

The Organic Farmer

The newspaper for sustainable agriculture in Kenya



Nr. 18 November 2006

It's harvesting time, farmers!

Delays in payment, exploitation by middlemen, storage problems – harvesting time is a real challenge to maize farmers.

Peter Kamau

It is once again that time of the year when farmers are harvesting their maize. They are doing this with great expectation that markets will be available and the prices favourable to them.

The harvesting time is a difficult period for farmers. Although the National Cereals and Produce Board has somewhat stabilised prices, delays in payment has often forced farmers to sell the produce to middlemen who buy it at throwaway prices and sell at a premium in maize deficit areas. At least the NCPB has already opened their depots which will enable farmers to deliver the produce on time.

Another problem among farmers is their tendency to wait for too long before they start harvesting. By this time, most of the maize cobs have opened, exposing the grain to weevils



and rotting. Storage structures in most farming areas today are made of timber off-cuts which provide a good haven for weevils. A store made of wire mesh is ideal as it gives adequate space for air circulation. The use of chemical pesticide dusts in Kenya is tricky. Many dusts are no longer effective against weevils and other dangerous pests such as the Larger Grain Borer (\$). Experts now suspect the products are faked. Unless farmers use the available organic methods of pest control, preventive measures seem to be the only option available to them.



Harvest early and store properly. See page 3

Good response to our plant extracts special

We have received numerous letters, telephone calls and SMS messages from farmers commending us on our September / October 2006 issue that featured plant extracts. That is why we have decided to make a reprint in English. Farmers interested in getting copies of the reprint can get in touch with us through our usual address. We thank you all for your positive comments.

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Su's organic shop now open in Nairobi

Organic food consumers in Nairobi finally have a shop where they can get fresh supplies: Su Kahumbu, well known to readers of the *The Organic Farmer*, opened the Shop at Gigiri Shopping Center near the UNEP headquarters on September 2 this year. The shop is stocked with lots of certified organic products from farmers' groups trained through the TOF Support Programme. See page 8

Dear farmers,

There is a widespread view among farmers that farming has become a loss making venture. Many will sit back and remember the good old days when they could sell their agricultural produce at good prices which were regulated by the Government. But things have changed with the liberalisation of the market, together with competition from other producers of the same goods. Competition is stiff and only the best can meet the demands of the ever changing market.

How can farmers really survive in this environment? In this issue (see page 4) we have a story on farmers in Meru, who have, against all odds, managed to start a factory to process their farm produce. This is a major step in the right direction because the farmers will now earn more from their farm produce. For many years, Kenyan farmers like their counterparts in the rest of Africa, have been primary producers of agricultural goods which do not fetch good prices because they are not processed.

Sometimes when we visit farmers in the field, we are shocked to learn that they do not have even the most basic tools, yet the same people can spend large sums of money on ceremonies which do not promote their farming activities. It is often surprising to find a farmer who does not even possess a wheelbarrow for carrying fodder for their cattle or who does not have even milk cans to deliver their milk to KCC. Some of these items can even be bought on credit.

What we are saying is that farmers have to do more. They should be well organized and be able to plan ahead. Farming should be viewed as an investment that can bring good returns and help raise the standards of living for the majority of rural people. Some farmers have borrowed money from Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) in their areas and used it wisely to develop their farms.

We keep our word. Some months ago, we promised you that we would increase the number of copies of *The Organic Farmer* following the great demand from farmers across the country. With the support of BioVision Switzerland we have now increased the number of copies from 12,000 to 14,000. Karibuni, wakulima!

MY OPINION

Every month I look forward to receiving a copy of *The Organic Farmer*. The reason for this is simple, TOF is not an ordinary newspaper. Every issue comes with something new for the farmer. It is so exciting to try new methods of farming which help increase production on my farm, at the same time cutting the cost of using expensive and harmful chemicals. Since most of the farmers in my locality do not receive a copy, I always share this information with them and also encourage them to try new ideas. I feel this is the only way information on organic farming can get to as many farmers as possible.

Robert Mukhwana, Bungoma

The Organic Farmer

The Organic Farmer is an independent newspaper for the Kenyan farming community. It promotes organic farming and supports discussions on all aspects of sustainable development. *The Organic Farmer* is published monthly by ICIPE and distributed free to farmers. The reports of *The Organic Farmer* do not necessarily reflect the views of ICIPE.

The Organic Farmer is sponsored by BioVision, a Swiss based foundation for the promotion of sustainable development.

www.biovision.ch



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In-A-Vision Systems(k)

How to prevent water loss

There are many ways a farmer can conserve run off water for use in crop production, even during the dry season.

The Organic Farmer

With the increasing frequencies of drought and water scarcity in many parts of the country, farmers need to know and practise water conservation methods in order to make maximum use of the available water resources on their farms. Water conservation involves trapping as much water as possible and storing it on the surface or allowing it to sink into the soil in order to raise the water table and increase the soil moisture level. A protective vegetation cover on the soil surface helps to slow down the flow of running water before it settles on pits and dams. Contour ditches are then dug to help spread the water all over the farm.

As we mentioned in previous editions, keeping the soil covered prevents soil erosion and water loss, and in the process improves the overall productivity of the soil. One method of doing this is the use of mulch; this is the use of dry plant residue to cover the soil. Mulch keeps the soil underneath moist, which is not possible if the soil is left bare. It also suppresses weeds and promotes a healthy plant growth. Mulching also reduces soil erosion and provides plant nutrients as the material decomposes.

Water conservation methods

Contour ploughing: Contour farming involves ploughing, planting and weeding along the contour, which is across the slope rather than up and down. (see photo)

Tumbukiza method: In this method, a hole 60 cm and 60 cm wide is dug and filled with compost mixed with soil and planted with maize or Napier grass. Water from run off collects in



A garden with terraces

Photo TOF

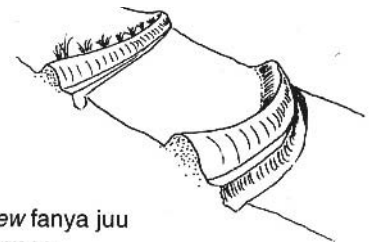
Our series on water

In the August 2006 issue of *The Organic Farmer*, we introduced drip irrigation, which can help farmers grow crops using very little water. In this issue, we will provide you with cheap and easy methods of retaining water in the soil as long as possible. In December, we will share the experiences of farmers in Lare Division in Nakuru District who have learned various methods of water harvesting for agricultural production, livestock and domestic use.

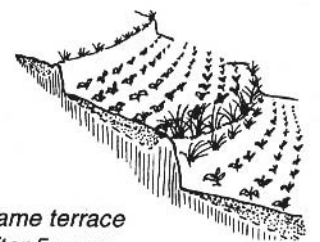
the hole and seeps slowly into the plant. (Sketch)

Fanya juu method: *Fanya juu* terraces are made by digging a trench along the contour and throwing the soil uphill to form an embankment. Fodder grasses are then planted to stabilize the embankment. It later develops into bench terraces which harvest and conserve water (see sketch).

Bench terraces: Bench terraces are level



New fanya juu terrace



Same terrace after 5 years

steps constructed on the contour and separated by embankments. They can be formed by excavation or may develop over time from a grass strip or *fanya juu*.

Stone Terraces: Stone terraces are useful in areas with steep slopes. The terrace walls are made of stones collected from the land. However many farmers do not prefer them as they provide shelter to rats and other rodents which eat the crops.

Intercropping: Planting maize as an intercrop between the rows of the main crop such as beans, cabbages, sukuma wiki (Kales) or potatoes provides shade which helps reduce water loss and also protects from the wind.

Harvesting early cuts down losses

Every year, farmers lose a large portion of their harvest due to poor timing, pests and lack of proper storage facilities.

Peter Kamau

Once again farmers are harvesting their maize crop. It is the dream of every farmer to harvest much more than they did last year. But this may not be the case for many of them. Although the crop may look healthy while still in the shamba, much of the crop will be lost due to pest damage and the rains. Every year farmers either lose a huge portion of their harvest, not because they did not use the right inputs but because they did not harvest at the right time or take the necessary measures to reduce pest damage.

As we have said before in this newspaper, losses to farmers always begin in the field. The maize crop is the most affected, due to poor timing and poor storage methods and facilities used by farmers across the country. Many farmers tend to leave the crop too long in the field where rains and pests attack the crop even before it is harvested. Most of the maize varieties grown at the beginning of the rainy season in mid-March and April are ready for harvest by October and November. In areas where the crop has been knocked down by wind and has come into contact with the wet ground, decay and pest damage is always faster. Right now, weather forecasts indicate that rains will increase in November and December. This means that farmers who harvest late will lose a considerable portion of their crop.

Reducing post harvest losses

Farmers should take the following measures to reduce losses during harvest and storage:

Sorting: Before storage, the maize should be sorted out to remove the cobs that have already been damaged by insects and mildew (mould). Research shows that sorting can help reduce the damage by up to 36 %.

Drying: The maize should be dried for a few days before storage. Drying gets rid of excess moisture which is responsible for decay during storage.

Shelling: Shelling helps to check pest damage. Since most pests prefer maize which is still on the cob for easy movement. If a farmer has to apply pesticides, this should be done after



A large portion of maize harvested every year is lost to pests and rotting. Photo TOF

the shelling. The maize should then be dried in the sun for a further 3 to 4 days after shelling. Direct sunlight kills weevils which have not entered the maize grain; the maize should be turned and stirred to ensure it dries evenly. Drying also helps bring down the moisture level to 13 %, which is ideal for long term storage of grain.

Construction of store: A good store should be well constructed. It should have adequate space for air circulation at the base and also on the upper part; pests prefer a warm environment and will keep away if the store is well ventilated. It is recommended that a store should have 40 to 50 % open space for the stored grain to dry properly. The store platform should be raised up to 60-90 cm above the ground to allow for air circulation.

Cleaning: Weevils reside in cracks in the wood of the store; they can remain there until the next harvest. Thorough cleaning is therefore necessary before fresh grain is stored to

ensure infestation of the maize does not occur during storage. Cow dung and fresh eucalyptus leaves can be burned to keep away any pests before storage. Granary floors and walls can also be plastered with cow dung for the same purpose.

Natural pest control methods

Diatomite: Diatomite is one of the most effective of natural pest control compounds. It is a natural preservative that does not affect the quality of grain. It is made up of millions of fossilized microscopic plants, called diatoms, which have sharp edges which pierce insects, killing them. It is not poisonous to both animals and human beings. The Kensil F grade of diatomite is the most appropriate (it costs Ksh 350 for a 20 kg bag). The recommended application rates are 3 kg of diatomite to one tonne of maize, wheat, oats, rice or sorghum. It is applied directly to the grain and mixed with a shovel. Wash off the diatomite and dry the grain before consumption.

Various plants can also be used to control pests in stored grain. Research shows that neem oil can repel The Larger Grain Borer. When applied at the rate of 20ml/ kg of maize neem oil has been found to prevent reproduction of the LGB and to drastically reduce damage to stored maize. The effect of neem oil has been found to last for up to 6 months.

Pyrethrum dust (*Crysanthemum Cinerari*): Flowers can be picked during a hot day and dried in the shade. They are then crushed into powder and mixed with grain. Pyrethrum powder from plants in general are said to reduce pest damage to maize and other cereals. Wash the grain and dry before consumption. The ashes mixed with grain are known to give 4 to 6 months' protection.

Battle against rats

Apart from weevils, rats and mice are troublesome pests that bring huge losses to farmers

because they eat large quantities of maize especially during storage. Rats can be controlled by use of traps and rat poison. Fixing of rat guards on raised stores can stop the rodents from access to the store. The rat guards look like a collar fitted around the pole (see photo). Farmers should take great care when using rat poison to ensure children, pets and livestock do not come into contact with the chemicals.



Value addition helps Meru farmers

This farmers group can now sell a wide range of farm products after processing them in their factory.

Jane Kigo, Meru

Stanley Mukuru, a farmer from Chuka, Meru South, practised farming like any other farmer in his village- that was to provide food for his family and sell the surplus whenever he could get a buyer. It was very hard for him to depend on farming as a source of income. This was due to the fact that many people in the area were farmers and did not require farm produce. The market, too was overflowing with the same products, pushing the prices down.

But all this changed in the year 2003, when the Ministry of Agriculture introduced the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP1). Mukuru and 15 other farmers from his village formed the Mungoni Focal Area Organic Group. They were trained by the Kenya Institute of Organic Farming (KIOF) under the NALEP programme. The group members were trained on compost making, use of plant extracts for pest control, value addition through processing and how to practise farming as a business.

"It was not hard for many of us, because our farms are not contaminated and we only needed to apply some other requirements of organic farming," Mukuru says.

Arrowroot around homestead

The group (now renamed the Mungoni Organic Farmers' Group) is one of the most successful in Meru district. Following the training, they have transformed their farms into some of the most productive enterprises in the region. Mukuru's farm, located a few kilometres from the Nyayo Tea Zone farm, is a good example of the skills the farmers have acquired from the training. Contrary to the belief that arrowroot are planted near or next to a river for a constant supply of water, he has been able to turn a flower garden near his homestead into an arrowroot garden. From a shallow basin, he has dug several holes 1 metre deep and 2/3 metre wide. An inlay of perforated polythene sheeting is spread in the trenches where arrow roots are then planted. The polythene helps conserve water. Soil enriched with manure is put onto the polythene paper to cover 2fts



Products ready for the market (left), farmer S. Mukuru tends his arrow roots. Photos: TOF

of the trench. Through this method, arrow roots and other crops can be planted throughout the year bringing a steady income. The water supply to the garden is replenished from a tap in the homestead.

The other portion of Mukuru's land is covered by a healthy crop of maize, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes and a small banana plantation. On the lower side next to the river is a plantation of Napier-grass, coffee trees and tea bushes.

Factory for value addition

Mukuru and his group members realized that their main difficulty was marketing of their produce. They therefore decided to go into value addition using the knowledge they acquired in the training.

They approached their Constituency Development Fund (CDF) committee for assistance to set up a food processing factory. After going through their intended plan of work, the Committee decided to offer assistance of Ksh 600,000 in two phases. The first phase of Ksh 400,000 has enabled them to build the factory and buy the necessary equipment.

The factory has been processing pawpaw fruit jam; fruit juice from passion, mangoes, avocado and pineapples; cassava and banana flour; and cakes from arrowroots and cassava. They also process crisps from bananas, arrowroots and Irish potatoes, and even a beverage from amaranth. The products are sold in Meru, Embu, Sagana and even supermarkets in Nairobi.

"The processing of these farm products has greatly improved income for our members and also created a market for other farmers in this region," says Mukuru.

The group is currently developing a

marketing strategy to expand their reach. They have also incorporated other farmers' groups into their production and marketing chain. The products will in future sell under the brand name VACID. To retain the group identity however, each of the groups will also have a brand name under which they will market their products.

Invested in training and marketing

Although production has been going on for the last one year, the members plough back their profits into the factory for expansion and other purposes such as registration, licenses and purchase of production equipment. Following their success with the factory, they now want to set up a multi-million food processing complex to process more farm products, much of which goes to waste during peak production period and which will now earn income for members and the community at large.

The group is now recruiting new members. The approved constitution allows a maximum number of 70 members; to date 50 members are registered. An agricultural officer is available to train them on weekly basis. They have been given a piece of land by Ndagani Secondary School which they use for demonstrations during training. Produce from the demonstrations land is given free of charge to the school.

The group plans to develop a large training institution to train other farmers in Meru district. With the results from the market survey conducted by the Group's sales representative, the entire range of their products have a lot of market potential. It takes a lot of hard work, but the group says it well in their motto "where there is a will there is a way".

Methods to control termites naturally

Termites cause great damage to crops. ICIPE has developed an environmental friendly fungus to control them.

Nguya K. Maniania *

Termites or white ants are known to concentrate their feeding activities on dead plant material from wood to humus. By these activities they contribute to the soil profile, soil texture and redistribution of organic matter. Termites are therefore important for recycling matter. But in their quest for cellulose, termites may also cause significant damage to crops, trees and houses of poor subsistence farmers, particularly in developing countries. Data on economic losses caused by termites to crops is difficult to obtain; but in most African countries the losses appear to be sporadic and localized, and can be more widespread and catastrophic in many other countries.

Rain fed crops more vulnerable

In general, damage by termites is greater in rain-fed than irrigated crops, during dry periods or droughts than periods of regular rainfall, in lowland rather than highland areas, and in plants under stress, because of lack of moisture, disease or physical damage, rather than healthy and vigorous plants. In particular, exotic crops are more susceptible to termite attacks than indigenous crops.

Conventionally, damage to plants by subterranean termites has been prevented by persistent insecticidal barriers in the soil around the roots, thus, preventing termite access to the crops and trees. This has in the past relied almost exclusively on the use of insecticides (lindane, aldrin, dieldrin, chlordane and heptachlor). Following the ban imposed on the use of these insecticides, less persistent insecticide groups such as organophosphates (chlorpyrifos, iodofenphos), carbamates (carbosulfan, carbofuran), and pyrethroids (permethrin, decamethrin) have been used as alternatives to termite control; but their low persistence calls for repeated applications.

Healthy plants more resistant

Although healthy plants may be damaged by termites, unhealthy and stressed plants are generally more susceptible to termite attack. There-



Termites (worker and soldier)



Termite mound



Damage to maize cobs (Photos courtesy Dr J. van den Berg)

fore, cultural practices should aim at maintaining or enhancing plant health.

The use of good quality seed, healthy seedlings, and appropriate transplanting procedure is more likely to produce healthy plants. In general, indigenous crops show more resistance or tolerance to termites. For instance, sorghum and millet are more resistant to termites than maize and groundnut, which are exotic crops. Deficiency or excess of water may stress plants and encourage termite attack. In general, attack on crops and trees is greater in drier areas and during dry periods. Overall annual rainfall is important but the even distribution of rainfall through the growing season may be more significant.

Control techniques

A number of techniques are used and include cultural methods, plant insecticides and biological control.

Cultural practices: Deep ploughing or hand tillage exposes termites to dehydration and to predators, thus reducing their number in the crops.

Pre-planting tillage also destroys the tunnels caused by termites and minimizes their foraging activities and associated damage to crops. Removal of the queen and/or destruction of the nest have frequently been used by farmers as a traditional method for control of mound-building termites. Mounds are dug, flooded or burnt with straw to suffocate and kill the colony.

Intercropping is the most effective cultural practice used by small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa to control insects that have specific host ranges. However, controversial results have been reported in case of termites. Intercropping in forestry has been suggested as a means of retaining termite diversity in the crop in order to prevent them from achieving pest status. Certain grasses are intercropped with different crops in West Africa to repel termites.

The removal of residues and other debris from the field may reduce potential termite food supplies and hence lead to a reduction in termite numbers and subsequent attack. On the other hand, leaving residues in the field or adding further organic matter could provide alternative food to which termites will be attracted, thereby reducing levels of attack on the main crop.

Plant extracts: Various parts of plants and extracts are known to be either toxic or repellent to pests of agriculture, and widely used in rural settings. Some of these extracts have been investigated in the laboratory and found effective against termites. Plant extracts such as those of neem and dried chilli have been used to control termites in the field and in storage.

Biological control: Many natural enemies (predators, parasites and pathogens) attack termites in nature. Biological control is the use of these natural enemies for their control. It constitutes a more environmentally acceptable alternative to traditional chemical control measures.

A new method: Control by fungi

Among the pathogens (bacteria, viruses and fungi), fungi offer a greater opportunity as termite control agents compared to other pathogens. Fungi infect their host through the cuticle and do not need to be ingested. They are environmentally safe. The ento-

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* Dr. Nguya K. Maniania is Scientist at ICIPE

Organically certified seeds are hard to get

M Abuoro (Tel. 0720 063 460) in Rongo wants to know if the use of certified seed is allowed in organic farming.

Certified seed implies the seed has been grown following strict standards, and the resulting seed has been tried and tested before being given the status of being certified. This ensures that there are no disease pathogens on the seed and the viability is good. It also ensures that the seed is pest free. 'Certified seed' is not the same thing as 'Organically certified seed'.

From an organic producers perspective nevertheless, certified seed is good to use as we are less at risk from diseases and pests from the start, and should get a good quality yield from production.

The international standards for organic production require that seed is undressed, or untreated and comes from an organically certified source. Conventional certified seed is often treated with Thiram or some other chemical. Untreated seed does not have any chemicals. It is however more prone to getting fungal disease and other infestations. In Kenya we do not have certified organic seeds available yet. As producers, we may therefore, if following international standards, apply for a derogation

on seed. This requires getting letters from 3 local seed companies supporting our claim to the non-availability of their organic equivalents. Alternatively, we can opt to import them but must follow very strict phytosanitary regulations set by KEPHIS.

This starts with making application to KEPHIS and if successful, being granted a Q-license to import, with certain conditions. A Q-license is a quarantine license and comes with the following requirements: Documentation of the origin of the seed must be supplied to KEPHIS and on entering the country, the seed is immediately taken to and tested at the KEPHIS laboratories. If it is seen to be carrying pathogens foreign to our local pathogens, it will be destroyed. From there, germination tests are done and if all goes well, you will be given the seed on certain planting conditions. The entire planting area will be quarantined, which includes 6 foot plastic sheet fencing and foot and car/tractor baths at all entrance and exits. Transfer or sale of the seed is also prohibited. As you can see, as organic producers we are caught between a rock and a hard place. To import following the regulations is expensive, time consuming and risky. To grow



Farmers can propagate their own organic seeds

our own seed can also be risky as we are subject to many variables. Our best option to minimize risk is to use certified seed and try to propagate our own when we feel confident enough to.

What about Nibecidine?

"Is Nibecidine organic?" asks Mary Wanja (Tel. 0721 673 830) in Molo.

Unfortunately I do not know what Nibecidine is. However, just as farmers/producers are expected to show integrity via organic certification, so too must be manufacturers of agricultural inputs and solutions. The best thing to do when in doubt is to ask them for documentation or symbol proving organic certification.

Growing tomatoes without chemicals is not easy

Sylvester (Tel. 0727 400 821) plans to start tomato growing between November and December this year. "Please advise me on care, disease control and other requirements," he asks.

Tomatoes are easily subject to insect and fungal diseases. They are particularly difficult to grow organically and require much vigilance throughout their growth period. To begin with, a good disease free source of seed must be used. If you are producing by using self grown seed, be sure to have selected your seed from your healthiest plants. If you are purcha-

sing seed from a seed agent, ask for seed that generally does well in your particular area.

It is important that you plant the seed in a well prepared seed bed. Make sure there is good spacing between each seed to avoid overcrowding of emerging seedlings. Seed beds must be kept moist, but not too wet, especially for tomato seedlings. If there is evidence of damping off, noticed by collapse of seedlings, remove the affected seedlings immediately, and also a few good ones on each side of those affected. This is mainly caused by over watering.

Tomato seedlings are generally ready for transplanting at 6 weeks of age. Do not leave seedlings in bed for much longer than this as they will struggle for nutrients and become stunted, stressed and subject to disease.

When transplanting, make sure to allow ample spacing between plants, up to 3 feet. Most diseases affecting tomatoes spread from plant to plant and strive in damp humid condi-

tions. By giving ample spacing this is avoided.

Tomatoes are heavy feeders and require soil with ample compost and very good drainage. Weekly feeds are recommended using plant teas, either fed to the plant at the root base, or as a foliar feed.

Any onset of disease must be quickly recognized and dealt with. Fungus and blight are common and can sometimes be contained using a spray of milk and water 1:10, neem or garlic. Blight is very difficult to control using organic solutions.

Insects are normally not too much of a bother apart from the spider mites. These can be controlled with pyrethrum extract; neem extract, Sodom apple extract etc. (*The Organic Farmer*, Sept./Oct. 2006 issue).

It is important to realize when pruning and harvesting tomatoes, that we act as carriers of insect and disease from plant to plant. Therefore we must keep a keen eye on these issues and avoid contamination.

Su Kahumbu answers your questions

Write to

The Organic Farmer

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Visit us in Matuga!

It was until the start of this month when I managed to come across your June issue of the newspaper. While visiting a farmers field school at Mau Narok, the facilitator of the same school produced a number of copies of *The Organic Farmer*, distributed them and started a topic on crop's nutrient deficiency symptoms. As she referred to each, the paper had the pictures where the participants could look and verify the colors. I saw a number nodding their heads signifying acknowledgements. Surely the technology on organic farming is unheard off in the coast more so Matuga division where am serving as a forest extension officer. While challenging you to consider poking your nose to this area, I kindly ask you to send me a few copies to distribute them to a number of organized groups within the Division some of which I am very closely working with. Please keep it up.

P. O Kibagendi,
Divisional Forest Extension Officer,
P.O Box 5, Kwale

TOF for East Pokot

I am interested in receiving your publication titled *The Organic Farmer*. I am a missionary living in Barpello, East Pokot and have seen a few issues of your newspaper which I found very helpful. Would you please put me on your mailing list.

My mailing address is:

Sr. Rebecca Janacek,
Barpello Catholic Mission,
P.O. Box 47, Marigat

natural termite control method...

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mopathogenic fungus, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, has recently been developed for control of termites in Kenya by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) and Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). The spores of the fungus are injected in the nest and thus, resulting in the destruction of termite colonies. Successful control of termites has also been achieved in maize crops, tree nurseries and grass. The fungus is produced on rice as substrate and formulated as pure spores or granules and applied in the soil. - The fungus is still under development at ICIPE.

Ideal for adults

I congratulate you for continuing to inform farmers through your newspaper. By chance I have come across your publications thrice. I am a voluntary adult education teacher working at Njoro division, Ngata location. Together with my students, we are small-scale farmers, farming on a quarter acre farm. The materials you publish is ideal to my literacy class and my immediate community. Therefore, I request to be receiving 10 copies of the newspaper and also the publications of previous months to us if possible. Thank you.

Daniel Gikima,
C/o Ngano AIC,
P.O Box 110, Njoro

I want to know more

In good faith I am writing to thank you for your response to my request for backdated copies of July 2006 and before. From this, I am getting some knowledge, which I am beginning to implement practically on the farm with good results, very humbly please do me a favour by defining in very simple language the meaning of organic farming. I am looking forward to your more knowledgeable and educative copies magazine. Thanks.

Rev. Jacob Henry Adhinga,
P.O Box 37, Butere

*Dear Rev. Adhinga,
We shall send you by post a copy of an article which tells you in simple words the meaning of organic farming.*

Useful for students

Msingi Bora Club is one of the clubs in Magana Primary School. The club is engaged in activities that promote character building and better farming methods. On behalf of club members, I wish to request you to be sending us monthly copies of your esteemed and informative issues of *The Organic Farmer*. The magazines would be placed in our school library where they will be accessible to all pupils and nearby farmers. Kindly consider also sending us previous issues.

Stephen Waweru,
P.O Box 28, Thika



Carrots ready for market

We lack market

On behalf of my group we are much interested in receiving your monthly newspaper for us to learn more. We would request you to assist us in marketing our farm produce which we are growing organically. We have been hearing that there are markets within and outside the country. But our farmers lag behind because we are not aware of it. So assist us to know more by sending us these magazines.

Stephen Marindany, P.O Box, Moiben

Helping the poor

I am agricultural extension and education officer of SMART in West Pokot District, semi arid areas of Kenya. The organization promotes bio intensive / organic agriculture in the region. I am interested in your monthly magazine which gives the real gospel on organic agriculture. This will lead to improved production in rural Kenya and the African continent. I request to be supplied with monthly copies of the newspaper so that the farmers in my region can get it.

Dismas Weminah Marango, Box 1395
Webuye, Kenya. Thanks.

Dear Farmers,

If you have any questions or ideas for articles, or if you would like us to publish experiences about your shamba or within your farmers' group, please contact us. We shall get back to you!
SMS ONLY



Tuma maoni yako! Asante.

tips and bits

from farmers for farmers

Shop in Nairobi offers organic products

Anja Bengelstorff

One of the biggest problems facing organic marketing in Kenya is lack of a system to authenticate organic products. Although most shops claim to be selling organic products, it is often difficult for them to prove to consumers that the products were really organic as they are not labelled. Su Kahumbu, a certified organic farmer herself, saw this problem and decided to do something. The result of her effort is the Organic Shop, which opened its doors to customers on September 2 this year.

Her consumers are mostly from the middle and upper class and foreigners working in Kenya, Su says. "They have been educated about the organic concept in their countries and appreciate to find those products here." The news of the shop opening spread fast, and Su enjoys a steady increase in customers and turnover. So far, the Organic Shop is supplied by two organic farmers groups from Gilgil and one group from Wangige who are already undergoing the certification process under *The Organic Farmer* Support Programme. Among products on sale are vegetables, frozen chicken, milk products, different kinds of jam, and Herbal products from brands such as Meru Herbs as well as coffee and tea, among others. All products are clearly labelled to show their organic status and origin,



a departure from other organic food outlets in Nairobi

However, Su Kahumbu would like to offer her customers a wider variety of fresh vegetables, including tomatoes, onions, aubergines, different types of beans and okra. "The farmers cannot always deliver what they promise, and when they do it is not always in time to be sold fresh," Su explains. "But I am sure those are teething problems which we will be able to overcome with time." She nevertheless urges farmers who wish to provide the shop with their organic products to contact the shop first before they supply anything.

The Organic Shop is open from Monday to Saturday between 9 am and 5.30 pm. Home delivery is possible. For this service, customers can call Helen on Tel. 0722-874 172.

Thank you for the SODIS article

In the last issue of *The Organic Farmer*, we published on this page an article on a very cheap and easy method to clean drinking water. However, we forgot to mention the Website where readers can get more information on this method (www.sodis.ch). One of the scientists behind this water cleaning method saw the article and wrote us a letter which we reproduce below:

"I am pleased to see a nice short article on SODIS (Solar Water Disinfection) written by Felix Mbitu Murimi and published on page 8 in your journal *The Organic Farmer* Nr. 17, Sept/Oct 2006. We would like to thank you for your efforts and the well written note. On this occasion, we would like to inform you that our

SODIS Lead Agency KWAHO (Kenya Water For Health Organisation) is implementing large scale SODIS projects in Kibera and Mukuru slums of Nairobi. Finally, I am pleased to inform you that Elgg, the village where I am living in Switzerland has made several donations for the *The Organic Farmer*. At the moment, several shops in Elgg sell products at a slightly higher price to collect money for your journal. Congratulations for the very practical information published in *The Organic Farmer*."

Martin Wegelin,
Dept. of Water and Sanitation in Developing Countries (Sandec) Eawag, P.O. Box 611, CH-8600 Duebendorf, Switzerland



Market Place

Goats for sale: Farming Systems of Kenya, a non-governmental organization working with farmers in Nakuru district has 20 female and 50 male goats for sale. Farmers interested should get in touch with the organization at the address given below:

Farming Systems Kenya, P.O. Box 2816, Nakuru, Tel. 051 2211177 or 0722 588 143 Ask for David Gicharu or Joseph Muraya.

Export: A German-based company would like to buy certified fruits from Kenyan farmers. They would like to buy mangoes, avocados, pawpaws and pineapples (Victoria baby varieties). Farmers groups or individuals should be able to supply a minimum of one tonne per week. They should also indicate the seasons when they can deliver supplies. Contact Wachira Waikwa, E-mail: nefshi@yahoo.com

Market for daisies: An organic farmer Limuru is looking for a market where he can sell flowers of the daisy variety. He would also like to sell his organically produced vegetables.

Interested: Alphaxard K. Njoroge P.O. Box 62 Nderu, Limuru.

Beekeeping: "I would be grateful if anyone would send me any information they may have on organic honey production. I am also interested in exploiting marketing opportunities for organic honey and beeswax. Kindly get in touch with me at the following address: Thomas Carrol, Director of Community Development, Baraka Agricultural College, P.O. Box 52, Molo, 20106, Tel. 051 721310 Fax: 051 721 310 E mail: tom@sustainableag.org

Photocopies: In the July issue of *The Organic Farmer*, we advised farmers in need of past issues of the newspaper that we were no longer able to send them these copies because we had run out of most of the issues. We repeat here that we can still assist those of you who need the copies by making photocopies of the same and sending them to you. But we cannot do this for free. Any farmer interested in getting the copies will have to buy stamps worth Ksh. 350 put them in an envelope and send it to us. We will then send the copies to you. We can make copies of all the issues. Give us your full address.

Contacts: I am producing organic fertilizer and would like to have a database of organic farmers located in Kiambu, Ruaka. I am farming 2 acres bananas and am an organic farmer. Please contact Silas Mwaura, 0722 300610.

