

BFA Media Release 14th January, 2009 Media Release

It's Official: Organic farming provides answers to feeding Africa

A major study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) concludes organic farming offers Africa the best chance of breaking the long inherent cycle of poverty and malnutrition.⁽¹⁾

Research conducted by UNEP suggests that organic, small-scale farming can deliver the increased yields which were thought to be the preserve of industrial high-tech farming, in addition to reversing environmental and social damages, leading to greater food security.

The head of the UN's Environment Programme, Achim Steiner, says the report "indicates that the potential contribution of organic farming to feeding the world may be far higher than many had supposed."⁽¹⁾

Dr. Kristen Lyons is a senior lecturer at the School of Biomolecular and Physical Sciences at Griffith University (QLD) and the director of Mukwano Australia, a non-for-profit group supporting the development of health care services in African organic farming communities.

"Organic agriculture offers an alternative – and sustainable – future for African farmers," says Dr. Lyons.

She says the report provides a clear direction for reducing the current crisis in agriculture and food systems in developing countries – organic, all the way.

"It demystifies the assumption that genetic engineering and other high-tech approaches to farming are required to feed the world.

"In contrast, it is organic farming systems that have demonstrated the greatest potential to feed the world's one billion starving people, and to ensure the long term sustainability of global food production," she says

The UNEP report proposes that African communities need to look to alternative methods of farming as genetic engineering is prohibitively expensive and therefore out of reach for most African farmers. ⁽¹⁾

Organic farming in Africa has led to benefits to the natural environment, with the UNEP report showing a 93 per cent of case studies reporting benefits to soil fertility, water supply, flood control and biodiversity. ⁽¹⁾

Also, when sustainable agricultural practices, which covered a variety of systems and crops, were adopted, average crop yields increased by 79 per cent. ⁽¹⁾

Overall, the report found an increase in organic farming in Africa could lead to savings on production costs (due to no expenditure on synthetic inputs), promote economic viability and encourage food self-reliance. ⁽¹⁾



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Data: (1) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development United Nations Environment Programme, Report: UNEP-UNCTAD Capacity-building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development, *Organic agriculture and food security in Africa*, United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2008 Link from:

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=548&ArticleID=5957&l=en>

To obtain images or find out contact details for organic farmers in your area contact the BFA media office, ph: (07) 3350 5716 ext. 232; email comms@bfa.com.au

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