

Organic farming for southern Africa under consideration

Prof. Dr Gerold Rahmann, Director of the Research Institute of Organic Farming of the German Government (www.vti.bund.de) and Dr Heinrich Rahlfs, Organic Marketing Specialist and Inspector of BCS (organic certification body, www.bcs-oeko.com), were recently in Zimbabwe and took the opportunity to visit ICRISAT-Bulawayo.

On 29 July, they discussed organic farming as an option for smallscale farmers with the Goat Forum, a network of key stakeholders in the goat sector that promotes livestock production, marketing and policy development.

Organic farming represents food quantity and quality with modern facilities and high management skills. Several African countries have adopted this as a strategy to increase incomes for smallscale farmers and they have undergone a process of organic certification and marketing of high premium products. Farmers can gain substantially more income when raising productivity from "low input – low output farming" towards "low input – medium output farming" and supplying international premium food markets.

In 2008, organic farming was practiced on 32 million hectares in more than 120 countries all over the world. The total market value was about US\$46 billion in 2008. African countries such as Uganda have made major



Dr Rahmann and Dr Rahlfs at a local goat auction in Matopos, Zimbabwe.

progress in organic farming, but southern Africa has not yet capitalized on these markets. For example, a mere 40 ha are certified for organic production in Zimbabwe.

Fair trade and organic trade are merging to provide a niche market for high income consumers. The main challenge is to guarantee a homogeneity of product quality throughout the year. The consumers and traders play a key role in defining product quality and niche demands. Recently, Arab countries established a demand for organic products and have become the biggest importer of organic food, particularly meat, and could become an important trade partner for southern Africa. The key would be to identify the marketable meat products and prices, identify a core group of innovative farmers and support them

with access and information about these markets. The market incentives would drive those farmers to improving management.

An enthusiastic discussion followed the presentation. Some of the leading questions revolved around the issues about identifying farmers to be targeted and how to enhance incomes through market-led approaches. Most of the farming in Zimbabwe is done close to the standards of organic farming, but the products are not certified as organic. It could be an option for "low input and smallscale farming" to move from subsistence towards market-oriented farming, which could help to improve productivity through better knowledge of natural nutrient and pest management in crop and livestock production.

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China-ICARDA-ICRISAT Launch CEDA

A historic milestone was reached in strengthening the long-standing partnership between China and ICRISAT through the inauguration of a joint Center of Excellence for Dryland Agriculture (CEDA) at the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) in Beijing on 4 August. This operationalizes the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by CAAS, ICARDA and ICRISAT for a tripartite R&D collaboration.

CEDA was jointly inaugurated by Drs Huajun Tang, Vice-President, CAAS, Director General William Dar and Mahmoud Solh, Director General, ICARDA in the presence of joint delegations from ICRISAT (Peter Nannes and Suhas Wani), ICARDA (Kamil Shideed and Weicheng Wu), and high-level officials from CAAS, including Dr Mei Xurong, DG, Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development in Agriculture (IEDA).

The ICRISAT and ICARDA delegations were received at CAAS on 3 August where they held detailed discussions with Dr Huajun Tang, Dr Gong Xifeng, Dr Feng Dongxin and Mr Liu Yukun, Division of Bilateral Cooperation.

Dr Dar gave a presentation titled *Poverty, water scarcity and climate change: opportunities and challenges in dryland agriculture*, thus setting the scene for joint collaboration under CEDA.



Director General William Dar with Dr Mahmoud Solh, Dr Huajun Tang, Dr Mei Xurong, Dr Peter Nannes, Dr SP Wani and other representatives at the CEDA inauguration in Beijing.

Lia Navarro trains at ICRISAT

Lia Michelle J Navarro, daughter of Communication Director, Rex Navarro has joined ICRISAT-Patancheru for an on-the-job training with the Communication Office and Housing and Food Services from 3 to 28 August. Her main focus is on frontline services. Lia has a Bachelor of Science degree in Tourism Management from the De La Salle University in Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines.

Lia had earlier worked as a Park Assistant at the Busch Gardens in Tampa Bay, Florida, United States, and in June and July this year, she worked on frontline hotel services at the Taj Deccan Hotel in Hyderabad, India.

At ICRISAT, she will become acquainted with the Visitors and Travel Services besides other



Lia Navarro.

functions of the Communication Office. She will also spend time in the Guestel business center and learn about the procedures and processes of housekeeping,

front-office management, kitchen and food preparation, and event management at ICRISAT.

Thought for the week

Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life.

– Sandra Carey



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