

The Organic Farmer



The magazine for sustainable agriculture in Kenya

Nr. 28 September 2007

Market day

Do small-scale farmers make any profit, despite the hard work on their shambas? See editorial on this page and pages 2 & 3. (Photo TOF)



Poultry keeping is profitable

With good management, farmers can earn more from rearing both indigenous and exotic chickens.

The Organic Farmer

More than 80 percent of farmers in Kenya keep indigenous chickens. They are popular with consumers because of the good taste of their eggs and meat. Exotic breeds, on the other hand, are faster growing and their egg production is higher because of selective breeding. The main breeds are the white Leghorn, the yellow-skinned Rhode Island Red, Light Sussex and the Black Australorp. In this issue we talk about rearing chickens the organic way. In one of the next issues we will feature the commercial production of indigenous chickens.

Farmers should be aware: Hygiene is of the utmost importance when raising poultry. It is therefore extremely

important to avoid contamination of any sort, whether it is through the feed, water or handlers. Illness and disease in chicken production are predominantly spread through handlers via hands and shoes. Biosafety measures can reduce mortality and disease spread by up to 60 percent. See pages 4,5 & 6



Budget of a chicken farmer

	Ksh
1. Cost of 200 day-old chicks @ Ksh 77	15,400
2. Cost of feeds (chick, growers and layers mash)	36,400
3. Brooding costs (labour, materials, heating, lighting and disease control) at 15% of total cost of production	7,770
4. Total cost of production	59, 570
5. Average monthly egg sales @ 140 per tray incl. expenses	10, 316
6. Total eggs sales for 12 months (10,316× 12)	123,792
7. Bird sales at culling stage @ Ksh 150 per bird	30,000
8. Total income	153,792
9. Gross profit margin	94, 222

Note: It is uneconomical to keep the birds beyond 12 months, as their egg production goes down. Maintaining them longer eats into your profit.

(Source: William Makechi, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development)

Dear farmers,

A short while ago, on August 9, we visited Kinale market along the Nairobi-Naiwashua road. The purpose of our visit was to find out how much money small-scale farmers make when they take their produce to the market (see page 3). In the gloomy weather, with fog reducing visibility on the mud-soaked slippery grounds, were dozens of farmers busy bargaining with middlemen and transporters who had converged on the market.

If one would like to learn more about the desperate situation of our small-scale farmers and the exploitation going on in the marketing of agricultural produce, then they should visit this or any other market in the country. It is a clear indication that farmers will never be able to improve their lot if the prevailing market environment continues.

Why? Let us illustrate this with an example: A watchman in Nairobi in 1995 earned a salary of Ksh 3,500. By September 2007 he earns Ksh 12,800. But at the Kangemi market Nairobi, he still pays Ksh 5 for a bundle of sukumawiki or Ksh 20 for a big cabbage. In the last 20 years or so, any keen observer of producer prices must have noticed that prices of agricultural products have more or less stagnated or even gone lower than they

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used to be, while prices of other consumer goods continue to rise. It's a contradiction that in a booming economy such as Kenya's, growing at a rate of 6.2 percent in 2007, small-scale farmers are getting poorer and poorer. Even worse, the small-scale farmers lose money due to the fact that most of them cannot sell directly to the consumers. Instead, the marketing cartels operate in a selfish way, where they continue to make hefty profits at the expense of the struggling farmers.

Farmers should take action. One option is to get organised as groups or cooperatives and market their produce directly to established retail outlets in towns nearest to them. Another alternative is to make use of available market information and grow products that can fetch good prices on the market. A third way out is diversification. Farmers should venture into areas that bring them more income, poultry keeping for instance, as we write on pages 4, 5 & 6.

OPINIONS

"If current trends in food production continue, child malnutrition in Africa is expected to grow from 38.6 million to 41.9 million children by 2025. Poor governance, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to markets, and low investment in agriculture contribute to the under-performance of Africa's agricultural sector. The continent will fail to meet the Millennium Development Goal to cut child malnutrition in half by 2015 unless more aggressive measures are taken now."

"Food Security in Africa to 2025", report from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

The Organic Farmer

The Organic Farmer is an independent magazine for the Kenya 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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Layout

In-A-Vision Systems (k)

Farmers work, middlemen profit

Small-scale farmers do a lot of work, but when they sell their products, prices are less than what they were 15 years ago.

Peter Kamau and Philomena Nyagilo

John Mbugua is a farmer in the Kinale area in Kiambu district. It is Thursday morning and he has delivered 300 cabbages from his ½ -acre plot to *soko mjinga* market along the Nairobi-Naivasha highway. The scenario looks promising in terms of business. The market is full of activities, with farmers, traders and middlemen bargaining for better prices. Mbugua sells the cabbages at Ksh 3 apiece. He pays Ksh 1 apiece for transport to the market and Ksh 20 cess to the local county council for the consignment. Mbugua is well known in *soko mjinga*. "I have been here for a long time", he says, "but the situation is not getting any better."

David Thugu transports four big bags of sukumawiki to *soko mjinga*. On his 1-hectare piece of land he plants cabbages, sukumawiki and carrots. Thugu pays his casual workers Ksh 150 a day. Going to the market, he has to pay Ksh 50 for the five sacks on the donkey cart, not to forget the contribution to the local council: Ksh 40 for parking the donkey and Ksh 20 for the trading space. This morning, he is offered Ksh 200 for 1 full bag of sukumawiki. "This is the same amount as 15 years ago", says Thugu, "but now we have higher production costs. The price of all commodities has gone up. For instance, the price for a bag of fertilizer has gone up to Ksh 2,000. This means that I am getting less than what I got 15 years ago", he says.

Smiling faces

On this chilly and foggy day only the faces of the middlemen and traders are smiling. They have parked their hired trucks and pick-ups beside the market and wait for the middlemen to haggle for prices with the farmers. The middlemen buy directly from the farmers. They decide and mark up the prices for cabbages, sukumawiki, carrots, spinach and potatoes for that particular day, depending on the demand from the traders and the amount being supplied. Although most of the farmers here in *soko mjinga* do have a mobile phone, they do not make any effort to find the market price for the day, as David Thugu confirms.



In this business, the middlemen and the traders are the big winners. They decide the price – and that's why they have reason to smile. Jane Wanjiku sees herself as a broker. She buys the cabbages from Mbugua and other farmers for between Ksh 3 and Ksh 5 and sells it for between Ksh 12 and Ksh 15 to traders from Nairobi, Mombasa and other towns; she has a profit of Ksh 8 to 10 per cabbage. A middleman who will not give his name is buying sukumawiki for Ksh 200 from David Thugu; he sells it to a pick-up driver for KSh 400. This means that in two or three hours and without breaking a sweat, the middlemen earn double the amount of money the small-scale farmers get after months of hard work on the shamba. Middlemen do not have any risk. They only buy if there are traders around or if they have a clear order from a trader. They never sit on a mountain of sukumawiki as farmers do when they lack buyers. In *soko mjinga*, the middlemen ensure by all means that the farmers do not sell directly to the traders as this would "spoil" the prices.

Cartels control marketing system

We asked small-scale farmer Mwangi Kariuki: "Why do farmers not cooperate and fix the prices? What would happen if the farmers came together and decided, "Today, we will sell a bag of sukumawiki for Ksh 350"? Mwangi Kariuki, a father of four, who is at times forced to work as a labourer in other people's farms, tells us without any illusions, "I have to sell my cabbages at any price. I cannot risk to go home without money". Even if the farmers organised themselves and hired lorries to

In honour of sukumawiki

While enjoying their popular daily meal of ugali and sukumawiki (the vegetable that enables one to survive during the week), many Kenyans may not know how sukumawiki came to be such a common vegetable on our dining tables. At the beginning of the 20th Century Africans relied heavily on the various indigenous vegetables which have now been discarded in favour of sukumawiki (or kale) and cabbage. Sukumawiki has become one of the most common vegetables in Kenya following introduction by agricultural extension personnel. It has a lot of nutritional benefits; and is said to contain most essential vitamins and proteins.

Common man's food

Apart from this, sukumawiki is very easy to grow as it does not require a lot of inputs and work to grow like other exotic vegetables such as broc-

coli, spinach, leeks, or capsicums; it is also not prone to diseases. Sukumawiki was initially very marketable but of late farmers have flooded the markets with it, leading to depressed prices. On the other side, sukumawiki would never have become so popular if so many people in Kenya did not live in poverty. The popularity of sukumawiki variety is synonymous with poverty. With one bunch selling at a price of Ksh 5/=, a low income earner is assured of a meal. Apart from salt and some onions, you do not need many ingredients, and it does not take long to cook. Until such a time that Kenyans can increase their earnings and afford a variety of foods or develop a desire for traditional ones such as *kunde*, *sucha* or even *sagaa*, which enjoy good prices in the market, sukumawiki will continue to enjoy a dignified place on wananchis' dining tables.



transport their vegetables to other markets such as Nairobi, it would still be difficult to sell. This is because the vegetable market is dominated by middlemen who operate like a cartel or the mafia: They are ready to do anything to protect their interests.

From our research two issues become clear: First, small-scale farmers rarely get the real value for their produce. This is the most important reason for the increasing poverty in most rural areas in the country. Secondly, most small-scale farmers do not even try to find ways of avoiding middlemen and traders by taking the produce directly to retailers.

Super profit for traders

Three hours later we are at the Kangemi market in the outskirts of Nairobi. The lorries and pickups with cabbages and sukumawiki and other vegetables are offloaded in Kangemi. Here also many retail dealers are buying the produce they will sell during the day. Joe, a trader, buys a bag of sukumawiki in soko mjinga



for Ksh 400; he sells it in Kangemi for Ksh 900. He pays Ksh 60 per bag for the transport, Ksh 5 to the loaders for each of the 30 bags on his own small lorry, and Ksh 10 per bag for bringing the bags to the retailers in Kangemi. The total costs a day are Ksh 14,250. If he sells all the 30 bags for Ksh 900 a bag, Joe remains at the end of the day with a profit of Ksh 12,150.

Chege Gichinga, a trader at the Kangemi market, travels every two days to Naromoru near Nanyuki. He buys between 2600 to 3000 pieces of cabbages at Ksh 11 apiece and hires a lorry at Ksh 13,000 to deliver it to Kangemi, where he sells each piece at between Ksh 20 – 25, depending on the size of the cabbage and season. In a week he makes two or three trips that earn him a weekly net profit of between Ksh 30,000 – 40,000.

On this day, Elijah Muiruri buys a bag at Ksh 900. On his small stand in Kangemi, he ties the vegetables into small bundles, which he sells at Ksh 5 a bundle, making him a profit of Ksh 250 for every bag he sells. Sometimes he cannot sell all the sukumawiki, so he has to sell the vegetables at a throwaway price

before they get spoilt. Elijah's neighbour Simon Gitonga says that five days before our visit, a bag was going for Ksh 500, but even then, he only made a profit of Ksh 350 a bag. The two traders sometimes sell cabbage and agree that the earnings are more or less the same. The traders cannot tell what the price for the day will be, as this keeps on changing depending on demand and supply.

The way out

Our research have shown us the difficulties that small-scale farmers face to earn a living from their shambas. There are alternatives, as we have mentioned in the editorial on page 1. The way out might not be easy for small-scale farmers, but it is still better to try them than to remain in poverty. ■



All about...

Raising chickens can be a good business if you take care of them, and keep proper records and strict hygiene.

Su Kahumbu

Before buying your chickens, you should do some preparations. Wash out all feeders and sun-dry before introducing the first water and feeds. Also, heat the room for two hours or so depending on the room size before introducing the chicks.

I use a small stone house approximately 2.5m x 2.5m for my 200 chicks, and cordon off one third of the room for the first two weeks with a wire mesh frame, gradually moving it back and increasing the bird floor area as they grow. I use 2 x 250Watt brooding lamps for the entire 4-week period, gradually raising the lamps to accustom the chicks to cooler temperatures by a few degrees every week.

Brooding

When choosing chicks, normally sold as day-old, look out for listless ones and those that may have oozing umbilical cords. These will be problematic and are better exchanged for healthy bright-eyed ones before you bring them home.

Like the young of all animals, chicks require brooding or incubation during the first few weeks of their lives. Both layers and broilers may be brooded together, say 100 of each. However, it is best to start off with the layers for two weeks before introducing the broilers, as broilers gain weight much faster and may crush the slower growing layers.



Lack of space and minerals causes stress and pecking (cannibalism) in chickens.

A brooding room must be kept free from draught at a constant temperature of 35°C, and must have suitable bedding that enables the chicks to exercise their feet through gripping.

Bedding

The bedding in the brooding room may be wood shavings or straw bedding. If raised on flat slippery flooring, the chicks develop weak tendons in their feet that cause problems as they gain weight. Fast-growing broiler chicks may develop spraddle leg, which is a combination of weak feet tendons coupled with vitamin deficiency. This can be seen when chicks refuse to stand and instead sit back with their feet spraddled forwards in front. To avoid this, one can add a few drops of cod liver oil to the chick water once a week for up to 5 weeks. Be sure not to add too much as this may result in runny stools.

The bedding must always be dry, so one must always keep a look-out for water spillage. Wet bedding can cause the growth of fungi and bacteria that will effect the chicks, as well as being a cause of chilling the young birds. Water feeders and grain feeders for chicks should be checked and cleaned regularly, as very young chicks are susceptible to diseases brought about through contamination of these implements.

As the bedding becomes soiled, rather than remove and add new, top up the bedding it with 4 inches of new material at 5-day intervals. Some organic producers believe this allows the bacteria that destroy the eggs of the coccidiosis parasite to grow in number, causing a natural reduction in the parasite prevalence. It is also more cost effective. The resulting deep litter also creates a blanket of warmth on the floor.

Observations

When introducing chicks to your brooding room on the first day, sit back for an hour or so and observe them. They should be quite inquisitive and active and will start pecking around happily as they investigate their new surroundings. After feeding a little they will begin to huddle around the warm areas and start to sleep. If using lamps, the birds will form a round yellow carpet like a patch beneath the lamps. If the lamp is too hot, the chicks will be panting and the area under the lamp will remain chick-free. If this is the case, raise the

What do you need at the beginning?

Depending on the type of chickens you choose to rear, it is wise to have all of the necessary equipment available and in clean working condition before you purchase the chicks. The following items are necessary for approximately 200 chicks of either layers or brooders.

- A secure, draft free brooding room with a source of constant heat and good ventilation.
- 4 small water feeders for first 2 weeks, gradually increasing in number as the chicks grow.
- 4 grain feeders, gradually increasing in number as the chicks grow.
- Clean, dry bedding material – wood shavings or straw.
- A packet or two of Coccid (available from any agro vet shop).
- Chick mash produced by a reliable animal feed manufacturer.
- Two bottles of E.M. (Effective Micro-organisms). (See page 6.)

lamps slightly until they are comfortable. If the chick's start to huddle or crowd into each other away from the lamp, it may be that the lamps are too high and the chick's are cool. In this case, lower the lamps.

The first week of a chicks life is the most important. It is this period that will determine the chicks future potential. It is thus very important to keep a keen eye, ear and nose on the situation in the brooding room. Observe the chicks often and look for any unusual behaviour. Chicks with sunken eyes and arched backs with drooping wings and ruffled feathers are sign of illness.

The same is true for smelly, bloody stools. At a very early stage, blood in the stool could be an indication of coccidiosis, a parasite that effects the gastrointestinal tract of the chicks. If noticed early, this can be prevented with Coccid and may not affect the chicks in the long term. If left unchecked, coccidiosis can result in up to 40 percent mortality of the flock. Coccidiosis is spread by chicks picking up the eggs of the parasite through litter of other chicks. In some cases, chicks may build up immunity, however good litter (bedding) hygiene is the best control. Vinegar (half a cup to 5 litres of water) can also be added to the chicken water to control bloody stool.

continued on page 5



Keep an eye on the outside temperatures also, as on sunny toasty days, one can reduce the brooding temperatures and allow windows to be opened.

Hygiene

Always stay alert for illness, diseases and signs of stress. Deal with these as soon as possible, as chickens are quite fragile. Hygiene is of the utmost importance when raising poultry. It is therefore extremely important to avoid contamination of any sort, whether it is through the feed, water or handlers. As part of our biosafety measures, we have a pair of boots dedicated to the chick housing. Handlers must first wash hands and change shoes for the designated boots before entering the chick housing, and these boots must never come out onto the external area. This boot control is practised at all levels of chicken production. Illness and disease in chicken production are predominantly spread through handlers via hands and shoes. Biosafety measures can reduce mortality and disease spread by up to 60 percent.

On a larger scale, when rearing chicks and older birds on the same property, it would be wise to have separate handlers dealing with each. Cross contamination, especially from older birds to chicks, can be a risk. If only one handler is available, the chicks (which are more fragile) should be handled first.

Lighting

Young day-old chicks are terrified of the dark. When lights are put off, they begin to scream! They then begin to huddle together for comfort and in so doing, the weaker ones are crushed and killed. If brooding with lamps, the light they emit is sufficient, however should the power go off, you will need to have a very quick back-up plan. This can be in the form of a kerosene lamp, or a china lamp. For extreme safety measures, we have a solar lamp back-up that comes on



Nesting box should be clean and comfortable for the layers; Inset: an ideal nesting box

immediately and gives us time to ignite a longer-lasting lamp.

Lighting can be expensive and unnecessary, thus we phase the lights off after one week. Most commercial breeders leave lights on to allow chickens to feed for 24 hours, in the belief that they gain weight faster. I personally believe chickens need to sleep and are stronger and better weight gainers when rested and less stressed. If you observe chickens in permanently lighted rooms, they trample over each other as they head for the feeders, waking and disturbing each other continuously.

Weaning from brooding heat

Broiler chicks are ready to leave the brooding room when they no longer have signs of yellow downy feathers on their heads. You will notice with broilers as they feather out that the head normally is the last area with baby chick yellow fuzz. Once this is gone they are ready to move on and need a lot more space as now they begin to grow quite quickly.

Our chickens are removed into a large secure shed which is especially secure from rodents and predators as well as birds of prey. They have outdoor access to a large area covered in netting where they can come out to enjoy the sunshine, grass, insects, etc. I feel this helps to keep the chickens happy and less subject to stress-related activities like fighting and pecking, which can have fatal consequences.

Layers need to take a little longer in the brooding room before they, too, must be removed to a larger space. To maximise on the quality of eggs, make sure layers also have an outside run, with plenty of greens in their feed.

Nesting box

Layers must also have access to a specially designated area where they can lay their eggs. If not, they will drop them all over the shamba. When making a nesting box area, allow one nesting box for each five chickens. I have a shelving system: two shelves high without partitions but covered on the sides. The shelf is thus dark and allows hens a little privacy. I also cover the shelves with straw and make sure not to have straw anywhere else. (I use shavings or maize stalks for the bedding floor). This prevents chickens from laying on the floor, which they would do if the material used on the floor were the same as the nesting material.

As the chickens grow – whether broilers or layers – always keep an eye out for illness, diseases and signs of stress. Deal with these as soon as possible, as chickens are quite fragile.

It is important when raising chickens that you remember that happy, healthy chickens are less stressed and cheaper to deal with than stressed chickens. *More about feed, water and disease control on page 6.*



A dirty waterer: they should be kept clean

This feeder, developed by KARI, Nairva-sha is hygienic and reduces feed wastage. (Photos TOF)



... and more about chickens

Chickens need good feed, clean water and a hygienic environment

Chicks require a balanced feed, and unless you are an expert in this area, it is advisable to buy from a feed manufacturer. Feed continuously, and keep an eye on making sure the feed is always clean. It is wise to hang green materials such as weeds inside the chicken coops, as this adds nutrients and vitamins to their diets. Chickens can get 30 percent of their daily feed requirements from grass.

Water

Water feeders and grain feeders for chicks should be checked and cleaned regularly. (For more about hygiene, see pages 4 & 5.) We add a cupfull of E.M. to 5 litres of drinking water for the entire life of the chickens. This helps build up immunity and vitality of the birds. It also helps with their feed conversion, thus resulting in healthier and heavier birds. We also add cod liver oil (fish oil) to their water, 1 tablespoon to 5 litres once a week for 4 weeks.

Give chickens free space

Allowing your chickens access to a large outdoor area during the daytime reduces build-up of chicken manure in their shed. The sun and its effects are the best known sanitizer for chicken droppings, thus disease build-up on the outside is naturally controlled. Chickens also control their own body mites by having regular dust baths.



We use a mobile chicken housing unit on the farm that we move twice a year. The benefits are three fold:

1. The ground is very fertile for crop production due to the chicken droppings which are high in soil nutrients.
2. The insect and nematode popula-

tion are reduced as the chickens have eaten most of them.

3. By rotating our chickens, we reduce the incidence of disease build-up that otherwise may affect future flocks. This is done in the same way that organic producers rotate their crops. ■

Soya is a good source of protein

I would like to get an alternative way of making poultry feed without using omena (fish meal). I saw the formula in one of the recent copies of *TOF* which proposed 8 kg maize, 1 kg sorghum and 1 kg omena at the ratio

Soya bean is very rich in all the nutrients necessary for proper growth. It can also be a good substitute for omena (fish meal), so we would recommend that you go ahead with con-

of 8.1.1. I would like to make my own poultry feed using soya bean, which is an equivalent protein source. What weight of soya bean do I require? Hudson Wanjohi, Tel. 0722 461 772

stitution of the feed without the use of omena. Remember to mix at the same ratio as you have given above (i.e. using 1 kg of soya bean instead of omena).

The best way to control poultry diseases

We have a problem with our poultry. There is a disease affecting the 3-week old chicks: Wounds around the eye and beak and the chicks don't feed. What shall we do? Can you also give us signs/symptoms and treatment of fowl typhoid and coccidiosis? Tel. 0728 406720

It is very difficult to pin-point the disease from which your chicks could

be suffering, from the symptoms you have given. This is because most poultry diseases show almost similar symptoms that can require different methods of treatment. We would advise you to consult a veterinary doctor near you or animal health assistant who can observe the chicks and give you a correct diagnosis and the best method of treatment. Sometimes the doctor may even recommend a laboratory test if they cannot identify the disease.

Fowl typhoid is a serious problem which is very difficult to eradicate. The best thing to do when the disease strikes is to clear the whole stock of chickens in the homestead and avoid bringing any new stock for up to 4 months. By the end of this period, the disease-causing bacteria will have cleared and any new stock will not

Unhygienic feeding conditions are responsible for many chicken diseases.



Su Kahumbu answers your questions

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be affected. Regular vaccination can protect your chickens against coccidiosis because the bacteria responsible are always present in the soil. One of the best ways to avoid this disease is to make sure the poultry sheds are kept as clean as possible at all times. Wash the floor regularly with organic acaricides such as neem powder to keep the disease at bay. The following vaccinations are important to prevent diseases:

Marek: This is an injection admin-
continued on page 7



Letters to the editor

We will distribute magazine to groups

Inter-Diocesan Christian Community Services (IDCCS) Ltd is a faith-based organisation involved in sustainable, participatory and integrated community development programmes in agriculture, health and water sanitation. As a keen listener to your radio programmes, I wish to request for *The Organic Farmer* magazine. Our office covers Kuria, Migori and Rongo Districts and we will make it available to common interest groups (CIG) involved in organic farming. IDCCS mainly partners with CIGs by offering technical trainings to farmers. For the benefit of our health, environment, sustainable crop production and appropriate utilization of natural resources, which reduces cost of farm inputs, IDCCS works with CIGs in sustainable agriculture. Your magazine will definitely be beneficial to our agriculture office and to the community, as we will guide them towards implementation of the various topics covered. Kindly send us 4 copies for onward delivery to farmers. We will be grateful.

Gordon Abwajoh, P.O Box 483 40400, Suna, Tel.0723 458690

Chicken diseases...

Continued from page 6

istered at the hatchery on young chicks.

Newcastle: These are inter-nasal drops applied to the eyes at 2 or 3 weeks and repeated at 18 weeks and after every 6 months.

Fowl Typhoid: This is applied as an intra-muscular injection at 8 weeks in high-risk areas and 18 weeks in less risky areas.

Fowl Pox: This is applied in the wings at 8 weeks in high-risk areas (e.g. the coast and Kisumu) and at 18 weeks in other less risky areas.

Gumboro: It is applied in drinking water at the 4th and 14th day.

Our own chickens, fortunately, are produced vaccine-free and as yet we have not had any problems. It could be that we are in an area that does not have a lot of disease pressure, though I like to believe it is because our birds are raised in a stress-free healthy environment, resulting in happy birds with good immunity!

Fighting poverty

Lack of knowledge has contributed to hunger and poverty in Kenya. We are a church-based group and have started passion fruit growing and would like to go organic. We came across your magazine through a friend and it is very informative. We are 20 members and request you to be sending us your monthly copies to help us improve on farming.

J. K. Kung'u, P.O Box 335, Matuu

I read with great interest!

The Ministry of Agriculture gave me your March 2007 issue and I went through it with much enthusiasm. I write to request for a few copies of it, say 10 to enable me and a few farmers benefit from your information. I shall be grateful.

J. K. Arap Kirui, P.O Box 152-20210, Litein

Solving farmers' problems

Thanks for the good work you are doing. Actually, the magazine has come at the right time because it is solving most of the farmers' daily problems. Though I have not been in this field for long, I experienced a hard start and needless to say the going has been tough all through. From a distant friend, I learnt of your monthly publication and just wish that you include me in the mailing list of this wonderful newspaper. I would be very grateful if you consider as I want to start organic farming. Otherwise kudos ICIPE and Biovision.

Peter Gakungi Gichure, P.O Box 598, Nyahururu

Paper should be read worldwide

I thank you for your magazine which has educated me a lot about organic farming. I have been reading it from a friendly neighbour, I also have contact with farmers who keep dairy cattle and goats. Please provide us with more information on breeding of high milk yielding dairy cattle. I will also be grateful if you can send us monthly copies of the newspaper to improve our knowledge. I hope that the newspaper is reaching farmers in other parts of the world in order to spread this useful knowledge. We are grateful to you for sending the magazines to farmers in our region, with whom we have been sharing. We

would like you to organize tours and field days for farmers to learn about new methods of agricultural production. Also, we would be grateful if you can provide us with more information on growing of desmodium seed.

David Kamotho, P.O Box Makimen, Via Sotik

We will improve yields

We are a small village in Kitui. We are interested in small-scale farming owing to our small pieces of land. We discovered that your newspaper, *The Organic Farmer* has a lot of useful information to enable small farmers to get maximum production by using the latest information you provide in your articles. We would appreciate if you could send us copies so as to keep ourselves abreast with the new trends in farming; otherwise we have been borrowing a copy each month from friends. Thanking you in advance.

Gabriel Wambua, P.O Box 189, Kitui

Helping young farmers

Following your frequent educative programmes over the radio about organic farming, Isanga Horticultural Farmers hereby request for *The Organic Farmer* magazines. This will teach, educate and highlight important information to our young farmers on new farming techniques and new plants. It is our hope that you will send us the magazines to boost our knowledge on new methods of production.

Daniel Nandasaba, P.O Box 1437 50100, Kakamega

Listening to radio

We, the Riziki Development Group members hereby humbly request for copies of *The Organic Farmer* magazine. We have been duly listening to your radio programmes.

Kenneth Onyango Abuya, Riziki Development Group, P.O Box 124, Kadongo

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

New opportunity for organic products

Certified organic farmers now need not worry about lack of markets for their produce. From the beginning of July this year, Su Kahumbu has teamed up with the Nakumatt retail chain of supermarkets and opened another shop at the new Nakumatt Westgate, an ultramodern shopping complex off Peponi road, Westlands next to Nakumatt Ukay. The Green Dreams Organic Shop offers farmers an opportunity to sell their organic produce in larger volumes since the new branch which is frequented by more than 3000 customers in a day will require a steady supply of organic produce to meet the needs of the city's organic food consumers.

Su Kahumbu says the shop is currently being supplied by farmers trained under *The Organic Farmer* Support Programme, but she is trying to set up a supply chain that will involve all other organic producers whose products are under organic cer-



tification. Farmers supplying the shops will have special identification to prove their produce is genuinely organic.

Already-established certified organic brands such as Meru Herbs (which specialise in herbal teas and sauces), Limuru Archdiocese Farm and Nyumbani Children's Home Farm (are supplying fresh vegetables and fruits, dairy products, meat and honey). Su says the main problem at the moment is lack of adequate and consistent supply from farmers, "Most of them can only afford to supply once a week but we need them to supply us three times a week to be able to meet the needs of our customers", she adds. Organic farmers interested in selling their produce can call the shop.

Contact: Zak0722572717, or Su Kahumbu 0721100001, info@organic.co.ke

Punishing African organic farmers

The Organic Farmer would like to express its total support for African farmers who export their organic produce to the European markets. It seems strange that the Soil association that has assisted in the certification of producers in Africa can turn around and start punishing the same farmers. Africa's contribution to the total global carbon emissions to the atmosphere is negligible. The campaign on carbon footprints appears punitive and misplaced.

New information service for farmers



Are your vegetables, let's say cabbages or tomatoes, affected by a pest and you would like to react in organic ways?

But how? Is your maize showing strange signs of disease and you do not know what to do? Would you like to know more about tillage, for instance, or about safe maize storage measures, or about the benefits of calliandra? Then very soon you will find help. BioVision, the sponsor of *The Organic Farmer* magazine, is launching in a new service called Infonet in October.

Infonet is an information platform. It presents a lot of information on scientifically proven ecological methods for the prevention and control of pests and parasite infestations of plants, humans and animals. And it is free!

You can reach it on two ways:

- Go to the Internet and dial www.infonet-biovision.org and you will find the answers for your questions. So many young farmers nowadays have computer knowledge, and they know how to surf the Internet. But it is not only young farmers who can make use of the Internet. Some weeks ago, members of a farmers' group in Kilifi had the opportunity to use Internet in a cybercafe at the coast. Not one of the farmers had previously sat at a computer, and not one had any experience with the Internet. After ten minutes all were able to do their own research about diseases or pests facing them.

- If you do not have a telephone landline for access to the Internet, you simply order a CD from *The Organic Farmer*. This CD contains all

Market Place



Organic Produce: David Gakere, a Kenyan resident in Johannesburg is keen to contact local exporters or farmers growing organic produce. He would like to buy only certified organic produce. Write to: gakere@mweb.co.za

Land for sale: 25 acres in Passenga scheme, well drained fertile soils on a gentle slope, currently under potato and oats, clean freehold title. Electricity and piped water available. Contact Waiyaki Mungai Tel. 0723-787171.

Amaranthus Seeds: Ronald M Nyabuya has about 300 kg of Amaranthus seeds. Any farmer interested in buying them can contact him. Write to Ronald Nyabuya P.O.Box 995, 30200 Kitale, Tel.0721 562 678.

Charcoal Stoves: Aruba Farmers Group are making charcoal stoves for chicken rearing. Any farmer who is interested can contact William Kibiwot Cheruiyot P.O.Box 596, 30200 Tel. 0728 342 166.

Rabbit meat: Anthony Dodds rears rabbits for their skins, however he would like to sell the rabbit meat to anybody interested. Contact him on Tel. 0721 440941.

Rabbits for sale: I am a rabbit keeper and would like to sell them to any interested buyer. Contact me on Tel. 0724 852678.

the information and also all numbers of *The Organic Farmer*. All you need to know is somebody who has a computer. We are sure that all farmers' groups have one or two members who know someone with a computer. The Infonet CD will be available in December 2007.

The farmers in Kilifi were very surprised how fast they learned to deal with the computers, and how fast they got the information they needed. "We are happy to get urgent advice about our problems", the farmers said. "We do not have to wait for extension people who never come. We are now more independent."

In the October issue of *The Organic Farmer*, we will give you tips on how to use Infonet, this helpful new information platform designed for small-scale farmers. (TOF)