

Productivity and Growth in Organic Value-chains (ProGrOV)



3rd Project Training Workshop and Project Meeting 8-15 September 2013



Stakeholders and ProgrOV team

Research results and activities from the ProGrOV project

In this issue - and in forthcoming issues - *ICROFS news* will bring a number of articles with activities and results from the ProGrOV project presented by the MSc students from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Denmark.

The ProGrOV project is about improving productivity and growth in existing organic value-chains in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania by way of developing agro-ecological methods governance and management of chains, and by capacity development regarding research focussed on organic and interdisciplinary approaches.



Productivity and Growth in Organic Value Chains (ProGrOV)

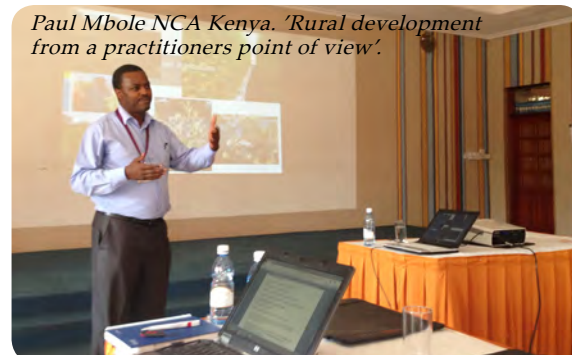
- 3rd Project Training Workshop and Project Meeting 8-15 September 2013



By Esther Waweru, Assistant International coordinator, ICROFS

'Development is a conversation!' This is one of the illuminating quotes given during a presentation on 'rural development from a practitioner's point of view' to challenge the ProGrOV team at the 3rd Project Training Workshop and Project Meeting.

The presenter's notion was that to achieve successful development, participation and communication between all key actors is pertinent.



Paul Mbole NCA Kenya. 'Rural development from a practitioners point of view'.

The ProGrOV project aims through research at supporting the development of organic value chains and will eventually contribute to the strengthening of communities, and stimulate rural development in a sustainable way. The concepts of rural development and communication are thus important for ProGrOV to consider and understand. It can, however, be a challenge for researchers to see their work in a larger perspective and to see how it can contribute

to rural development. How does research in integrated livestock management contribute to rural development? How can the results of an analysis of the governance of organic value chain or knowledge on improved methods to manage mealy bugs in pineapple be linked to improving the livelihood of smallholder farmers? Therefore, the main focus of the training that took place at the recent ProGrOV workshop was 'rural development and dissemination.

Linking agricultural research with rural development

ProGrOV had called upon three experts to provide food for thoughts. Rural development was explained and discussed from the theoretical point of view as well as from the points of view of extension and rural development practitioners. Some of the key messages that were put across by the three presenters were:

Household well-being versus farm economics:

Traditional agricultural economics is typically concerned with measures such as yields per hectare or prices per kg of a produce in order to get a measure for farm income. However, a farmers decision-making in order to improve the situation for the family depends on a range of other values which may related to security of the household, risk minimization, access to various resources, status in society, cultural values, etc. Therefore, farm income is not the primary measure for rural development.

Communication between researchers and stakeholders:

Research has an important role to play in the development of organic and other sustainable agricultural production. However, scientist need to engage in a two-way communication with the farmers and other stakeholders instead of taking a top-down/one way communication approach – sometimes referred to as 'ivory towerism' – for the dual purpose of ensuring that the research addresses the felt needs within the rural setting as well as to get mes-

About ProGrOV

ProGrOV is a research, development and capacity strengthening project funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This 5-year project commenced in 2011 and takes place in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. This year the annual project training workshop and project meeting was held in Nairobi, Kenya at the Oak Place Hotel. The main items on the agenda included

- Training for students and monitoring the progress of the studies
- Stakeholders workshop - feedback and interaction with different organisations and stakeholders from the organic sector,
- Field trip - visit to organic farmers.



Farm manager from Kalimoni Farm explains on how he controls pests in the farm

*Kalimoni Greens
Shope in the shop-
ping area*



sages across and understood by stakeholders.

Participation of stakeholders: a participatory approach where stakeholders are engaged in developing, testing or giving feed-back to research is necessary not only to target the rights problems, but also to make sure that the solutions that are being developed are applicable and feasible for the farmers to use. A participatory approach will furthermore help researchers in packaging the message in a way that is mainstream and easily understood by practitioners.

Thoughts from Kenya's stakeholders within the organic sector

The ProGrOV research projects in Kenya address domestic high value organic chains and several of the MSc studies in ProGrOV are related to the market and consumer preferences. Therefore, the project had invited different stakeholders from the domestic chains to a workshop to give feed-back and inputs specifically to the Kenyan

research projects, as well as to the project in general. The objectives of the workshop were:

- to create strategy and foundation for dissemination of the study findings of the ProGrOV project and
- to stimulate feedback that will identify gaps in organic value chains that will inform further research

The forum brought together different actors related to the organic value chains. The floor was opened by the representative from the Danish embassy who put the workshop into perspective linking the development of value chains with development. Thereafter both stakeholders and students had a chance to present their work and it was evident that most of their work was complementary, although it was also noted from the stakeholders' presentations that there were many research gaps related to issues such as health benefits of organic produce, chain development, and the organic production systems. The presentations by stakehol-

ders included Green Health Innovations (GHI) an NGO involved with addressing the lack of awareness and knowledge gap felt by consumers on value of organic produce and providing the group with views on nutrition and health as part of value addition to organic value chains; a small business enterprise providing organic inputs shared knowledge on Kenyan soil its conservation and amendments; the head of Organic Foods, a supplier to the supermarket chain Nakumatt, shared information and experience in matching supply and demand of organic products; and finally a representative from the Ministry of Agriculture informed on the progress regarding the policy on organic agriculture.

Fieldtrip: Organic production in Kiambu

To get a real life perspective of the organic production for local high value markets and to get a first-hand impression on the challenges that farmer are facing in accessing the market the ProGrOV visited orga-

nic producers in Kiambu County in the outskirts of Nairobi. Stops were made at two production sites:

Kalimoni Farm and Kalimoni Organic Shop

The enthusiastic farm manager Mr. Mwangi took the group on a guided tour explaining how the farm is run and showing the diverse cropping system with a variety of crops as well as animals. Of interest was also the recycling of organic waste for compost making collected from their customers. Upon questions on how he tackled pests, the manager demonstrated the different intercropping methods and mulching used for pest control. However, he did mention that certain pests were still a challenge. Following that was a visit to the Kalimoni Organic Shop



A farmer from the Muhuri Road Organic Group showing his crops on the farm



Group discussions with stakeholders

located in the nearby shopping area. In addition to the shop, Kalimoni also sell their produce through a basket scheme, as well as they organise organic farmers markets together with other farmers.

Muhuri Road Organic Group - an organic farmers group

The group comprised of men and women as well as young and old farmers. The Muhuri Road Organic group was formed in 2010 initially getting support

from the NGO RODI Kenya. The group became interested in organic farming and they approached the ProGrOV partner Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) for training in organic agriculture practices, certification and marketing. The group started off with 25 members but it currently has 16 members. The members expressed that knowledge/information on issues such as pest control, soil amendments etc. is a main challenge. For their produce,

the members usually market their products through organic farmers markets and organic outlets in Nairobi. However with surplus produce their products are also sold in the conventional markets.

'Development is a conversation' was the message given on the first day of the workshop, i.e. communication and interactions with stakeholders in the organic value chain are essential for making research contribute

to development. This was experienced at first hand through the stakeholder workshop and visits to the farmers' fields. The group experienced that sharing knowledge with stakeholders in the various steps of the value chain was inspiring and helped ensuring that the work of the students was on the right track.



ProgrOV team 2013

More information

The gathering included 37 project participants – students and their supervisors from Sokoine University of Agriculture 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. The annual workshop and project meeting is an essential event for all the participants as this is where all the participants meet and share their work, findings and challenges and review progress.



Read more about ProGrOV: <http://www.icrofs.org/Pages/Research/progrOV.html>