that we can turn to for direction. Often there is a way if we have the will. Possibly the biggest hurdle in many situations is to find the will to resolve conflict which has caused so much suffering around the world not the least in Africa.