

BFA Media Release 4th December 2008

Organic food helps feeds Africa this Christmas

This year, the best way to make sure communities in developing countries have enough to eat is to aim your aid toward organic.

A major study released in October by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) says organic agriculture could be Africa's best chance of breaking a decades-long cycle of poverty and malnutrition (1).

Dr. Andrew Monk, BFA Standards Chair, says far from being a high priced 'food fad,' the research shows organic food returns more to communities.

"This is in contrast with other major agricultural developments like GMO's – which cost more, and can return devastating environmental and social impacts," he says.

The report found most of the chronically hungry in Africa are small farmers who rely on what they produce to eat, supplementing incomes with cash crops where possible. Farmers did not have access to, or could not afford to buy, synthetic chemical farm products.

It stated organic agriculture could improve agricultural productivity and raise incomes with low-cost, locally available and appropriate technologies - without causing environmental damage.

And it challenged the 'popular myth' that organic agriculture could not increase the quantity of food grown.

"In all cases, there was an increase in per hectare productivity of organic food crops," it stated.

Dr. Monk says findings that organic was more financially and environmentally sustainable in Africa could be applied world-wide.

"Even in Australia, organic systems, farming practises and their related social benefits deliver far more than just a premium opportunity for producers' extra hard work.

"Australian organic producers have the potential to be less under the thumb of retailers and chemical manufacturers, and make an invaluable environmental contribution to their communities – as do the consumers who choose organic everyday."



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Want to know how to give organically this Christmas? Try these for a start:

- Buy a sustainable farming gift package from World Vision at:

<http://www.worldvision.com.au/Smiles/GiftCatalogue/Gift.aspx?GiftID=122&CategoryID=2>

- Purchase a Mukwano calendar for a friend this Christmas and support African farmers - 100% profit goes to aid Mukwano Organic Farming Communities in Uganda. For info visit www.mukwano-australia.org. To purchase your calendar contact Dr Kristen Lyons ph 07 3735-7590 or email kristen.lyons@griffith.edu.au.

- Donate to the African Food Crisis Appeal with Oxfam:

<http://www.oxfam.org.au/world/emergencies/africa-food-crisis/>

- Donate to the development of organic farming in Sri Lanka with Oxfam:

http://www.oxfam.org.au/world/sthasia/sri_lanka/

- Assist the development of organic farm and environmental systems in Kesho Leo with Food, Water, Shelter (FWS) at:

<http://www.foodwatershelter.org.au/page21313540.aspx>

- Sponsor or volunteer for organic farm projects in Gambian villages at:

<http://www.africaorganics.org/introduction.php>

- Find volunteer roles on organic farms in Africa at:

<http://www.ecoteer.com/placements/organic.php#africa>

- Help sustainable farming in the Solomon Islands at:

<http://www.terracircle.org.au/projects/projects.html>

ENDS

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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*, Unite 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 BFA media officer Jaime Newborn ph: (07) 3350 5716 ext. 222; email marketing@bfa.com.au

The BFA has a vision for organic industry growth and education in Australia. Ask about your copy of the Organic Industry Market Research Report to see how the organic industry is achieving its goals! More information is available at http://www.bfa.com.au/index.asp?Sec_ID=260



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