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Challenges for Agricultural Research”

How Can Organic Agriculture Contribute to Sustainable Development?

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Abstract

Organic agriculture can, especially in poorer countries, contribute to meaningful socio-economical and ecologically sustainable development. On the one hand, this is due to the organic practice, which means management of local resources (e.g. local seed varieties, dung, etc.) and therefore cost effectiveness. On the other hand, the market for organic products — at local and international level — has tremendous prospects for growth and offers to creative producers and exporters from the south some excellent opportunities to improve their incomes and living conditions. As to whether organic agriculture is a viable alternative for a particular holding, is something, which can only be clarified case by case.

What are the potentials of organic agriculture for the solution of the hunger and poverty problems? What can organic agriculture contribute to socially and ecologically sustainable development in poor countries?

At the core of organic agriculture are the promotion of soil fertility, biodiversity (e.g. native flora and fauna), locally adapted production methods and the renouncement of chemical inputs. Such methods and the cultivation of diverse crops stabilise the delicate eco-systems in the tropics and reduce drought sensitivity or pest infestations. Organic production lowers the risk of yield failure, stabilises returns and therefore enhances food security of small farmer's families. The author presents examples from international cooperation projects and discusses the following hypothesis on the basis of these examples:

- Organic agriculture is sustainable and diverse;
- Organic farmers conserve resources;
- Organic farms produce more;
- Organic products provide market access and create added value;
- Organic agriculture raises self-confidence and autonomy;
- The organic movement mobilises new forces and partnerships.

Moreover, the author presents a farming system comparison trial, which is starting in kenya and india in cooperation with FiBl and local partners. The aim of this trial is to analyze the contribution of organic agriculture to sustainable development.

Keywords: Farming system, organic agriculture, sustainable development