

# Productivity and Growth in Organic Value Chains (ProGrOV)

## 2nd Project Training Workshop and Project Meeting, 19-23 September 2012



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**Which type of mulching can at the same time reduce the farmers' need for weeding and help providing sufficient yields of marketable bell peppers and tomatoes to the customers in Dar Es Salaam? This is one of the questions the students of the Tanzanian part of ProGrOV are testing at farmers' fields in Lushoto high in the Usambara Mountains of north-East Tanzania.**

A group of organic farmers have found a market in Dar but how may such organic markets in the tourist sector develop further and what

are major obstacles to this? In ProGrOV students and scientists work together with the organic industry in identifying the bottlenecks and possible solutions for strengthening the organic value chains. Thus, ProGrOV has an interdisciplinary and participatory approach to improving organic production and marketing (as described in the article 'Innovation Research in Organic Value Chains' published in ICROFS News, September 2011).

This year the annual gathering of the plus 30 project participants – students and their supervisors from Soikoine University of Agricul-

ture in Tanzania, Makerere University in Uganda, University of Nairobi in Kenya; supervisors from Aarhus University and University of Copenhagen, the Organic Movements from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya; and the coordinators from ICROFS – was held in Arusha in Tanzania at the MS-Training Centre.

Three main items were on the agenda of this intensive 5-day project meeting:

- Training for MSc and PhD students and monitoring of progress in the studies
- Workshop with stakeholders from the

tourism sector

- Field visits to organic production sites

### Training

How to design organic and interdisciplinary research approaches' is a question that the supervisors of ProGrOV address as part of the training. At each annual gathering a course is put together for the students. This time the focus was on research communication and scientific approaches applied in an organic value chains approach.



*Discussions at the field trial in Lushoto Mountains – organic tomatoes and green pepper.*



*Field trip to organic vegetable farmers – demonstrating the art of making compost*



The students had in advance prepared posters regarding their individual studies and presented their work to update the project participants on progress and to initiate the interactive training in oral and written scientific communication. Covering the walls of the conference room, the posters also provided a colorful and very informative environment for the workshop. This was followed by sessions on theoretical aspects of science and discussions on how science is influenced by and interacts with practice when working with organic value chains in interdisciplinary approaches and research teams.

#### **Workshop with stakeholders from the tourism sector:**

Participation of relevant stakeholders is essential in ProGrOV. As the research in Tanzania is focused on value chains that aim for the tourism sector as market, the project had invited stakeholders from the tourism sector to provide advice and ideas for the research projects and to help identify challenges

and potentials of organic value chains, for example, for organic vegetables.

It was a truly international group of people that met at the stakeholder workshop. In addition to the stakeholders from Tanzania, the project had invited ICROFS Executive Board member to the workshop and several had accepted this opportunity to learn more about ProGrOV. Thus, the workshop had guests from several continents: Roberto Ugas, Professor at Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina, Peru, and representing IFOAM's World Board, Professor Louise Jackson from University of California, Davis; Dr. Bernard Hubert, Research Director at INRA, France, and President of Agropolis International, France; Dr. Henrik Wegener, Provost from the Technical University of Denmark; Aage Dissing representing Organic Denmark; and from Tanzania Dr. Mwatima Juma, Chairman of Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement (TOAM) and IFAD Country Officer in Tanzania.

*The ProGrOV Team*



#### **Field visits to organic production sites:**

The field visits are an important source of information and inspiration. This year it took place in the foothills of Kilimanjaro with the choice of:

- a visit to organic coffee growers of the Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union where coffee is grown in a multistory intercropping system that included beans, coffee, bananas and various fruit trees or leguminous fodder trees, as well as
- a visit to organic vegetable producers that among other interesting issues demonstrated the making and use of compost and legumes for maintaining soil fertility.

The on-site demonstrations of crop management and the experience in marketing shared by the farmers during the field visits were of high value and gave the project participants' insight and understanding of the diversity of organic systems.

The annual project training workshop and project meetings are the only time

where all participants are together and, therefore, a very important event for project implementation, communication, coordination and management. It is, however, in spite of a very condensed programme also an occasion where the 'ProGrOV family' is having a good time and enjoy the company in a more informal way.

The project is presently in its second year. The MSc students will be finalizing their thesis within the coming year and the PhD students are in the process of the official approval of their research proposals with the majority having started implementation of fieldwork already. In addition to the outcomes of the individual studies the project will through the interactions and discussions at the project workshop and the knowledge and experiences gained in the project develop the concepts of a participatory value chains approach to organic research.

Read more on the ProGrOV project at <http://www.icrofs.org/Pages/Research/progrrov.html>