

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF THE IWAMA PROJECT ON FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS AND ABERDARE'S ECOSYSTEM

December 2023



The IWAMA Project

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Association operates as a network of Civil Society Organizations dedicated to assisting smallholder farmers and pastoralists across East, Central, and Southern Africa.

In Kenya, PELUM Kenya is one of twelve country chapters advocating for agroecological principles to enhance the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

With 61 member organizations spanning twenty-two counties, PELUM Kenya collaborates with various entities to implement projects that address local needs.

For the past seven years, PELUM Kenya, in conjunction with five member organizations (SACDEP, ICE, COSDEP, OACK & RODI), has undertaken a Livelihoods Project funded by Tudor Trust since 2017.

In its three years' pilot phase (2017-2019), the Project "Food security and Livelihood Improvement" objectives were to;

1. Increase food and nutritional security of smaller holder tea farmers within the Aberdares ecosystem in Kiambu and Muranga Counties.

2. Diversify farmers' livelihoods and livelihoods income and reduce the overreliance on tea and coffee.

3. Improve agricultural production through adoption of agroecological practices.

The successful implementation of the pilot phase transitioned into further funding support from Tudor trust for the second and third phase of the same project under the name "Integrated Watershed Management for Diverse Farming Enterprises" Phase I (2020-2021)



and phase II (2022-2023).

The project initially focused on enhancing food and nutritional security for smallholder tea farmers within the Aberdares ecosystem in Kiambu and Muranga Counties. Subsequent phases expanded its scope to include diversified livelihoods, agroecological practices, and integrated watershed management.

Notable Achievements:

- **Enhanced Health and Nutrition Security:** The project contributed to improved access to highly nutritive food resources, resulting in better food and nutrition security for target households. The adoption of agroecological practices and the use of organic inputs led to healthier diets, reduced malnutrition, and minimized reliance on chemical inputs.

- **Capacity Building for Advocacy:** The Integrated Watershed Management for Diverse Farming Enterprises (IWAMA DIFE) project strengthened communities' capacity for lobbying and advocacy. PELUM-K

and its partners equipped households with advocacy skills, leading to collaborative efforts in influencing decisions and policies at the county level.

- **Establishment of Organic Markets and Increased Household Income:** The project facilitated the creation of organic markets, contributing to increased household income through the sale of surplus diversified crops. Farmers, supported in income-generating enterprises like beekeeping and poultry farming, achieved product quality and consistency to meet market demands.

- **Uptake of Agro-ecological Practices and Watershed Management:** Knowledge dissemination on agroecological farming practices positively impacted nutrition, health, and the environment. Adoption of organic fertilizers improved soil fertility, leading to higher yields and increased incomes. Ecosystem conservation, particularly watershed management, resulted in less intensive farming along riparian areas, reducing

soil erosion and pollution.

Looking Ahead:

In the upcoming phase, the project aims to contribute to climate resilience among smallholder farmers and the conservation of the Aberdares ecosystem in Kiambu, Muranga, Nyeri, and Nyandarua Counties.

Acknowledgments:

PELUM Kenya expresses gratitude to Tudor Trust for continuous financial support and trust in their mission. Appreciation is extended to project partners (ICE, OACK, RODI, SACDEP & COSDEP) and various stakeholders, including Kenya Forest Services, county departments, NEMA, Community Forest Associations, and Water Resource Users Associations.

This booklet shares impact stories and highlights the transformative efforts of PELUM Kenya and its partners in Kiambu and Muranga Counties. Readers are invited to explore the journey of community transformation facilitated by the project.

Jennifer Maina Thrives

Economically and Healthily with Organic Farming Revolution

For decades, Jennifer Maina wrestled with persistently low productivity on her farm in Kangari, Murang'a County.

The culprit? The prolonged use of synthetic fertilizers, primarily relying on Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) for planting and Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium (NPK) for topdressing.

Jennifer, a farmer since 1989, experienced a significant shift in her agricultural practices three years ago when she adopted Black Gold, an organic fertilizer available at a local agrovet specializing in organic products.

Breaking away from the shackles of synthetic fertilizers marked a turning point for Ms. Maina. Her agricultural yield soared, providing an economic lifeline, especially during challenging financial times for many Kenyans.

Previously, she benefited from a government-backed subsidy facilitated by the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) to support farmers in the region.

However, her current focus is on organ-

“I am always certain that what I am eating is healthy because it's from my own farm, and I only do organic.”

Jennifer Maina

ic farming, a shift that has been facilitated by OACK, an organization that has played a pivotal role in her journey.

Engaging with OACK has not only introduced Ms. Maina to the benefits of organic farming but has also provided her with valuable training.

She credits this education for her newfound success, emphasizing the positive impact on her crop management skills and the adoption of organic products.

While she continues to receive subsidized fertilizer from KTDA, she redirects

it to other farmers, using the proceeds to purchase the organic alternative that has transformed her farm.

Tea, vegetables, and various herbs now flourish on Ms. Maina's farm, showcasing the diverse possibilities of organic farming.

Beyond economic prosperity, her life has undergone a drastic transformation. The knowledge imparted by OACK has empowered her to educate her children and fulfill her daily needs, all made possible by the enhanced income from her thriving organic farm.

For Ms. Maina, the advantages of organic farming extend beyond financial gains to encompass profound health benefits. Proudly declaring her produce as organic, she asserts that it constitutes some of the healthiest food in today's world.

By adhering to organic practices, she has eliminated the need for harmful pesticides and herbicides, substances often linked to health issues such as cancer.

The adherence to organic principles also ensures that Ms. Maina's produce is free from harmful residues. In contrast to farmers using synthetic chemicals, who often





harvest before the recommended pre-harvest interval (PHI), Jennifer's crops reach the market untainted by harmful chemicals.

In her words, "I am always certain that what I am eating is healthy because it's from my own farm, and I only do organic."

Ms. Maina stands as one of the pioneering farmers in the region who embraced organic farming when the concept was first introduced.

Her success story serves as a testament to the transformative power of organic practices, impacting not only agricultural output and financial well-being but also the health and well-being of individuals and communities.



Cultivating Prosperity:

Bio-Fertilizers Transforming Agriculture in Murang'a County

Synthetic fertilizers have long borne the brunt of criticism for their role in the declining productivity of farms, primarily due to their adverse effects on soil health with prolonged use.

The government's recent decision to ban the use of Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) and exclusively provide Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium (NPK) fertilizers aims to mitigate the negative impact on soil fertility.

In response to this shift, there has been a notable rise in the adoption of organic fertilizers, recognized for their positive effects on soil health.

Playing a pivotal role in this transition is the Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM-Kenya), a civil society organization actively supporting groups in cultivating organic produce, and advocating for use of bio-fertilizers and pesticides.

Among the beneficiaries of PELUM's support is the Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya (OACK), which actively promotes organic products.

A noteworthy success story emanates from Kangari, Murang'a County, where the introduction of bio-fertilizers facilitated a farming revolution.

Farmers in the region reported significant increases in harvest yields, attributing this success to the organic alternative.

Gladys Wanja, an attendant at the Organic Fertilizer Shop in Kangari, highlighted the growing popularity of bio-fertilizers among Murang'a farmers.

Established in 2010, the organic shop introduced bio-fertilizers in 2021, and since then, farmers have enthusiastically embraced this sustainable alternative.

Ms Wanja highlighted the affordability of bio-fertilizers, priced at Sh1,500 for a 50 kg



Gladys Wanja, an attendant at Organic Fertilizer shop and Duncan Kariuki, the chairman of OACK Kenya displaying organic fertiliser and other bio products that they sell to farmers.



Ksh1,500

**Affordability of bio-fertilizers,
priced at Sh1,500 for a 50 kg
bag,**

bag, making it a cost-effective choice compared to synthetic alternatives. Additionally, farmers appreciate its nutrient-rich composition and soil rejuvenation properties, contributing to enhanced agricultural productivity.

Duncan Kariuki, program officer OACK Kenya, underscored the significance of bio-fertilizers, especially during the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021.

With disruptions in global logistics affecting synthetic fertilizer supplies, farmers in Murang'a turned to the organic alternative.

Mr Kariuki emphasized the nutrient richness of bio-fertilizers and their pivotal role in water retention, factors that have contributed to its widespread adoption among farmers.

Despite Murang'a's traditional reliance on government-backed subsidized fertilizers, the organic shift in 2021 demonstrated the resilience and efficacy of bio-fertilizers, prompting farmers to continue embracing this sustainable and environmentally friendly approach to agriculture.

The collective sentiment among farmers is that bio-fertilizers outperform their synthetic counterparts, further solidifying their commitment to this transformative agricultural practice.



Empowering Agriculture:

Pelum-backed Value Addition Spurs Organic Revolution at OACK Centre

At the heart of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya (OACK) in Kangari, there's a bustling hive of activity as farmers engage with machines to enhance the value of their herbs.

This dynamic scene is a testament to the transformative impact of Pelum's support through OACK Kenya, which provided farmers with a machine and knowledge, facilitating value addition to their herbs, and steering them away from selling raw produce.

The significance of this support is underscored by Duncan Kariuki, the chairman of OACK, who expressed gratitude for the machine donated by Pelum.

According to Mr. Kariuki, this equipment has proven invaluable, empowering farmers to conduct value addition on their spices, thereby enabling them to command more favorable prices for their products.

By engaging in value addition, farmers not only enhance their earnings but also find renewed motivation to reinvest in their agricultural enterprises.

Value addition, as highlighted by Mr. Kariuki, has the added advantage of allowing farmers to bypass brokers who often offer suboptimal prices for raw herbs.

This newfound independence in the market has been a game-changer for local farmers, ensuring that their hard work translates into economic returns that genuinely reflect the value of their products.

Jennifer Maina, an herb farmer in Kangari, shared her positive experience with the value addition at the OACK centre.

She highlighted the support received in the form of packaging materials from OACK, courtesy of Pelum.

This additional support has enabled her not only to enhance the quality of her products but also to package them effectively, making them more marketable.

Reflecting on the past, Ms. Maina noted the contrast between selling raw herbs and the current scenario where she sells ready-for-market products.

The transition to value addition has not only increased her income but has also opened up new market opportunities within the local community and among vis-



itors keen to explore the world of organic farming.

The increasing demand for organic products is a trend observed by Ms. Maina, who attributes it to a growing health consciousness among consumers.

In an era where people prioritize products that boost immunity and overall well-being, organic herbs have become sought-after commodities.

This shift in consumer preferences has positioned organic farmers with a distinct



Sammy Maina displaying how they do value addition on herbs at OACK centre in Kangari.

advantage in pricing, as their chemical-free produce commands a premium in the market.

The compelling benefits associated with organic foods have, in turn, become a driving force encouraging more farmers to venture into organic production.

Beyond economic considerations, this organic revolution is also contributing to a broader societal shift towards healthier eating habits and a heightened awareness of the connection between the food we consume and our well-being.

As the OACK centre thrives with activity, it symbolizes not just a space for value addition but a hub driving positive change in agricultural practices and consumer choices.





Murang'a's Agrarian Renaissance:

Herbs and Spices Cultivation Emerges as a sustainable Alternative to Traditional Cash Crops

Murang'a County, traditionally renowned for its lucrative coffee and tea cultivation, is undergoing a transformation in its agricultural landscape due to population growth and urbanization.

The diminishing availability of farming land, as a consequence of changing land use patterns, necessitates innovative approaches for farmers seeking sustainable income streams.

In response to these challenges, a notable shift is occurring among farmers in Murang'a County, particularly those affiliated with the Kenya Organic Farmers (Kofam) umbrella.

These forward-thinking farmers are exploring the cultivation of herbs and spices, a venture proving to be not only more economically viable but also requiring less land compared to traditional cash crops.

Lucy Muigai, a farmer in Kangari, exemplifies the success of this diversification. Having embraced the cultivation of

herbs and spices on a quarter-acre of her land, Muigai attests to the remarkable financial returns.

She highlights that the profits from her herbal endeavors surpass those attainable from a significantly larger expanse dedicated to coffee cultivation.

For Muigai and other farmers in Kangari, the cultivation of herbs like chia, basil, fennel, thyme, rosemary, tarragon, mint, and oregano has become a burgeoning enterprise.

Organizations such as the Organic Agriculture Centre of Kenya (OACK), supported by Pelum, are playing a pivotal role in educating farmers about the benefits of diversifying their crops.

Pelum's initiatives extend beyond education; they aim to alleviate poverty and enhance the living standards of resource-poor communities.

By advocating for ecologically viable development strategies, Pelum strives to foster sustainable and quality livelihoods in the region.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, while disruptive to many businesses, brought unexpected blessings to Murang'a's herbs and spices farmers.

The increased demand for these products, driven by a surge in interest from Kenyans seeking immune-boosting remedies, led to improved prices and profitability for the farmers.

Farmers in this region emphasize that cultivating herbs and spices on smaller parcels of land is not only a practical response to land subdivision but also yields sufficient produce to sustain their livelihoods.

An acre of land dedicated to herb cul-



Members of OACK Kenya displaying their value added products

tivation, for instance, can yield up to 1.2 tonnes, ensuring a lucrative return for the farmer.

Moreover, herbs farmers in the county have formed strategic partnerships with organizations like Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (Pelum).

These collaborations have not only expanded the market for their produce but have also facilitated capacity building, enabling farmers to respond effectively to community needs.

Pelum's advocacy efforts extend to lobbying for policy changes that favor small-scale farmers. By directly engaging in policy formulation, Pelum aims to create an enabling environment for farmers to thrive in the cultivation of alternative crops like herbs and spices.

The symbiotic relationship between farmers and organisations like Pelum underscores the potential for sustainable agriculture to uplift communities and foster economic resilience in the face of evolving challenges.

1.2 tonnes

An acre of land dedicated to herb cultivation, for instance, can yield up to 1.2 tonnes, ensuring a lucrative return for the farmer.



Lucy Muigai Thrives with Organic Fertilizer,



Lucy Muigai displaying her value added products at her farm in Kangari, Murang'a County.



Lucy Muigai stands as a living testament to the transformative power of organic fertilizer in the lives of farmers across the country.

Previously yielding a modest 120 kilograms of tea per month, Muigai experienced a significant boost to 330 kilograms per month upon adopting organic fertilizer.

In October this year, she achieved a remarkable high of 440 kilograms, a milestone unprecedented in her years of farming.

Notably, Ms Muigai observed a distinct advantage of organic fertiliser over commercial alternatives during periods of drought.

While her production plummeted to 300 kilograms amid dry spells, a stark contrast to

Revolutionising Farming in Murang'a



Ksh 80,000

In the last season, Lucy Muigai earned Ksh80,000 from a handful of Avocado trees

the almost nonexistent yield with commercial fertilizer, she found that organic fertilizer enabled her to maintain a substantial harvest even in adverse weather conditions.

Reflecting on this, Ms. Muigai shared, “There is one thing that I have learned from using this organic fertilizer, during the drought season, I can still harvest a substantial amount of tea, unlike previously when I could get nothing using commercial one.”

Expanding beyond tea, Ms Muigai has incorporated organic fertiliser into all her crops, consistently witnessing remarkable results on her Kangari farm in Murang'a County.

Attributing her success to education

provided by Pelum and OACK Kenya, Ms Muigai expressed gratitude for their support in farm management and organic farming practices.

Having embraced organic fertiliser for the past three years, she emphasised that the benefits derived from it have solidified her commitment to its usage.

In addition to tea, Muigai cultivates avocados on her Kangari farm. In the last season, she earned Ksh80,000 from a handful of trees, marking her highest achievement on the farm, a success she attributes to the use of organic fertilizer.

“Why would I go back to commercial fertilizer when I can achieve such an amount in one season from just a few trees?” she

questioned.

Ms Muigai highlighted the economic advantages of organic farming, emphasising the cost-effectiveness of organic fertilizer compared to commercial alternatives.

While a 50-kilogram bag of commercial fertilizer costs Ksh3,500, an equivalent quantity of organic fertilizer is priced at a more economical Ksh1,500.

As an active member of KOFAM, Muigai acknowledged the impact of OACK's training, which has empowered farmers like her to enhance productivity in their enterprises, contributing to their economic empowerment.



Mr David Mburu showing holes that he has dug on his farm, where he taps runoff water for distribution to his crops.

Kangari's Organic Triumph:

OACK Kenya Cultivates Health, Wealth, and Trust in Sustainable Farming

The surge in popularity of organic foods in Kangari can be attributed to the myriad health benefits associated with them.

Organic farmers in the region find themselves at the forefront of this agricultural revolution, with an ever-expanding clientele that is proving challenging to meet.

The local eateries and individual households in the area are passionately vying for the limited organic produce available, showcasing the high demand for these health-conscious choices.

A significant catalyst for this organic farming boom is the Organic Agriculture Community of Kenya (OACK), backed by crucial support from Pelum Kenya.

OACK has played a pivotal role in training local farmers on the principles and practices of organic farming, emphasizing its environmental and health importance.

Moreover, the organization has successfully orchestrated partnerships to secure a ready market for the farmers, creating an avenue for them to secure a sustainable income.

Duncan Kariuki, the program officer OACK Kenya, stressed the dual role of their organization: “We not only train farmers on organic production, but we also connect them to the market.” In an interview at the organization’s Kangari office, Maina highlighted the ease with which farmers can now access markets, underscoring the high demand for their sought-after organic products.

The success stories from Kangari farmers are not limited to market access; their yields have also been significantly enhanced. This improvement is attributed to the use of organic bio-fertilizers, a product of the knowledge imparted by OACK.

Farmers are not only taught how to produce these fertilizers but are also encouraged to make them at home using locally available organic materials.

This has not only increased their yield but has also helped them cut costs that would have been incurred in purchasing commercial fertilizers.

Janet Chege, a member of the Kofam group benefiting from OACK Kenya, shared her experience of making her own fertilizer.

Not only does this practice contribute to cost savings for her, but she also manages to sell the surplus to other farmers, thereby supplementing her income.

Ms. Chege expressed gratitude to OACK and Pelum for the knowledge that has translated into financial benefits for her group.

Ms. Chege’s farm in Kangari, Murang’a County, is a testament to the versatility of organic farming. She cultivates a variety of organic produce, including vegetables, herbs, fruits, tea, and coffee.

Her success story resonates with many farmers who have embraced organic farming and are reaping its multifaceted rewards.

Beyond the financial gains, the farmers’ commitment to organic practices has fostered trust among their custom-



ers.

Consumers are increasingly aware that the produce from these farmers is free from harmful pesticides and chemicals, making them the preferred choice for health-con-

scious individuals.

The organic revolution in Kangari is not merely a shift in farming practices but a holistic transformation that encompasses health, environment, and economic sustainability.

Kenyan Organic Farmers

Thrive as OACK Kenya Boosts Organic Agriculture

In a transformative move in 2021, a small group of farmers united to establish Kenya Organic Farmers (Kofam), an umbrella organization championing the cause of organic agriculture in the region.

The initiative took shape following comprehensive training provided by OACK Kenya in agro ecology farming, focusing on sustainable income generation and the production of safe, organic foods.

The OACK training equipped farmers with essential knowledge, including the creation of organic fertilizers and bio-chemicals, which they have since applied to enhance the quality of their crops.

Nestled in Kangari, Kofam, comprising 22 members, has evolved into one of the country's leading producers of organic foods, cultivating a diverse range of crops across individual farms.

Recognizing their commendable efforts, the County Government of Murang'a

has allocated dedicated stalls to Kofam at the local market.

These stalls serve as a testament to the pivotal role played by the organization in promoting organic farming and providing consumers with access to high-quality produce.

Ms. Chege, a member of Kofam, expressed gratitude to the County Government, stating, "We would like to thank the County Government because they have noticed our efforts and allocated us stalls at the market. This shows how important organic foods are."

Encouraged by the success of Kofam, the County Government has actively supported the organization's mission and encouraged them to expand their membership base.

The farmers, in turn, have established a marketing group within Kofam, fostering collaboration and eliminating intermediaries in the value chain.



This move ensures that members benefit from economies of scale, a marked improvement from their initial struggles with individual sales and reliance on brokers.

Commenting on the initiative, Ms. Chege highlighted the group's commitment to maintaining high-quality standards: "The products that we are doing as a group are of high quality, and no member compromises on quality."

In addition to boosting economic empowerment through training, OACK Kenya has played a pivotal role in creating a ready market for Kofam's produce.

Members now enjoy the flexibility of conducting house deliveries to loyal customers they have cultivated relationships with over time.

For Beatrice Nyambura, a member of Kofam, the organic farming project has been life-changing.

"Nowadays I can pay for my children's school fees with much ease and meet my daily needs without any struggle because I have sufficient income from my vegetables and herbs," she said.

As Kenya Organic Farmers continues to thrive, it serves as a shining example of the positive impact that sustainable and organic farming practices, coupled with supportive government initiatives, can have on local communities.





Kofam's Historic Herb Export Sets Stage for Growth



In October, Kofam achieved a groundbreaking milestone by making its inaugural herb export. This marked a significant achievement for an organization that, since its inception, had predominantly relied on the local market.

The group successfully exported 50kg of herbs, generating a revenue of Ksh467,000. This sum was subsequently distributed among the 14 members of the group who actively contributed to the export initiative.

While the monetary gain might seem modest at first glance, it held immense importance for the members of Kofam.

The success of the export venture was attributed to the invaluable support extended by Pelum and OACK Kenya. Emboldened by the returns from this venture, the group is now fervently motivated to expand their cultivation of organically grown herbs.

Their goal is to tap into an untapped market that craves safe products cultivated without the use of harmful chemicals.

In their quest for further opportunities,



Kofam members are urging their partners, including the government, to facilitate more avenues for them beyond national borders.

Despite the existence of a ready market, bureaucratic hurdles, particularly the stringent certification processes, pose a significant challenge.

Beatrice Nyambura, a Kofam member, stressed the need for simplifying the certification process, asserting that it would greatly facilitate their access to the international export market.

Ms. Nyambura emphasized that the simplified certification process would not only benefit small organizations like Kofam but would also contribute significantly to easing their entry into the export market.

The returns from exports, she argued, far outweigh what they earn locally, benefiting both the farmers and the government through increased foreign exchange.

Encouraged by the success of Kofam,

50 kg
Kofam exported 50kg of herbs,
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farmers under the organization are expanding their herb cultivation areas, anticipating future export opportunities.

Previously limited to small portions on the edges of their properties, these farmers

are now increasing the size of their herb cultivation areas in response to the promising returns from their initial exports.

Farmers express the need to meet the growing demand, both locally and internationally, prompting their proactive expansion efforts.

OACK asserts that there is substantial potential in the export of organic herbs and underscores the importance of farmers receiving necessary support from various stakeholders.

According to OACK officials, these farmers are more than willing to produce ample volumes for export, provided they receive the required support and assurance for seamless shipment to the global market.



Breaking the Cycle:

How Organic Farming Rescued Farmers from the Burden of Loans

Despite its small size as a trading center, Kangari hosts branches of nearly all major banks operating in Kenya.

The strategic placement of these banks aims to provide farmers with access to loans, enabling them to address their farming requirements without having to wait for returns from crops like tea or coffee.

Kangari is situated in Murang'a County, a predominantly agricultural region re-



nowned for the cultivation of significant cash crops, including tea and coffee.

While banks offer a readily available source of funds to farmers through loans, this financial assistance comes at a cost. The facilities are accompanied by an exorbitant interest rate, approximately 15 percent, which has raised concerns among agricultural stakeholders.

Duncan Kariuki, the program officer OACK Kenya points out that these loans often ensnare farmers in a cycle of perpetual indebtedness.

He notes that banks extend new loans before the previous ones are cleared, creating a situation where farmers continually owe the bank.

One farmer, Samuel Maina, an organic farmer in Kangari, shares his experience of

breaking free from the cycle of bank loans.

Mr. Maina reveals that he no longer seeks loans from banks since he started cultivating organic herbs and vegetables. Previously, he would borrow at least Ksh10,000, subject to high-interest rates.

However, with his shift to cultivating herbs and vegetables, Maina generates daily income, which has eliminated the need for loans.

“On a daily basis, I cannot miss earning at least Ksh2,000. This consistent income has eradicated my dependence on loans,” said Mr. Maina.

Despite Kangari’s modest size, it accommodates seven banks, all of which are perceived to be ‘preying’ on farmers with their high-interest loans.

Expressing gratitude, Maina acknowl-

edges organizations like OACK and Pelum Kenya for enlightening farmers on herb cultivation and agro-ecological practices.

According to Mr. Kariuki, the quick returns from herbs have empowered farmers to reduce their reliance on loans, enabling them to manage their finances more effectively.

Farmers now utilize the income generated from herbs and vegetables to meet immediate financial needs and manage other crops such as coffee and tea.

The shift towards sustainable and profitable farming practices is gradually transforming the financial landscape for farmers in Kangari, offering them a viable alternative to the burden of high-interest bank loans.



Organic Revolution:

Mary Waithera's Remarkable Journey from Crop Crisis to Abundant Harvests

For a decade and a half, Mary Waithera grappled with the disheartening reality of low coffee yields on her Kangari farm.

The relentless effort she poured into her cultivation endeavors seemed futile as she contemplated uprooting the coffee crop, considering

alternative options.

Harvesting a meager 86 kilos of coffee, Mary faced a challenging dilemma that left her questioning the sustainability of her agricultural pursuits.

However, a beacon of hope emerged in the form of education and training provided by OACK Kenya, with invaluable support from Pelum.

This intervention focused on imparting knowledge about the application of organic fertilizer, capable of revitalizing the soil and catalyzing enhanced production.

Mary, who had long relied on commercial fertilizers in the belief of their superiority, found a transformative solution in the organic alternative presented



through the program.

Post-training, Mary made a bold decision to experiment with organic fertilizer, and the results exceeded her expectations.

The once meager 86-kilo yield skyrocketed to an impressive 503 kilos per year, all thanks to the efficacy of organic fertilizer in her cultivation practices.

The success story not only saved Mary's coffee crop from potential uprooting but also instilled in her a desire to expand her plantation due to the newfound high production levels.

Over the course of four years, Mary has remained loyal to the bio-fertilizer, vowing never to revert to commercial alternatives.

Beyond the remarkable increase in coffee yield, she attests to a substantial reduction in production costs, a direct consequence of the economic feasibility of organic fertilizer compared to its commercial counterparts.

503 kg

The once meager 86-kilo yield skyrocketed to an impressive 503 kilos per year, all thanks to the efficacy of organic fertilizer in her cultivation practices.

Mary enthusiastically details her cost savings, highlighting that a 50-kilo bag of bio-fertilizer costs Ksh1,500, a stark contrast to the Ksh3,500 required for its commercial counterpart.

The success story doesn't end with Mary alone; her transformative results have influenced even the most skeptical stakeholders.

Mary's husband, once doubtful about

the viability of organic farming, has undergone a change of heart. Previously neglecting the coffee plantation due to concerns about low yields, additional labor, and higher costs, he now stands converted, embracing organic farming practices.

Mary Waitthera has not only become a symbol of success in Kangari but also a role model for organic farming enthusiasts.

Her journey from contemplating uprooting her crop to achieving unparalleled success through organic fertilizer stands as a testament to the potential of sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

The ripple effect of her success has not only revitalized her coffee plantation but has also contributed to changing perceptions and fostering a broader embrace of organic farming in her community.



WORD *from*

THE PARTNERS

OACK

The Organic Agriculture Center of Kenya (OACK) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to fostering sustainable livelihoods and landscapes for small-scale farmers in Murang'a County.

Their focus lies in empowering farmers with knowledge and skills in agroecology, enabling them to achieve food and nutritional security, environmental conservation, and stable incomes.

OACK is proud to collaborate as a key partner in the Food Security and Livelihoods Improvement (FOSELI) and Integrated Watershed Management for Diverse Farming Enterprises (IWAMA-DIFE) projects, both one and two.

Originally launched as the FOSELI initiative, the program aimed to uplift smallholder tea farmers through agroecology, breaking away from the monoculture practices that had been the mainstay of their livelihoods.

The project addressed the challenges faced by tea farmers who, due to reliance on tea sales, struggled with food and nutrition insecurity as living costs rose while tea prices stagnated, leading to increasing farmer indebtedness.

Similarly, IWAMA-DIFE aimed to address issues within tea growing areas and adjacent landscapes, including the Aberdares, with a primary focus on safeguarding water resources.

Together, these initiatives sought to impact millions of people living in tea-growing areas, improving nutrition and incomes for those upstream and downstream, including urban areas reliant on the Aberdares catchment.



The IWAMA program not only strengthened collaborating organizations and key local stakeholders but also facilitated active cross-learning, creating a combined impact and sharing crucial strengths among partners and stakeholders.

OACK, in particular, has significantly benefited from this collaboration, enhancing both programmatic and financial systems and gaining a deeper understanding of the environmental context through continuous and objective interaction with stakeholders.

Furthermore, IWAMA has played a crucial role in equipping tea farmers in the Aberdares ecosystem, offering them opportunities to diversify their livelihood options in terms of food, nutrition, and income.

Farmers can now cultivate a variety of crops in family gardens for personal consumption and potential income, aligning with the program's goal of promoting healthy choices and income-generating opportunities.

The program also addresses agricul-

tural challenges and climate constraints by encouraging the use of bio-inputs, such as bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides, promoting environmentally safe practices.

Farmers are increasingly aware of their role in safeguarding the environment, as evidenced by the growing trend of water harvesting, a response to climate change effects, and a strategy to stabilize production and income.

OACK extends sincere gratitude to all partners, especially Tudor Trust (UK), for their financial support from the inception of the program (FOSELI and IWAMA-DIFE 1 & 2). Special thanks to Pelum-Kenya for seamlessly bringing together the five member organizations and effectively coordinating the program. Recognition is also extended to the collaborative efforts of partner implementing organizations (COSDEP, ICE, SACDEP & RODI) for their support, advice, and active participation.

OACK acknowledges the invaluable support from stakeholders, including the Kenya Tea Development Agency, Kenya Forest Services, Community Forest Association (Gatare Forest), World Vegetable Centre, and the Ministry of Agriculture, for their overwhelming support, goodwill, and exchange of ideas.

In conclusion, OACK expresses heartfelt thanks to all the farmers who voluntarily participated in the training, adopted new practices, engaged with us, and actively participated in various program activities. The success of these initiatives is a testament to the collective efforts of all involved.

David Gathuka, OACK CEO

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Ms. Chege envisions a substantial expansion of her current agricultural enterprise to capitalize on the burgeoning demand for organic foods in the market. Currently cultivating a variety of vegetables, fruits, and herbs, she has seamlessly integrated animal husbandry into her operations, maintaining cows and goats for the production of organic milk and meat.

An essential aspect of Ms. Chege's commitment to organic practices lies in the meticulous care of her livestock. She proudly attests that her milk qualifies as organic, given the fact that she feeds her cows with organically grown fodder cultivated on her farm in Kangari.

This hands-on approach to the entire production cycle ensures that the end product, in this case, her milk, aligns with the principles of organic farming.

Ms. Chege highlights the proactive role of the County Government in supporting the organic farming community.

Recognizing the myriad benefits associated with this sustainable approach, the County Government has provided tangible support, including allocating a dedicated stall at the market for organic farmers.

This not only facilitates the sale of their produce but also serves as a pivotal platform for marketing their merchandise to a broader audience.

Under the umbrella of Kofam, a collective of organic farmers, Ms. Chege and her fellow farmers are ambitiously looking beyond the confines of Murang'a County.

Their objective is to expand the cultivated area dedicated to organic crops, ensuring a surplus that extends beyond their current market reach.

This move aligns with their vision of broadening the market scope to encompass neighboring counties.

As a forward-thinking leader within Kofam, Ms. Chege harbors aspirations beyond personal success. Her overarching vision involves growing the membership of the Kofam group, aiming to enlist more individuals into the realm of organic farming.

By doing so, she seeks to foster a community of like-minded individuals dedicated to sustainable agricultural practices, thereby contributing to the broader goal of promoting organic farming on a regional scale.

Through collaborative efforts and a shared commitment to organic principles, Ms. Chege aspires to create a more significant impact, both within her local community and across neighboring counties.



Jane
Chege

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Jane Thiong'o, a resilient farmer with a remarkable story of agricultural transformation, has seen her tea production surge from 200 to an impressive 305 kilograms per month.

This substantial increase in yield is a direct result of her transition from conventional fertilizers like DAP and NPK to the adoption of organic fertilizers, marking a pivotal shift in her farming enterprise.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms. Thiong'o recounts the challenges she faced in the past, struggling to meet her children's educational needs and daily expenses due to insufficient farm yields.

However, her decision to embrace organic farming became a turning point in her economic life. The introduction of herbs, characterized by shorter growth cycles and quick returns, played a pivotal role in this transformation, providing a more immediate source of income compared to traditional cash crops like tea and coffee.

Expressing her gratitude, Ms. Thiong'o acknowledges the instrumental role played by OACK in introducing her to organic farming techniques, particularly the cultivation of herbs.

The diversified and quick-maturing nature of these herbs has not only significantly boosted her monthly income but has also allowed her the financial flexibility to address immediate needs, including the payment of her children's school fees.

The positive impact of organic farming on Ms. Thiong'o's economic landscape is evident in the newfound financial stability she enjoys.

Unlike the extended waiting periods associated with traditional cash crops, the herbs on her farm mature rapidly, enabling her to generate income at any time.

This versatility has translated into disposable income, empowering her to meet immediate financial obligations and enhancing her overall quality of life.

Ms. Thiong'o's success story serves as a testament to the transformative power of organic farming, not only in boosting agricultural productivity but also in fostering economic resilience at the individual and family levels.

Through her experience, she exemplifies how embracing sustainable agricultural practices can lead to tangible improvements in livelihoods, education, and overall well-being.



Jane
Thiong'o

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Mary Waithera, a passionate advocate for organic farming, has not only cultivated a flourishing farm in Kangari but has also succeeded in winning over her initially skeptical husband to the merits of organic agricultural practices.

Their journey is a testament to the transformative impact of organic farming on both yields and environmental sustainability.

Initially, Mary's husband was not a believer in the potential benefits of organic farming. It was only after witnessing firsthand the positive outcomes facilitated by organic products, particularly fertilizers, that he became a convert to this eco-friendly approach.

Faced with the prospect of uprooting their struggling coffee plantation due to persistently low yields, Mary proposed the use of Bocashi, an organic fertilizer known for its ability to enhance yields without compromising soil health.

Although initially skeptical, Mary's husband soon became a staunch advocate for organic fertilizers as the farm experienced a remarkable turnaround.

The increased yields were so significant that they expanded the coffee plantation from a modest 86 bushes to an impressive 300, driven by the promise of high returns and sustainable farming practices.

This shift marked a departure from their previous reliance on commercial fertilizers for over 15 years, which had failed to deliver the desired results.

In an interview, Mary proudly attested to her husband's transformation into a champion of organic farming. His newfound commitment stems from a genuine and firsthand experience of the tangible benefits derived from the use of organic products in their farming practices.

Crucial to Mary's success in organic farming is her access to bio-products, including organic fertilizers and pesticides, sourced from a nearby organic shop in Kangari.

This local availability of essential inputs underscores the importance of community support and infrastructure in promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Mary Waithera's story serves as an inspiring example of how personal conviction and tangible results can influence even the most skeptical individuals to embrace the principles of organic farming.

Their experience highlights not only the economic advantages but also the environmental stewardship inherent in adopting organic methods, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable agricultural landscape.



Mary
Waithera

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Beatrice Nyambura, a dedicated farmer in the lush landscapes of Kangari, Murang'a County, has transformed her 1.2-acre plot into a thriving oasis of organic cultivation.

Her agricultural pursuits encompass a diverse array of vegetables, herbs, and fruits, all nurtured through sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.

In addition to her flourishing crops, Ms Nyambura maintains a flock of chickens on her farm, not only for the production of fresh eggs but also as a vital component in her holistic approach to farming.

The innovative farmer ingeniously utilizes chicken droppings to craft nutrient-rich manure, a natural fertilizer that serves as a cornerstone in her cultivation endeavors.

Ms Nyambura attributes a significant part of her success to the invaluable training and support she received from OACK Kenya.

The organization not only equipped her with essential skills but also facilitated crucial connections to the market, enabling her to supply her organic produce to hospitals, hotels, and even offer personalized house deliveries to her satisfied customers.

Expressing her gratitude, Ms Nyambura declares herself an "organic champion" owing to the transformative training provided by OACK and their collaborative partner, Pelum Kenya.

Reflecting on her journey, she acknowledges that without their guidance, she would not have achieved the remarkable progress evident on her farm today.

One notable aspect of Ms Nyambura's commitment to organic farming is her exclusive reliance on bio-fertilizers as her primary source of manure for the past three years.

The results speak for themselves, with her tea yields witnessing a substantial increase from 240 to 300 kilograms. This tangible success stands as a testament to the efficacy of organic fertilizers in enhancing crop productivity.

Beyond the immediate benefits of increased yields, Ms Nyambura emphasizes the broader goals of organic farming. For her, it's not just about producing safe and nutritious food; it's a conscientious effort towards environmental conservation.

Her farming practices align with a sustainable ethos, seeking to strike a balance between agricultural productivity and the preservation of the natural ecosystem.

Furthermore, Ms Nyambura notes the growing appreciation among consumers for organic foods. The discerning clientele, she asserts, is not only content with the quality of organic produce but actively supports the efforts of farmers like her who are part of organizations like Kofam.

Through such initiatives, a positive shift towards sustainable and organic agriculture is gaining momentum, fostering a healthier connection between farmers and consumers.



Beatrice
Mwihaki

WORD *from*

THE PARTNERS

SACDEP

Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme (SACDEP)'s Integrated Watershed Management for Diverse Farming Enterprises (IWA-MA-DIFE) has marked a significant achievement after a three-year implementation period from 2021 to 2023. The primary goal was to enhance community and ecosystem resilience in the tea-growing regions of Murang'a and Kiambu County, resulting in the establishment of vibrant and healthier communities.

A key focus of SACDEP was to uplift the livelihoods of tea farmers in the Gatanga region of Murang'a County. One of the primary objectives was to strengthen the conservation and management of watersheds and ecosystems, particularly the Aberdares Ecosystem.

This effort led to a noteworthy increase in tree cover, involving the planting of nearly 100,000 indigenous trees and giant bamboo seedlings in riparian areas.

This objective held paramount importance for various reasons highlighted below:

Significant contribution to environmental conservation, enhancing the overall health and sustainability of the Aberdares Ecosystem. The increased tree cover not only facilitated watershed management but also played a crucial role in preserving biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Mitigation of landslides in the region through the strategic planting of indigenous trees and giant bamboo.



Support for farmers with the cultivation of hass avocado fruit trees, aiding in soil erosion control and contributing to improved food, nutrition, and income security. The earlier FOSELI project's avocados have borne fruit, enabling farmers to earn up to Ksh50,000 from sales.

Focus on achieving food and income security through agro-ecological production and marketing in Murang'a. Notably, the adoption of nutrition gardens led to improved food and nutrition security, addressing the challenge of tea being a non-food cash crop. Nutrition gardens provided an alternative source of food, ensuring a diversified and more resilient livelihood strategy for farmers.

Optimization of land use, particularly through the cultivation of nutrition gardens, saving space and time for farmers heavily engaged in tea farming.

Feedback from farmers underscores the positive impact on their daily lives, showcasing SACDEP's successful promotion of agroecological practices and sustainable food systems. Communities have reported improved water dis-

charge from rivers and streams, particularly during dry periods, benefiting both people and the ecosystem.

SACDEP also played a crucial role in training farmers in value addition and marketing of Ecological Organic Agriculture Products. While achievements in this area are commendable, there is a need to address the low level of value addition in Murang'a County to further strengthen the value chain and marketing strategies, enabling farmers to fully capitalize on the benefits of ecological organic agriculture.

Furthermore, through the collective efforts of all implementing Member Organizations, the county governments, particularly Murang'a County, launched The Murang'a Agroecology Policy 2022-2032 and The Murang'a County Agroecology Development Act, 2022 in March 2023.

These legislative measures encourage the use of organic farming practices and the production of organic products, positioning the County as a leader in adopting and applying agroecology practices for climate change adaptation and improved sustainable and resilient food systems.

In conclusion, SACDEP Kenya expresses gratitude to funding partners and acknowledges the instrumental support of PELUM Kenya in coordinating the project smoothly. The success of this project is attributed to the strength and partnership of all five Member Organizations involved in the implementation.

Paul Karanja-Deputy executive Director (SACDEP Kenya)

Diversification Dynamo:

Organic Odyssey Transforms Farming Fortunes in Gatanga



Lucy Wanjiku stands as a shining example of diversification in Murang'a County, where she has engaged in various farming enterprises to bolster her income.

Her two-acre farm in Gatanga serves as a testament to her commitment to diversification, housing an array of crops alongside livestock to create a synergistic approach to farming.

For a remarkable 15 years, Ms. Wanjiku has dedicated herself to organic farming on her property, cultivating tea, macadamia, and an assortment of vegetables.

This agricultural maven attributes her success to the guidance provided by the Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Programme (SACDEP-Kenya), an initiative focused on promoting diversification among farmers in the region.

In the past, Ms. Wanjiku heavily relied on tea as her primary source of income. However, the transformative education received from SACDEP spurred her to explore other avenues, recognizing the potential for increased returns through diversification.

The organization played a pivotal role in altering her mindset, emphasizing the importance of branching into various agricultural ventures.

SACDEP, in collaboration with Pelum Kenya, has been a driving force in supporting farmers in Gatanga, particularly in the realm of crop diversification.

Ms. Wanjiku expresses her gratitude, declaring herself a living testament to the tangible benefits derived from the training imparted by SACDEP.

Organic farming practices have significantly contributed to Ms. Wanjiku's enhanced yields. The conscientious use of organic products on her crops, including tea, has resulted in a substantial increase in production.





As a prime example, she now generates a monthly income of Ksh17,000 from a few trees, a notable improvement from the previous Ksh8,000, all credited to the adoption of organic fertilizers.

Ms. Wanjiku's resourcefulness extends beyond conventional farming methods. Embracing SACDEP's teachings, she employs everything available on her farm to minimize waste.

Her innovative approach includes utilizing rabbit urine to concoct organic fertilizer, a practice that has proven both sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Raising rabbits, chickens, and cows further amplifies Ms. Wanjiku's diversification strategy. The manure from these animals serves as a valuable resource, further enriching her farm's soil.

Her advocacy for diversification and the

use of organic products is unwavering, as she passionately encourages fellow farmers to explore varied agricultural activities for improved returns.

In essence, Lucy Wanjiku's journey epitomizes the transformative power of diversification and sustainable farming practices, showcasing the potential for increased yields and enhanced livelihoods within Murang'a County.



Lucy Wanjiru (left) and Joleen Wambui displaying the fodder grass and Bamboo trees that was distributed by SACDEP.

Empowering Farmers and Eroding Challenges:

SACDEP-Kenya's Sustainable Agricultural Intervention Reshapes Landscape in Murang'a

For many years, Lucy Wanjiku grappled with the persistent threat of landslides on her property, a piece of land that slopes towards the river, making it susceptible to erosion and compromising her agricultural efforts.

Ms. Wanjiru endured substantial yield losses over an extended period due to the challenges posed by frequent landslides, hindering her ability to engage in meaningful and productive farming activities.

However, a ray of hope emerged a few years ago when the Sustainable Agriculture and Community Development Programme (SACDEP-Kenya) extended a helping hand to her.

This organization, with support from Pelum Kenya, aimed to address the issues of landslides and soil erosion by focusing on the restoration of riparian lands.

As one of the beneficiaries of the SACDEP-Kenya program, Ms. Wanjiru received invaluable training on proper land management practices.

Moreover, the organization provided her with cover crops, such as vetiphas grass, specifically designed to mitigate soil erosion.

Vetiphas grass proved to be an effective solution, firmly holding the soil together and preventing it from being washed away by rain.

Reflecting on the transformative impact of the program, Ms. Wanjiku said, "I grew up here, and for many years, we couldn't derive meaningful returns from our farm due to frequent landslides."

The introduction of the cover crop marked a turning point, allowing the community to break free from the shackles of constant landslide threats.

With gratitude, Ms. Wanjiku emphasized the positive change, stating, "It has been years since I witnessed a landslide here. The cover crop provided has played a

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“Despite the continuous rains, we have not witnessed a single landslide due to the mitigation measures we’ve implemented, thanks to SACDEP,”

Lucy Wanjiru

”

significant role in mitigating the effects of erosion.”

The program not only focused on cover crops but also included comprehensive training for farmers. Ms. Wanjiru received bamboo seedlings, which she successfully cultivated on her farm, contributing to the overall sustainability of the land.

As El-Nino rains loomed over the region, Ms. Wanjiku expressed relief, crediting SACDEP for their foresight and support.

“Despite the continuous rains, we have not witnessed a single landslide due to the mitigation measures we’ve implemented, thanks to SACDEP,” she said.

Beyond cover crops and land management, SACDEP went a step further by providing fruit trees, including avocados, to the farmers.

Planting these trees has significantly contributed to stabilizing the soil, offering a long-term solution to the erosion challenges that had plagued the community for years.

Ms Wanjiku’s journey reflects the transformative power of sustainable agricultural practices and community-focused programs, demonstrating how strategic interventions can break the cycle of environmental degradation and empower farmers to thrive despite challenging conditions.



WORD *from*

THE PARTNERS

RODI

The 5 community groups that have been implementing the FOSELI and IWAMA projects have benefited from the consortium project in many ways. These include among others:-

Peer learning

Peer learning and exposure visits made it easier for the project beneficiaries to try new things/skills. The interaction between farmers from different localities/counties enhanced confidence in individual farmers to air their views. They can now better lobby the county and even national governments to address their plights.

Individual implementing organizations were also able to learn from one another and improve on their weakness; they were also able to capitalize on their potentials after realizing that they could be doing better.

Food security

The food security situation among the beneficiaries also increased during the period as indicated in the past evaluation reports. All the beneficiaries attested that they no longer buy vegetables for their households while over half of them were able to sell the surplus.

Water harvesting was improved during the period where individual farmers installed earth pans. The pans



are in use; harvesting of water for irrigation and fish farming thus improving on food and nutrition security.

Environment

The project was also able to improve the environment by planting over 10,000 assorted tree seedlings within the project area over the period. River banks were also conserved during the period.

Incomes

Tea farming among beneficiaries is no longer the only source of income for them as used to be the case courtesy of enterprises diversification.

Poultry keeping for instance requires minimum space and the farmers implementing the project have embraced the venture with remarkable success; farmers are now taking more proteins from meat as well as making money from life

birds and their products such as eggs and manure.

Avocadoes growing also contributed greatly in income generation as all the beneficiaries working with RODI were able to plant more than 10 trees each. More than half of these trees are already in production and earning incomes to the farmers.

Energy conservation

Energy conservation and especially firewood shortages has also been a challenge in the tea growing areas. The beneficiaries benefitted with energy conserving stoves (Jikokoa) and are now able to save on their household budgets as well as conserving the environment. Fewer trees are now cut down for firewood; less time is also spent on cooking as these stoves take much shorter time to cook food.

There are many other benefits as attested by the beneficiaries. Continuation of this project will therefore make major milestones in the project areas and beyond.

Partnership

RODI is pleased with the partnership and will continue to support and collaborate with the other partners even beyond the IWAMA project.

Many thanks to all and especially PELUM for coordinating the project.

Esther Bett RODI CEO



Margret Wanjiru inspecting an incubator that they use for breeding



Poultry Triumph:

Loco 4 Group's Eggcellent Journey from Chicks to Eggs

Embarking on a journey of a thousand kilometers begins with a single step, as the age-old adage wisely imparts.

This timeless saying mirrors the remarkable progress achieved by Loco 4 Group in Matara, Murang'a County, as they have transitioned from nurturing mere chicks to overseeing the growth of mature hens that now contribute to their thriving egg production, a process that extends to utilizing incubators.

In the past, the group faced challenges as they had to procure eggs externally, often incurring losses due to the inability of some eggs to meet the required standards for successful incubation.

This situation prompted a significant shift as they transitioned to relying on their own flock of hens, thereby not only ensuring a steady supply of quality eggs but also

slashing the costs associated with external egg purchases.

Previously, the group spent Sh30 on a single egg, translating to a substantial expenditure of Ksh10,500 to fill an incubator to capacity.

Maintaining the incubator at full capacity is crucial to avoid wastage resulting from underutilization, a strategic move that has been successfully implemented by the group.

Margret Wanjiru, a member of the group, stressed the significance of this shift, stating, "Now we are assured of getting quality eggs for breeding given that our first set of chicks have now grown into laying hens."

Ensuring the quality of breeding eggs is paramount. These eggs must be sexed and should not have been laid more than ten days prior to incubation.

Failure to adhere to these requirements could result in significant losses as the eggs may fail to hatch into viable chicks. Mem-

bers of the group bring their own eggs for hatching, fostering a sense of responsibility among them to meet the stipulated standards.

Moreover, the surplus chicks generated from this breeding process are sold to interested parties, generating additional funds for the group members.

This revenue serves as a valuable resource that can be allocated to immediate needs, showcasing the economic empowerment derived from their poultry venture.

Despite their success, the group faces challenges common to poultry farmers, grappling with the escalating costs of feeds.

The rising prices of supplements such as cotton cake seed, sunflower cake, and soybean pose a financial strain. In light of this, the group appeals to stakeholders to intervene, advocating for more affordable rates for these essential supplements to formulate their organic feeds.

Amidst these challenges, the group expresses gratitude to Rodi Kenya and Pelum for providing financial support during a period of economic difficulty for many Kenyans.

This support has played a pivotal role in sustaining their poultry venture and contributes to the resilience of local farmers facing financial uncertainties.

The journey of Loco 4 Group reflects not only individual determination but also the collective strength that can be harnessed when communities come together to overcome challenges in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods.



Financial Liberation through Feathers:

Loco 4 Group's Poultry Project Empowers Members in Murang'a County

Nancy Wangui, a resident of Matara in Murang'a County, has transcended the worry of financial instability, transforming into a self-reliant mother capable of addressing her family's needs without the anxiety that once plagued her nights.

Through her affiliation with the Loco 4 Group, a community-based organization engaged in poultry farming and supported by Rodi Kenya and Pelum, Wangui now navigates life's financial demands with ease.

The Loco 4 Group, facilitated by Rodi Kenya and Pelum, has become a financial lifeline for Ms Wangui and its members.

In times of necessity, such as covering her children's school fees, purchasing food, or bol-



Nancy Wangui at her farm in Matara.



stering her business, Ms Wangui can readily access funds from the group.

This financial flexibility is made possible by the group's initiative, allowing members to secure loans of up to Ksh100,000, a testament to the collaborative contributions made monthly by each one of them.

The allure of this community-based financial support extends beyond its accessibility; the loans are offered at a 12 percent interest rate on a reducing balance.

This stands in stark contrast to the rates imposed by commercial banks, which often charge up to 16 percent interest. Ms Wangui



expresses gratitude for the project, highlighting its role in providing advance cash to address pressing issues and eliminating the need for expensive bank loans.

Beyond poultry farming, Rodi Kenya imparted crucial financial management skills to the group, instilling a culture of saving among its members.

Ms Wangui attests to the transformation, highlighting the shift from a lack of saving culture to regular monthly contributions of at least Ksh400 per member.

This collective effort accumulates into a shared pool, enabling members to borrow as needed. The borrowed amount, structured as a loan, is then returned to the group's coffers after one month.

Members of the Loco 4 Group unanimously attest to the positive impact of these loans, facilitating the development of both businesses and homes.

With ready access to cash, they embark

on developmental projects while awaiting returns from their diverse farming enterprises.

Margret Muthoni, another member of the group, credits their financial resilience to the invaluable education provided by Rodi Kenya.

She reflects on the potential vulnerability to expensive loans if not for the insights gained from the organization, avoiding a precarious financial situation they had experienced in the past.

Looking ahead, the Loco 4 Group harbors a vision of expansion, aspiring to augment its membership by welcoming new members into its fold.

As a beacon of financial empowerment and community support, the group continues to make strides in transforming lives and fostering economic resilience among its members.

Poultry Prosperity: Financial Liberation and Community Empowerment through RODI Kenya's Initiative

Margret Muthoni's financial struggles with expensive bank loans, stemming from the lack of a consistent income for her daily needs, have undergone a remarkable transformation.

Formerly reliant on the delayed returns from tea and coffee cultivation, where substantial payments are received only at the year-end as bonuses, Muthoni now revels in the success of a poultry project facilitated by Resource Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI Kenya) in collaboration with Pelum.

The poultry project, initiated after comprehensive training from RODI Kenya, has not only liberated Muthoni from the burden of costly bank loans but has also provided her with a reliable source of income.

Members of the initiative, including Muthoni, were equipped with knowledge of successful poultry farming practices and were further supported with incubators provided by RODI Kenya.

These incubators have become instrumental in hatching chicks, enabling each member to rear them at their respective homes.

Expressing her gratitude, Muthoni acknowledges the poultry project as one of the most impactful endeavors she has been involved in, attributing its success to the support from RODI Kenya and Pelum.

She has embraced a strategic approach of raising chickens to maturity, selling some for immediate income while retaining others for both egg-laying and household consumption.

In addition to the economic empowerment derived from poultry farming, Muthoni and her peers have taken their finan-



cial resilience a step further.

As members of the Loco 4 group, they've established a table banking system, eliminating the need for traditional banks when seeking loans.

Through regular contributions to the group's shares, each member becomes eligible for a loan, with the amount determined by their shareholding.

Muthoni says that each member can access a loan equivalent to twice the amount they have saved within the group.

The success of the original Loco 4 group has been so profound that it has given rise to another independent group, showcasing the ripple effect of empowerment in

the community.

The incubator, a crucial asset in this journey, was donated by RODI Kenya and is located at the homestead of one of the members.

With a remarkable capacity to hold up to 350 eggs, the incubator ensures a swift and efficient chick-raising process for the members, contributing to their economic upliftment within a short span of time.

The initiative stands as a beacon of community empowerment, where sustainable poultry farming not only generates income but also fosters financial independence and resilience.

Harvesting Success:

David Mburu's Water-Wise Farming Revolution Defies Drought and Boosts Prosperity

For many years, David Mburu grappled with the harsh realities of drought, which significantly impacted his farming venture.

Often losing crops to dry spells when rains vanished at critical stages, he faced economic challenges and uncertainty in sustaining his agricultural livelihood.

However, this narrative has undergone a transformative shift, marking a turning point in Mr. Mburu's agricultural journey, all thanks to the innovative water harvesting project he initiated.

The water harvesting project implemented by Mr. Mburu has emerged as a beacon of resilience and sustainability.

No longer does he contend with the devastating effects of drought, as he now ensures a continuous water supply throughout the year.

The implementation involves harvesting rainwater during the rainy season and channeling it into a strategically placed pan on his Matara farm.

The success of this initiative is attributed to the valuable training Mr. Mburu received from Rodi Kenya, an organization dedicated to empowering farmers economically.

Grateful for the skills acquired, he highlights the project's role in mitigating the impact of climate change on his farming operations. The harvested water proves invaluable during dry seasons, enabling him to irrigate crops and achieve bumper harvests.

In an interview at his thriving farm, Mr. Mburu expresses his newfound perspective, stating that he doesn't feel the impact of drought anymore.

"In fact, dry periods are a blessing in disguise, allowing me to produce when other rain-dependent farmers cannot. This means I can sell my products at a premium," he said.

While farmers nationwide grapple with the repercussions of climate change, Mr. Mburu stands resilient, unaffected by the changing weather patterns.

He ingeniously directs runoff water to



Mr Mburu at one of his fish ponds.



Mr Mburu displaying how he releases water from the fish pond to his farm as organic manure.

strategically dug holes across his land, ensuring effective distribution and utilization of this precious resource.

However, Mr. Mburu's innovation extends beyond traditional crop irrigation. He has incorporated a fish pond into his farming ecosystem, reaping additional benefits.

The pond not only yields fish for the local market but also provides nutrient-rich water, serving as fertilizer for his crops.

The farmer's sustainable approach transforms challenges into opportunities, exemplified by his cultivation of tea, avo-

cado, and various vegetables.

Mr. Mburu advocates for fellow farmers to embrace water harvesting, emphasizing the myriad benefits that far outweigh the initial investment costs.

"I urge farmers to embrace water harvesting; this will not only increase their income but also boost food production in the country in the wake of climate change," he says, echoing a call to action for a more sustainable and resilient agricultural future.

WORD *from*

THE PARTNERS

ICE

The Institute for Culture and Ecology (ICE), a member of the PELUM Kenya network, was established in 2006 under the NGO coordination Act. Dedicated to promoting the intrinsic connection between culture and environmental resource management in Kenya.

ICE collaborates with communities, organizations, and individuals at local, regional, and global levels. Through partnerships, ICE aims to integrate diverse knowledge systems and advocate for policies that recognize and leverage traditional knowledge for environmental rehabilitation and conservation.

ICE actively participates in projects like FOSSELI and IWAMA DIFE in collaboration with PELUM Kenya.

These initiatives have significantly influenced ICE's work in livelihood diversification and watershed management. In the FOSSELI project, ICE supported forest-adjacent communities in tea-growing areas facing challenges in sustaining livelihoods.

By facilitating farmer learning exchanges and promoting alternative enterprises such as poultry keeping, food crop value addition, and energy-saving stoves, FOSSELI successfully diversified income streams for target households.

The formation of the Kamburu Green Forum, a local network of community groups, emerged as a response



to climate change issues.

This forum played a crucial role in advocating for local climate policies in Kiambu County, resulting in the development of the Kiambu County Climate Change Act. Additionally, the FOSSELI project contributed to local climate leadership by nominating four Kamburu Green Forum members to the Ward Climate Change Committee.

The IWAMA DIFE project provided hands-on experience for ICE in watershed management. Activities included setting up tree nurseries, planting over 20,000 indigenous trees in the Uplands Forest, and supporting the Community Forest Association in reviewing their Participatory Forest Management Plan.

The project also facilitated the installation of water harvesting units,

empowering farmers to irrigate crops during dry seasons.

Notably, the IWAMA DIFE project sparked agro-ecological transformations. ICE supported the setting up of demonstration gardens, engaged schools in agro-ecological processes, and witnessed the pioneering efforts of Kamburu Secondary in cultivating chemical-free food crops.

Eight young farmers embraced agro-ecology, becoming local champions and generating additional income by providing agro-ecological materials and services.

The latest addition to diversification projects is beekeeping, initiated by a community group with support from ICE. The project, currently with ten hives, aims to expand further, contributing to biodiversity and income generation for the community.

In summary, the FOSSELI and IWAMA DIFE projects have had a profound impact on community initiatives, fostering biodiversity and water conservation, soil rehabilitation, income diversification, local leadership empowerment, and the promotion of agro-ecology.

ICE expresses gratitude to PELUM Kenya and TUDOR Trust for their support in these projects.

For more information about ICE, visit www.icekenya.org.

Martin Muriuki, Executive Director - ICE

Mary Kimotho Champions

Agroecology for a Greener Tomorrow



Mary Kimotho, a farmer in Kibathithi, Kiambu County, has embraced agroecology as a holistic approach to conserving soil and the environment on her farm.

Over the years, she has diligently employed organic products, a milestone she attributes to the valuable training she received from ICE.

Ms. Kimotho's commitment to sustainability is evident in her farm practices. From fertilizers to pesticides, she has been crafting these essential products directly on her premises for the five years.

During our recent visit to her home-stand, we observed her engaged in the production of a harsh brew, an organic concoction specifically designed to control blight in crops.

The health of her potato crop stood out prominently, showcasing a thriving harvest without the use of synthetic chemicals. Given the susceptibility of potatoes to blight, Ms. Kimotho's decision to rely on organic alternatives is strategic, preventing potential losses due to this destructive bacterial disease.

Ms. Kimotho passionately explains that her agroecological farming practices play a pivotal role in environmental conservation. She says that using synthetic chemicals on her land that slants to the river could



Mary Kimotho displaying Bokashi organic fertilizer and harsh brew mixture that she uses on her farm.

mean that the chemical is washed downstream when it rains, causing adverse effects on the ecosystem.

"Organic farming has been of immense benefit to me, not only due to its environmentally friendly nature but also because of its cost-effectiveness, utilizing locally sourced materials," she asserts.

Financially, Ms. Kimotho attests to spending Ksh4,500 to produce a substan-

tial 700 kilograms of Bokashi, an organically made fertilizer.

Her unique advantage is derived from her livestock, as most of the required materials are sourced directly from her farm, significantly reducing production costs.

The only supplementary items she occasionally purchases to create her bio-fertilizer are yeast and molasses, crucial components in the production process.

According to Ms. Kimotho, the bio-products she formulates are not only environmentally sustainable but also contribute essential nutrients, enhancing overall productivity.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms. Kimotho says that after her training from ICE on agroecology, she carefully assessed the economic and health implications of using synthetic products on her farm.

Her conclusion reinforced the wisdom of her decision, recognizing the cost-effectiveness and reduced health risks associated with organic alternatives.

On her diversified farm, Ms. Kimotho cultivates vegetables, maize, and potatoes while also maintaining livestock.

Through her dedication to agroecology, she stands as a beacon of sustainable farming practices, demonstrating that a harmonious relationship with the environment can yield both ecological and economic benefits.



Blossoming Profits:

Gabriel Mbugua's Agroecology Revolution Transforms Flowers and Fortunes

In 2021, Gabriel Mbugua embarked on agroecology farming with a primary focus on environmental conservation—a commitment to Mother Nature.

Little did he anticipate that beyond its ecological benefits and the production of safe foods, agroecology farming would emerge as a lucrative income stream.

Situated in Kamburu, Mr. Mbugua cultivates a variety of crops, with *Arabicum*, an ornamental flower, standing out prom-

inently.

Leveraging a collaborative group effort, the farmer exports these flowers to the Netherlands, a pivotal market for their produce.

Mr Mbugua is one of the beneficiaries who received education on agroecology farming from ICE, in order to conserve the environment and produce safe foods.

Despite cultivating flowers for three years prior, Mr. Mbugua noted a substantial increase in earnings after transitioning to organic farming, attributing the surge to the improved health of the flowers.



Gabriel Mbugua at her ornamental flower farm.

Before adopting agroecology practices, his weekly flower harvest amounted to 5,000 stems. However, with the transition, this figure has risen to an impressive 7,000 stems.

Mr. Mbugua says the valuation of these flowers is based on length and strength, with longer and sturdier stems commanding higher prices.

Categorizing flowers into three height brackets—60cm, 70cm, and 80cm—Mr. Mbugua highlights the premium prices fetched by flowers reaching 80cm.

Organic farming, especially the use of Bokashi bio-fertilizer and boosters, has significantly contributed to the increase in stem height, surpassing the 80cm threshold.

Expressing the benefits of bio-products, Mr. Mbugua underscores their eco-friendly nature and their pivotal role in augmenting income.

European buyers, particularly those within the European Union, have shown immense interest in Mr. Mbugua's flowers. During off-seasons, they closely monitor the resumption of production.

Recent developments within the European Union underscore a growing emphasis on environmentally sustainable farming practices.

The 27-member bloc actively advocates for the ban of some synthetic chemicals used in agriculture, signaling a collective shift towards agroecology.

Through initiatives like the Green Deal, Europe champions the production of safe foods—from farm to table—ensuring the well-being of consumers.

As Kenya relies on the European Union for over 80 percent of its fresh produce market, aligning with these agroecological trends positions farmers like Mr. Mbugua at the forefront of a burgeoning global movement.



WORD *from*

THE PARTNERS

COSDEP

Seven years ago, COSDEP joined a consortium for the Food Security and Livelihoods project, with PELUM Kenya as the lead partner.

The selection of COSDEP was based on its notable work with tea farmers in Kiambu County, the intended beneficiaries of the project.

The main goal was to implement interventions that would assist farmers in diversifying their agricultural practices and reduce their dependence on tea farming.

The target beneficiaries faced various challenges, including unpredictable weather patterns causing production declines, overreliance on costly synthetic fertilizers affecting soil fertility and human health, strained relations within the tea sector, deforestation, interference with riparian zones, and a gap in implementing good agroecological practices.

To address these challenges, the Food Security and Livelihood Improvement project introduced a range of interventions.

Beneficiaries underwent comprehensive training programs covering both theoretical and practical aspects of good agricultural practices.

Exchange visits were organized to expose them to new skills and insights from established farmers. This led to the identification of Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) to champion change within their communities.

Beneficiaries were also introduced



to new technologies, such as renewable energy sources, and connected to organic input suppliers within and outside the consortium.

Under the FOSELI project, the adoption of agroecological agricultural practices surpassed expectations. Tea production increased, farm diversification occurred, and discussions about establishing an organic market outlet gained momentum.

Building on the success of FOSELI, a three-year extension program, IWAMA DIFE, was developed to address identified gaps, especially in water harvesting, natural resource management, and marketing strategies.

The project achieved significant impacts, including increased forest cover in the Aberdares, enhanced water volumes through various water harvesting techniques, improved soil fertility

with advanced bio inputs, heightened food and nutrition security through the consumption of healthy organic produce, increased quantities due to reduced post-harvest losses through value addition, and improved visibility in the organic market.

Throughout the project duration, harmonized partnerships were established with various stakeholders, including the Department of Agriculture, the County Government, the Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Tea Development Authority, local administration, other NGOs, and horizontal networking between project partners under PELUM.

At the organizational level, COSDEP experienced substantial growth and improvement in different operational facets.

The scope of work expanded to include natural resource management, value addition, marketing, and water harvesting technologies. Administrative processes were enhanced, significantly improving overall service delivery.

In light of these achievements, COSDEP expresses gratitude to Tudor Trust UK for their enduring support, PELUM Kenya for effective project coordination, project partners, and dedicated staff members who worked tirelessly for the project's success.

The organization looks forward to engaging in similar collaborations in the future, given the availability of opportunities.

Stanley Kinyanjui, COSDEP CEO

Championing Agroforestry:

The Inspiring Stories of Kiambu Farmers

In 2015, Wilfred Mwaura retired from his extensive teaching career. Unlike many retirees who choose to remain in the city, he opted to relocate to his rural home in Githiga, Kiambu County.

It was there that he earnestly embraced agroforestry as both a means of conserving the environment and generating income.

Trained by COSDEP on agroforestry under the theme “Tree for the Future,” Mwaura has since become a leading advocate for the cultivation of indigenous trees.

He has supplied countless trees to various institutions and individuals, cultivating them for purposes such as fuel, medicine, and fodder for his animals.

One noteworthy tree in his collection is *Trichardria*, with over 40 of them thriving on his farm.

Trichardria stands out due to its versatility. Mwaura uses it for firewood, animal fodder, and fertilizer.

Its multiple uses make it an ideal tree for any farmer, as attested by Mr. Mwaura himself. The leaves of *Trichardria* serve as fodder for his animals, while the branches are used for fuel and fencing within the compound.

Operating a nursery that primarily propagates indigenous trees for sale to other farmers and institutions, Mwaura has taken agroforestry to a new level.

His compound boasts fresh air and an array of shades, all thanks to the trees he has planted. He attributes this milestone to COSDEP, which played a crucial role in teaching him the importance of agroforestry and its impact on the environment.

During the interview, officials from the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate (Kephis) visited Mwaura to consider certifying his tree nursery.

COSDEP’s involvement has been vital in ensuring the certification of the farmer’s nursery, promoting agroforestry in the region.

Beyond tree planting, Mwaura benefits from COSDEP’s provision of vegetables such as amaranth, Chinese cabbage, kale, onions, and pepper, all grown organically.

He utilizes leaves from the trees to produce organic fertilizer, selling the surplus to fellow farmers.



Anthony Muchiri (right) and a member of their group displaying some of the seedlings that they provide to farmers.

In Limuru, John Githanji has been practicing agroforestry for years, thanks to COSDEP’s efforts in advocating for a safe environment.

He has grown various indigenous and fruit trees, including avocados, apples, and palms. COSDEP’s guidance on efficient land use has been invaluable for Githanji and fellow farmers with limited land.

Anthony Muchiri, leading a community-based farmers group, is another beneficiary of agroforestry through the ICE ini-

tiative. ICE purchases seedlings from the group, distributing them to members and organizations for growing.

Muchiri credits this initiative for significantly increasing forest cover. The intercropping of trees in coffee and tea plantations provides shade during the hot season, ensuring consistent productivity even in drought seasons.

Additionally, the leaves that fall from the trees act as natural fertilizer, enhancing crop yields.

Mary Wanyoike's Journey

from Two Hives to Bee Farming Champion with COSDEP Support

Mary Wanyoike and her husband share a longstanding passion for beekeeping, a pursuit they nurtured for many years.

Initially, they engaged in this endeavor on a small scale, managing just two beehives when they started.

However, their journey transformed into a commercial venture with the intervention of the Community Support and Development Program (COSDEP), which provided crucial training.

Under COSDEP's guidance, Ms. Wanyoike expanded her beekeeping operation to over 20 beehives, with nearly half of them generously supplied by the organization.

Not only did COSDEP impart essential knowledge, but they also taught her how to craft beehives using locally available materials, significantly reducing her expenses.



Additionally, COSDEP equipped Ms. Wanyoike with a centrifugal machine for processing harvested honey.

Hailing from Kambaa, Kiambu County, she has emerged as a beekeeping champion in the region, attracting numerous farmers and groups seeking training at her home.

Expressing gratitude for COSDEP's training and support, Ms. Wanyoike actively imparts her knowledge to other farmers, having trained over five groups and numerous individuals.

COSDEP and the Institute of Collaborative Engagement (ICE) regularly refer groups and individuals to her for training.

Her expertise and products have received certification from the Kenya Bee Research Institute, having been trained by the institution as well.

In collaboration with Philadelphia group members, Ms. Wanyoike has established a honey shop in Githunguri Shopping Centre.

This shop serves as a platform for all members of her group to sell their honey. Emphasizing her commitment to agro-ecology farming, Ms. Wanyoike highlights the chemical-free environment where her honey is produced as a key factor in its popularity.

Despite high demand, Ms. Wanyoike acknowledges that their production is insufficient, attributing the popularity of their honey to its chemical-free nature.

Caren Wekesa, a COSDEP field officer, commends Ms. Wanyoike as a role model in bee farming for the region, stating that all their bee farming training and benchmarking activities are conducted at her farm. Furthermore, COSDEP has supported her enterprise by providing packaging materials.

Despite being pure and organic honey, they sell it at Ksh800 for a one kilogramme tin, considering the difficult economic times that Kenyans are going through.



Mary Wanyoike demonstrates how a centrifugal honey processing machine works.



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Under COSDEP's guidance, Ms. Wanyoike expanded her beekeeping operation to over 20 beehives, with nearly half of them generously supplied by the organization.

KFS and Local Community Forge a Green Partnership In Restoring Forest and Riparian Land



Caren Wekesa at one of the bamboo trees planted in Uplands.

In the heart of Kiambu, a remarkable alliance has blossomed between the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the local community, as they join hands to restore and preserve vital forest and riparian lands.

At the forefront of this transformative collaboration is Flasih Wanjiku, member of the Community Forest Association (CFA).

The Community Forest Association plays a pivotal role in this symbiotic relationship, working hand in hand with the Kenya Forest Service to ensure the conservation of both forested areas and riparian lands.

Unlike traditional conservation approaches, the community members have embraced a unique strategy: integrating tree care into their agricultural practices.

As they tend to their crops, they nurture and protect the trees that share the same soil, fostering a harmonious coexistence between farming and forestry.

One of the standout features of this agroforestry initiative is the cultivation of bamboo along the riverbanks.

Recognized for its water-friendly properties, bamboo serves a dual purpose – preventing soil erosion along the riverbanks and supporting the local ecosystem.

The riverbanks, once vulnerable to degradation, are now fortified by the resilient growth of bamboo, thanks to the careful cultivation efforts of the community.

The collaboration between the Kenya Forest Service and the local community extends beyond mere planting; it is a true partnership where each party plays a crucial role.

The Kenya Forest Service relies on the community's intimate knowledge of the land to identify gaps in the forest that need attention.

This reliance on local insight ensures that trees are planted where they



Flasih Wanjiku at the indigenous tree cover that was planted by the community in collaboration with the KFS.

are most needed, contributing to a more effective and sustainable reforestation effort.

The roots of this collaborative endeavor trace back to 2007 when the Community Forest Association partnered with the Coalition for Sustainable Development (Cosdep).

Under the guidance of Cosdep in 2017, the community planted over 15,000 trees. However, the collaboration went beyond tree planting – Cosdep also provided leadership training and empowerment sessions, equipping community members with the skills and knowledge needed to take charge of their environmental stewardship.

Cosdep purchases seedlings directly from the local community, creating a sustainable econom-

ic loop that benefits the members and impacts positively on the environment.

As the community witnesses the literal and metaphorical fruits of their labor, they also witness the return of water to the landscape.

The bamboo, now flourishing along the riverbanks, acts as a catalyst, rejuvenating the water system.

Seven years down the line, the vision of a restored and thriving ecosystem is becoming a reality, thanks to the unity of the Kenya Forest Service and the dedicated members of the Community Forest Association.

Together, they are not just planting trees; they are cultivating a future where nature and community coalesce in harmony.



Dhania crop that has been integrated with the forest.

ICE and Kenya Forest Association

Forge Sustainable Alliance Empowering Uplands Community Through Innovative Forest Management



The launch of the participatory forest management plan by the the project through ICE in collaboration with KFS and Community Forest Association

In an effort toward sustainable forest management, ICE has joined forces with the Kenya Forest Association (KFA) to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the Uplands Community.

This collaboration aims to foster community engagement and environmental conservation through a carefully devised participatory forest management plan.

The initiative gained momentum with ICE's partnership with the Uplands Community Forest Association and the KFS Uplands Forest Station manager.

Together, they conducted a comprehensive review of the existing participatory forest management plan that had been in operation.

In early 2023, the IWAMA project, spearheaded by Pelum lent its support to this environmentally conscious initiative.

Following the successful completion of

the participatory plan review, IWAMA continued its support, leading to the formalisation of a forest management agreement.

This agreement, signed in November 2023 between the Kenya Forest Association and the Uplands Community Forest Association, serves as a cornerstone for sustainable practices that benefit both the community and the environment.

Under this agreement, the Uplands Community has become an active participant in the forest's management alongside the Kenya Forest Association.

Gathuru Mburu, project officer for the initiative, highlighted the community's newfound role, stating, "The community is now participating in the management of the forest with KFS, and they will derive income through farming crops that are friendly to the forest's biodiversity."

This innovative approach allows the community to generate meaningful income while ensuring the preservation of the for-

est's delicate ecosystem.

Crops such as mushrooms and beekeeping have been identified as nature-friendly enterprises that contribute to the restoration of the ecosystem without causing harm to biodiversity.

In an era where environmental sustainability is paramount, this collaborative effort signifies a step forward in achieving a harmonious balance between community livelihoods and ecological preservation.

The adoption of nature-based income generation strategies not only empowers the Uplands Community but also sets a commendable precedent for sustainable development in other regions grappling with similar challenges.

As the partnership between ICE, KFA, and the Uplands Community flourishes, it stands as a testament to the positive impact that collective action can have on fostering environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Collaborating Partners



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