ISAN MAGAZINE

FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

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About ISAN Magazine

ISAN Magazine was born in 2021 out of the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa, a project funded by GIZ and operationalised by African NGOs through five knowledge hubs making up the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa. Today, we are working towards financial sustainability, partnering with leading NGOs and movements to bring you news you can use!

ISAN Magazine is dedicated to building a strong network of informed civil society actors and organisations across the southern African region to advocate for organic agriculture and agroecology as a framework for regional food and farming systems.

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Editor's Note

By Fortunate Nyakanda

This edition arrives at a moment when Africa's food and farming systems are undergoing profound change. Across the region, farmers, youth leaders, researchers and community organisers are responding to climate shocks, economic pressures and shifting landscapes with remarkable ingenuity. Their stories, captured throughout this issue, remind us that the future of sustainable agriculture is not being shaped in boardrooms, but in fields, seed banks, homesteads and community networks across Southern Africa.

From the research breakthroughs shared at the African Organic Research Conference in Egypt to the climate-resilient farming practices emerging in Zambia and Zimbabwe, this edition highlights the steady growth of ecological farming knowledge across the continent. We also spotlight the rising leadership of women and young people—innovators who are redefining what it means to farm with care, creativity and purpose.

In these pages, you will find examples of resilience forged under pressure, but also of celebration: of indigenous crops, of community-led movements, of the artistry of food and of the power of shared learning. Whether through seed saving, regenerative enterprise, policy advocacy or youth-led initiatives, each contribution in this issue shows how African solutions are taking root and expanding possibility. Alongside these developments, this issue also reflects a broader shift taking place across the continent: a reclaiming of narrative power.

For too long, stories about African food systems have been told from the outside, focusing on deficits rather than the immense creativity and capability within communities. We highlight voices that are charting their own paths. These contributions challenge narrow narratives and show that Africa's food future is being authored by those closest to the land—people whose knowledge, leadership and lived experience hold the solutions our region needs.

As you read, I invite you to reflect on how these stories connect to your own work, community or organisation. Transformation does not happen in isolation. It grows through collaboration, courage and the steady commitment to building food systems that honour both people and planet.

Organically yours
Fortunate Nyakanda

KCOA

Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa

KCOA is a collaborative country-led partnership that aims to scale up the adoption of organic and agroecological farming practices through a network of five Knowledge Hubs in Africa. KCOA partners are based in 18 countries and with the involvement of over 30 civil-society organisations.

Scan to discover more!

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Quick catch up...

Stay in the know with our quick roundup of strategies, declarations upcoming events, must reads and recently released resources.

African Union's CAADP Strategy and Action Plan: 2026-2035

Adopted in January 2025, this strategy titled *Building Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Africa* will support implementation of the Kampala Declaration. In the Kampala Declaration, 55 African member states made six commitments to transform and strengthen the agri-food system in Africa. This includes increasing agricultural production by 45%, growing local food processing to 35% of agrifood GDP, tripling intra-African trade and reducing post-harvest losses by 50%. The ambitious plan requires $100 billion in investment and recommitting African governments to spending at least 10% of national budgets on agrifood systems.

Critics argue that it repeats past promises without tackling the structural barriers that stalled earlier progress. The plan lacks clear accountability and financing mechanisms, and its commitments to gender and youth inclusion are seen as weak. Many warn that its focus on productivity and agro-industrial growth risks marginalising smallholders and agroecological approaches. Questions also remain over resource mobilisation, data transparency and genuine participation by civil society. Without stronger accountability and a shift toward equitable, ecological food systems, the strategy may entrench rather than transform existing inequalities.

Find the full strategy and action plan here.

Pan-African Declaration on the Future of Biodigital Technologies in Food and Agriculture

Participants at the first Pan-African Convening on the Future of Biodigital Technologies in Food and Agriculture reaffirmed their commitment to defend Africa's food sovereignty and resilience amid emerging digital and biological technologies. They warned that tools like AI and synthetic biology risk deepening inequality, corporate control and ecological harm if imposed without justice or consent. The Declaration calls for technologies to serve agroecology, indigenous knowledge and community rights, not corporate profit, and urges African governments and movements to secure data justice, seed sovereignty and democratic control of Africa's digital future. **Read the full Declaration here.**

Must reads

- **Using evidence in policy and practice: Lessons from Africa**. This book explores how African governments can use evidence to improve their policies and programmes. It contains five case studies showcasing ways this has been done, presenting what works and what does not. Download here.
- **Bringing agroecology to scale in Eastern and Southern Africa: Update on countries' National Agroecology Strategies**, this brief provides a short update on the development National Agroecology Strategies in 8 countries in East and Southern Africa, highlighting key takeaways. Download here.
- **2025 EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy, Sustainable and Just Food Systems** [Summary report], presenting the most comprehensive global scientific evaluation of food systems to date. Download here.

Must reads continued...

- **Policy Brief on Agroecology as Africa's Climate Solution** presents AFSA's position on enhancing the resilience of African food systems and agriculture to the climate crisis through agroecology, calling for urgent policy shifts and funding support for agroecology. Download here.
- **Challenging the Green Revolution:** Exposing AGRA's undue influence on African agricultural policies that shows how AGRA influences agricultural policies in a deliberate attempt to orient farming systems towards industrial models. Download here.

Interesting articles

- Indigenous knowledge and agroecology should be at the centre of food systems.
- Five takeaways from the 2025 Africa Food Systems Forum.
- Aid cuts spark a rethink of African food systems rooted in agroecology.
- Opinion: Food aid is in crisis. So, let's stop funding agrochemicals.
- Growing resilience: how agroecology is transforming SADC's food future.
- Is organic farming more profitable than ordinary practices?
- Growing embrace of organic agriculture boosts demand for biofertilisers.

Resources

- **Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa:**
  - Namibia Nature Foundation's Low-tech Agroecology Guide poster series covering mixed alley cropping with pigeon pea, making biochar, water harvesting with pits and trenches and fencing. Download here.
  - Sustainability Institute's Beyond Attendance: Tips for Meaningful, Inclusive Gender Work in Projects tipsheet that shares practical ways to make projects, farms or workplaces more inclusive of women. Download here.
- **Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa:**
  - Advocacy Messaging Handbook for Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) that provides concise messaging for advocacy work with policymakers to make the case for FMSS. Download here.

Days of commemoration

- **African Day of School Feeding 1 March:** In 2016, the African Union acknowledged the crucial role of Home-Grown School Feeding in advancing education, nutrition, agriculture, rural development and gender equality by declaring 1 March to be commemorated as the Africa Day of School Feeding. Campaigns on this day showcase the transformative role of school feeding programmes across the continent.

- **Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day 3 March:** In 2012, the African Union adopted a decision to rename the day as Africa Environment and Wangari Maathai Day to commemorate the incredible legacy of Professor Wangari Muta Maathai. She was a visionary environmentalist, feminist and advocate of Earth jurisprudence. Founder of the Green Belt Movement, she mobilised Kenyan women to plant millions of trees, restoring degraded ecosystems, improving food and water security and strengthening the bond between people and nature. A believer that "culture is coded wisdom", Wangari championed biocultural diversity and the inclusion of Earth-centred principles in Kenya's constitution.

Funding opportunities

- **Welthungerhilfe Global Food System Challenge**: This Challenge seeks innovations at the intersection of three key areas: Safe, nutritious food for healthy diets; Sustainable or regenerative practices that keep food systems within planetary boundaries; and Equitable access to affordable, appealing and trusted food. Find out more here. Deadline: 15 December 2025.

Feature: A Complete Halt to Alluvial Mining in Zimbabwe: An Analysis of Statutory Instrument 188 of 2024

By Hazel Tariro Chimbiro

Caption: A miner shovels soil and gravel in search of minerals at an alluvial mining site Credit: Hazel Chimbiro

Introduction and Background

Zimbabwe's mining sector has long been a pillar of the economy, contributing significantly to GDP. Yet, it has also drawn criticism for its environmental and social impacts. Mining often leaves behind deforestation, siltation, water pollution and ecosystem degradation. The 2013 Constitution enshrines environmental rights in Section 73, requiring development to balance economic and ecological concerns. Similarly, the National Development Strategy (2021–2025) calls for expanding rehabilitation of mined areas from 2 500 hectares in 2020 to 10 000 hectares by 2025.

In recent years, the government launched a Responsible Mining Audit, revealing widespread violations such as operating without Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), unsafe chemical storage and waste discharge. Among the most damaging activities was alluvial mining — extraction of minerals from river sediments. This method, though lucrative, has devastated rivers and water systems.
In response, the government introduced Statutory Instrument (SI) 188 of 2024, which unconditionally bans alluvial mining. This article reviews the evolution of regulations and analyzes the implications.

Evolution of Alluvial Mining Regulations

2014 Regulations

The Environmental Management (Control of Alluvial Mining) Regulations 2014 required EIAs before special mining grants could be issued. They prohibited mining within 200 metres of water bodies, wetlands or riverbanks, and banned the use of chemicals such as mercury and cyanide. Violators faced fines or imprisonment, and courts could order environmental remediation under the 'polluter pays principle.'

2018 Amendments

Amendments in 2018 extended prohibitions by increasing buffer zones around rivers and banning construction of processing plants, slimes dams, and settling ponds within 500 metres of watercourses.

2021 Amendments

The 2021 amendments tightened restrictions, requiring ministerial approval under "exceptional circumstances." They banned mining within 200 metres of rivers, lakes and wetlands but still left room for ministerial discretion. EIAs became mandatory, and violations could result in fines, imprisonment or confiscation of equipment.

The Turning Point: SI 188 of 2024

By 2024, evidence showed large-scale mechanical alluvial mining had caused widespread siltation, pollution and destruction of river ecosystems. Cabinet directed an immediate ban, formalised through SI 188 of 2024.

This regulation repealed earlier laws and unconditionally prohibited alluvial mining or prospecting in any river or public stream, regardless of whether miners held grants, EIAs or ministerial approval. All previously valid licenses and grants became void.

Key Features of the Ban

- Absolute prohibition: No exceptions for special grants or ministerial approval.
- Rehabilitation obligations: Miners were required to cease operations immediately and initiate rehabilitation within 30 days, though the regulations failed to specify what these measures entail.

- Penalties: Contraventions still carry fines up to level 14 (approx. US$5 000) or 12 months' imprisonment.
- Seizure of assets: Police and inspectors may seize minerals, machinery or vehicles, with courts deciding on forfeiture. Unlike previous rules, forfeiture is no longer automatic.

Enforcement Progress

Since the ban's introduction, enforcement has been visible. By December 2024, authorities had arrested 344 illegal miners. A September 2025 Cabinet update confirmed that alluvial mining had largely ceased in most provinces, and focus has shifted toward rehabilitation of degraded sites.

The government has reaffirmed the **polluter pays principle**, with perpetrators bearing liability for rehabilitation. Legislative reforms are being developed to strengthen enforcement and penalties.

Civil Society's Role: ZELO's Contribution

The Zimbabwe Environmental Law Organisation (ZELO) has been instrumental in advocating for responsible mining. Through the Zimbabwe Accountability and Citizen Engagement (ZIMACE) project, ZELO promotes Environmental, Social and Governance accountability. Activities include:

- Scientific monitoring: Water quality tests in Bubi, Mbembesi, Penhalonga and Shurugwi revealed significant pollution from mining.
- Policy engagement: ZELO presented findings at the 2024 Zimbabwe Alternative Mining Indaba, leading to the ZAMI declaration that influenced the alluvial mining ban.
- Parliamentary support: ZELO builds capacity for lawmakers to strengthen oversight of mining practices.
- Community involvement: Training in water quality monitoring enables local communities to report illegal mining and ensure compliance.

Recommendations

1. Effective implementation

The Environmental Management Agency (EMA) needs adequate resources to monitor compliance. Without strong enforcement, illegal alluvial mining could resurface.

2. Stronger penalties

Despite the ban, penalties remain unchanged since 2014. A fine of US$5,000 is negligible for mining companies. More deterrent penalties are required, and judicial officers need awareness training on the environmental consequences of lenient sentencing.

3. Community awareness

Public education campaigns should highlight the value of river ecosystems and the dangers of alluvial mining. Communities can play a frontline role in reporting violations.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

EMA should establish a scientific framework to monitor the ecological recovery of rivers over time, using data to assess the ban's effectiveness.

5. Alternative livelihoods

Many communities turned to mining as a survival strategy, particularly during droughts. The government should invest in sustainable alternatives, such as eco-tourism, vocational training and climate-resilient agriculture. Support for artisanal miners to transition to safer, sustainable practices is also critical.

6. Partnerships

Collaboration between EMA, NGOs and development partners can strengthen compliance, rehabilitation and community engagement.

Conclusion

The ban on alluvial mining marks a historic milestone in Zimbabwe's environmental governance. SI 188 of 2024 eliminates the legal loopholes that previously allowed destructive riverbed mining to continue. However, the effectiveness of this bold step will depend on consistent enforcement, stronger penalties, community engagement, and investment in sustainable alternatives.

With coordinated action, Zimbabwe can protect its rivers and ecosystems while pursuing inclusive, sustainable development.

Movements & Advocacy

This **Advocacy and Movements** section highlights the determined, imaginative work of southern African organisations, alliances and community networks reshaping food and farming from the ground up. These groups are not seeking minor adjustments to the status quo. They are advancing alternatives grounded in justice, ecological care and the shared right of communities to define their own food systems. Across the region, advocates are promoting agroecology as a foundation for resilience, sovereignty and fairer futures. Their efforts challenge the structural inequities of industrial agriculture and redirect power towards farmers, Indigenous knowledge keepers and local institutions. Through policy engagement, farmer training, seed stewardship, community mobilisation and many other forms of organising, they are transforming both the landscape and the conversation.

In this section, we share their stories. They show that food is a nexus of land, culture, identity and biodiversity, and that meaningful change grows from collective action.

Building the Foundations of Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) in Southern Africa

By Fortunate Nyakanda, Representative of the EOA-I interim technical working group

In 2011, African Heads of State adopted the African Union Decision EX.CL/Dec.621 (XVIII) on Organic Farming during the 18th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This landmark decision committed Member States to integrate Ecological Organic Agriculture (EOA) into national agricultural systems by 2025. The Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative (EOA-I) was subsequently established to implement this vision, promoting ecologically sound farming that enhances resilience, food security and sustainability.

In 2013, a Continental Steering Committee (CSC) on EOA-I was established, chaired by the African Union Commission and comprising development partners, and regional representatives. The Biovision Africa Trust is Secretariat to this CSC. To date, four subregions—Eastern, Western, Central and Northern Africa—have developed active EOA-I programmes. Southern Africa, however, lagged in implementation until 2024, when renewed efforts began to align the region with the 2011 AU declaration.

Laying the Groundwork: ITWG Formation

To accelerate progress, the CSC convened a virtual meeting with support from the Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa on 21 June 2024, where southern African organisations and individuals nominated representatives to form an Interim Technical Working Group (ITWG). Guided by a terms of reference, the ITWG's mandate is to spearhead establishment of the Southern Africa Regional Steering Committee (SA-RSC) preceded by creation of national EOA-I structures across SADC's 16 member countries. The ITWG also promotes stakeholder coordination, policy dialogue and progress reporting to the CSC.

Representatives from Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe were endorsed in June 2024. While implementation began with these active member countries, engagements continue to bring additional Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries on board as structures evolve.

Regional Progress & Engagement with SADC

Over the past 14 months, the ITWG has worked to secure formal recognition of EOA-I within SADC. With support from the African Union Commission, Economic Community of African States, the East African Community and the EOA-I Secretariat, the initiative was presented to SADC officials in Gaborone in July 2024.

SADC responded positively, appointing Mr Easiah Tjelele as focal contact and pledging to align EOA-I with existing programmes. The ITWG has since been invited to brief the Directors of Agriculture from SADC Member States in November 2025—a critical step toward regional policy harmonisation and coordinated action.

Country-level Achievements

- **Botswana** established the Botswana Ecological Association (BEA) in 2025 with ITWG support. The Ministry of Agriculture endorsed a National Steering Committee, appointed a CAADP focal person as liaison, and integrated EOA-I into the draft National Agricultural Policy. BEA is planning farmer training on organic seed production and Participatory Guarantee Systems.
- **Malawi and Mauritius** are advancing EOA-I through advocacy and awareness programmes—Malawi is building political buy-in while Mauritius is mobilising farmer associations for national engagement.

- **Namibia** is integrating EOA-I into its Strategy for the Transformation of the Agri-food Sector, with its Ministry of Agriculture. The National Steering Committee will also serve as the Agroecology and Organic Agriculture Technical Working Group under the strategy, supporting the agriculture sector in Namibia. The group has met twice and is currently working on establishing an action plan.
- **South Africa** continues implementing agroecology and organic agriculture initiatives aligned with African Union frameworks while pursuing stronger interdepartmental buy-in.
- **Mozambique and Zambia** are re-engaging and aligning national EOA-I processes through their CAADP focal points.
- **Zimbabwe** has mainstreamed EOA-I under the National Agriculture Policy Framework's Sustainability and Resilience Pillar, aligned with the Agroecology Policy and National Development Strategy 2 (2026–2030). The Ministry of Agriculture has appointed a national focal person and is preparing to launch a multi-stakeholder EOA-I platform, possibly in 2026.

Challenges and Opportunities

Progress has been uneven across countries. Earlier efforts in some were interrupted by government changes, requiring restarts. Persistent challenges include limited funding, weak policy coordination and low government responsiveness, all of which constrain national and regional activities and require attention by the ITWG.

The ITWG calls for enhanced technical and financial support from the African Union Commission and Africa Union Development Agency-NEPAD to strengthen advocacy, coordination and implementation.

Greater engagement from SADC and the Continental EOA-I Secretariat is also needed to strengthen the ITWG work, especially in advocacy training, technical backstopping and communication. Sustained national government commitment remains critical for institutionalising EOA-I processes across the region.

Next Steps

The ITWG's immediate priorities include:

- Finalising national steering committees across remaining SADC countries by March 2026.
- Securing partner funding to support physical regional meetings and establishment of the Regional Steering Committee by June 2026. Here, leveraging existing national and regional initiatives is key. The ITWG will conduct some scoping to identify these key initiatives and explore linkages.
- Strengthening advocacy and policy linkages with SADC, ensuring EOA-I is mainstreamed into regional frameworks and investment plans.

National and Regional Platforms will serve as multi-stakeholder forums to coordinate EOA implementation, share experiences, mobilise resources and monitor integration of EOA into government strategies and programmes.

Conclusion

The journey to institutionalise EOA-I in southern Africa is gaining momentum. Milestones such as Botswana's registration, Zimbabwe's and Namibia's policy integration, and SADC's growing involvement demonstrate collective commitment. While progress varies among countries, coordinated action and sustained support from the CSC and SADC Secretariat will be key to making EOA-I a cornerstone of sustainable agriculture in the region—anchored in resilience, inclusivity and sustainability.

EOA-I Strategic Areas of Impact

- Research, training and extension
- Information and communication
- Value chain and market development
- Networking and partnerships
- Policy and programme development
- Institutional capacity development

Find our more at https://eoai-africa.org/

African Organic Research Conference (AFROREC), Egypt

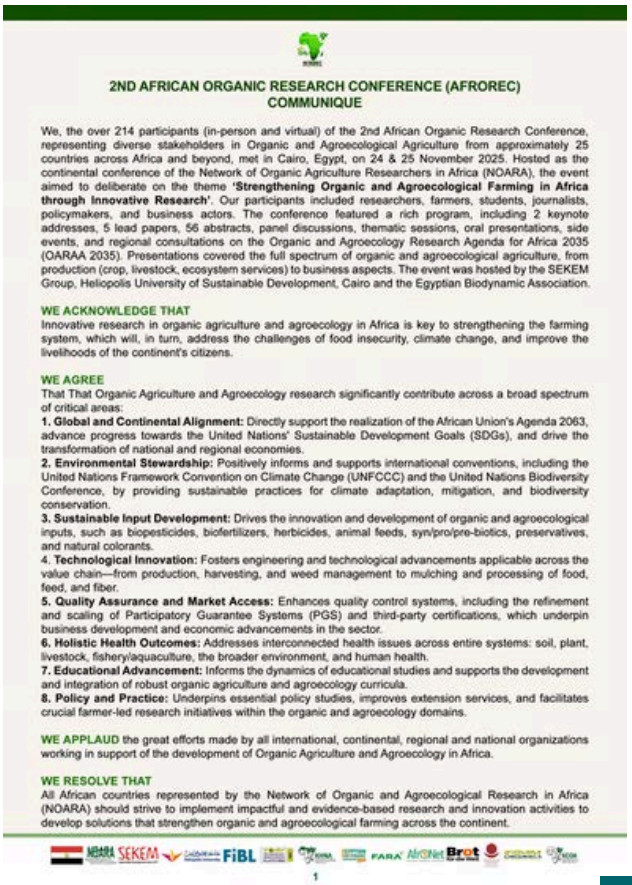
By Stefanie Swanepoel, KHSA Communications Manager

Caption: Participants at 2nd AFROREC Conference, Heliopolis University, Cairo, Egypt Credit: AFROREC

On 24 and 25 November, the second African Organic Research Conference (AFROREC) was held at Heliopolis University in Cairo. Researchers and practitioners from across the continent, including representatives from AfrOnet, the African Union's Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)-International, FiBL, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa and the regional KCOA hubs, gathered to share new evidence and highlight advances in organic and agroecological research. Keynotes, panels and virtual presentations pointed to steady growth in knowledge, practice and collaboration across Africa.

A side-event hosted by AfrOnet, EOA-I, FiBL and NOARA presented new data showing rising adoption of organic and agroecological approaches across the continent. The conference also served as a platform to validate NOARA's 10-year research roadmap, developed through extensive consultations with 270 stakeholders from 32 countries. These priorities were endorsed in a dedicated session with participants online and in person, paving the way for a coordinated, continent-wide agenda for research, investment and policy. The resulting communique is shared below.

For more information, email NOARA.



2ND AFRICAN ORGANIC RESEARCH CONFERENCE (AFROREC) COMMUNIQUE

We, the over 214 participants (in-person and virtual) of the 2nd African Organic Research Conference, representing diverse stakeholders in Organic and Agroecological Agriculture from approximately 25 countries across Africa and beyond, met in Cairo, Egypt, on 24 & 25 November 2025. Hosted as the continental conference of the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), the event aimed to deliberate on the theme **'Strengthening Organic and Agroecological Farming in Africa through Innovative Research'**. Our participants included researchers, farmers, students, journalists, policymakers, and business actors. The conference featured a rich program, including 2 keynote addresses, 5 lead papers, 56 abstracts, panel discussions, thematic sessions, oral presentations, side events, and regional consultations on the Organic and Agroecology Research Agenda for Africa 2035 (OARAA 2035). Presentations covered the full spectrum of organic and agroecological agriculture, from production (crop, livestock, ecosystem services) to business aspects. The event was hosted by the SEKEM Group, Heliopolis University of Sustainable Development, Cairo and the Egyptian Biodynamic Association.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT

Innovative research in organic agriculture and agroecology in Africa is key to strengthening the farming system, which will, in turn, address the challenges of food insecurity, climate change, and improve the livelihoods of the continent's citizens.

WE AGREE

That That Organic Agriculture and Agroecology research significantly contribute across a broad spectrum of critical areas:

1. **Global and Continental Alignment:** Directly support the realization of the African Union's Agenda 2063, advance progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and drive the transformation of national and regional economies.
2. **Environmental Stewardship:** Positively informs and supports international conventions, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, by providing sustainable practices for climate adaptation, mitigation, and biodiversity conservation.
3. **Sustainable Input Development:** Drives the innovation and development of organic and agroecological inputs, such as biopesticides, biofertilizers, herbicides, animal feeds, syn/pro/pre-biotics, preservatives, and natural colorants.
4. **Technological Innovation:** Fosters engineering and technological advancements applicable across the value chain—from production, harvesting, and weed management to mulching and processing of food, feed, and fiber.
5. **Quality Assurance and Market Access:** Enhances quality control systems, including the refinement and scaling of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and third-party certifications, which underpin business development and economic advancements in the sector.
6. **Holistic Health Outcomes:** Addresses interconnected health issues across entire systems: soil, plant, livestock, fishery/aquaculture, the broader environment, and human health.
7. **Educational Advancement:** Informs the dynamics of educational studies and supports the development and integration of robust organic agriculture and agroecology curricula.
8. **Policy and Practice:** Underpins essential policy studies, improves extension services, and facilitates crucial farmer-led research initiatives within the organic and agroecology domains.

WE APPLAUD the great efforts made by all international, continental, regional and national organizations working in support of the development of Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa.

WE RESOLVE THAT

All African countries represented by the Network of Organic and Agroecological Research in Africa (NOARA) should strive to implement impactful and evidence-based research and innovation activities to develop solutions that strengthen organic and agroecological farming across the continent.

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CALL FOR ACTIONS:

1. **Regularly Showcase Innovations:** Regularly showcase organic and agroecology research products and innovations at the continental, regional, and national levels for the purpose of upscaling the production of organic and agroecological produce/products across the continent
2. **Uptake and finalize OARAA 2036:** The work-in-progress Organic and Agroecology Research Agenda for Africa (OARAA 2036) based on need assessment of the stakeholders should be led and finalized by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in collaboration with regional agriculture research bodies in Africa, and support from the Continental Secretariat of the NOARA, FiBL Switzerland, and other strategic international partners.
3. **Network Stakeholders:** NOARA should work with FARA to network stakeholders of organic and agroecology research at regional and national levels in Africa to foster synergy of operations and collaboration.
4. **Generate Research Templates:** NOARA should work with FARA to generate templates for organic and agroecology research in Africa, including methodologies for market data gathering, true-cost accounting, ecoservices valuation, and farmer-friendly climate-smart economy models.
5. **Compile Scientific Compendium:** The West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) should work with FARA, regional research bodies in Africa, and NOARA to periodically compile scientific evidence on the capability of organic agriculture/agroecology in contributing to healthy living, economic transformation, enhancement of systems resilience, mitigation of climate change, soil health, and food security in a Compendium for Organic and Agroecological Research in Africa on a three-year basis.

WE PLEDGE THAT

The organic agriculture and agroecology research sectors in Africa, as represented during the 2nd African Organic Research Conference (2nd AFROREC), commit to collaborating closely with all public and private stakeholders to effectively implement the conference's resolutions.

APPRECIATION

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Government of Egypt for providing an enabling environment for the successful hosting of the 2nd AFROREC. Our appreciation also goes to the SEKEM Group, Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development, and the Egyptian Biodynamic Association for their exemplary support and hospitality. We likewise acknowledge all speakers and contributors whose participation enriched the conference. We also thank the leadership of the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), members of the Local and Continental Planning Committees for the successful organization of the 2nd African Organic Research Conference (AFROREC), with the support and participation the following: Friends of SEKEM, FiBL Switzerland, Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture (KCOA), GIZ/BMZ, Knowledge Hub of North Africa (KHNA), African Organic Network (AfrONet), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), IFOAM Organics International, International Society of Organic Agriculture Research (ISOFAR), IFOAM Technology Innovation Platform, Federal University of Lavras (UFLA, Brazil), Bread for the World, Agroecology Europe, and other stakeholders.

During the event, distinguished participants from within and outside Africa AGREED that the 3rd AFROREC will be held in Zimbabwe in 2028.

Signed.

Dr. Ahmed Elshazly,
Chair, Local Planning Committee,
Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development Cario

Prof. Olugbenga O. AdeOluwa,
Continetal Coordinator,
Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA)

Prof. Raymond Auerbach,
Chair, Governing Council,
Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA)

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SAOSO Foundation with IFOAM-Organics International launches leadership course

By the South African Organic Sector Organisation

Caption: Participants at the AOLC course, Cape Town, 2025 Credit: SAOSO

The Agroecology and Organic Agriculture Leadership Course (AOLC), led by IFOAM - Organics International in partnership with the SAOSO Foundation, convened 25 changemakers in Cape Town, South Africa for an intensive six-day, in-person immersion. The course is a flagship programme of the IFOAM – Organics International Academy and forms part of the Agroecology Promotion Programme, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Across 22 sessions, participants explored key developments in the organic and agroecological movement, while building practical skills in leadership, strategic communication, networking and agroecological entrepreneurship.

A highlight of the week was a field visit to Metro Organics in Noordhoek, Cape Town where participants toured the farm's nursery, production fields, composting operations, packing and cooling facilities, and one of their local organic shops. The visit offered a real-world look at an integrated organic value chain, including an on-site Participatory Guarantee System assessment in action.

The group also enjoyed an early-morning visit to the Oranjezicht City Farm Market, gaining first-hand insight into market dynamics, setup logistics, and the operational and historical context behind one of Cape Town's most iconic farmers' markets. The in-person training concluded with participants crafting their personal development plans, turning their learning into clear projects and actionable initiatives that help to grow the sector.

Running over nine months until June 2026, the programme continues with a hybrid curriculum that blends in-person modules and online sessions.

Together, the SAOSO Foundation and IFOAM–Organics International aim to build a diverse, empowered network of leaders - from farmers and community organisers to entrepreneurs and policymakers - who are equipped to drive inclusive, resilient, and ecologically grounded food-system transformation across South Africa.

Caption: Participants at the AOLC course, Cape Town, 2025 Credit: SAOSO

Round-up From the KHSA

By Stefanie Swanepoel, Communications Manager KHSA

KATC and CTDT training of farmers in Rufunsa in sustainable organic agriculture Credit: KATC

The Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Southern Africa (KHSA) is part of a continent-wide Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology (KCOA) that works to strengthen agroecological and knowledge across Africa. Read on to find out what our partners have been up to.

PELUM Zambia
PELUM Zambia contributed to a regional workshop on agroecological strategies in Dakar, Senegal in August 2025 alongside Zambian government officials. It also co-hosted the annual Traditional Food and Seed Festival in Lusaka, drawing strong public interest and high demand for local seed varieties.

Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC), Zambia
In October 2025, KATC supported innovative agritourism training to help farmers diversify income and co-launched with government the national E-Agriculture Project to equip extension officers with digital tools for climate-smart, organic practices. KATC also graduated 24 new agroecology practitioners with the University of Zambia.

Kusamala Institute of Agriculture and Ecology, Malawi
Kusamala supported 2 400 farmers through agroecological training, with standout successes such as Emily Braundi, whose roselle enterprise transformed her household income and inspired collective entrepreneurship in her village.

Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC), Malawi
Responding to youth demand, SFHC trained 32 young people in tree planting, regeneration and gardening, helping them establish a structured association, learn entrepreneurship skills and develop plans for collective marketing and financial management.

Namibian Organic Association (NOA), Namibia
NOA continued to build national recognition for agroecology by supporting implementation of Namibia's Strategy for the Transformation of the Agri-Food Sector. NOA also engaged in policy dialogues through the Public Private Forum and contributed to regional EOA-I coordination.

South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO)
SAOSO participated in a national Farmers' Rights gathering to strengthen civil society advocacy on seed sovereignty and supported PGS farmers to showcase their produce at the Limpopo Trade Show and Career Expo. Read an update on their Agroecology and Organic Agriculture Leadership Course on page 11.

Find out more about KHSA at khsa.online or subscribe to the KHSA newsletter here.

A Changing Climate

Across the continent, climate change is no longer a warning of what may come. It is unfolding now. Unpredictable seasons, longer dry spells, intense storms and rising heat are reshaping landscapes and daily life. These shifts are straining food systems, deepening water scarcity and placing a growing burden on rural households whose resilience is already stretched. The effects are immediate, personal and increasingly impossible to ignore.

Yet despite this lived experience, African perspectives remain marginal in global climate discourse. Reporting often gravitates towards international summits, carbon markets or technological fixes that have little grounding in local realities. Missing from these narratives are the voices of farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and communities who hold generations of ecological knowledge and have long been adapting to environmental change. This section brings these stories into focus. It highlights African approaches to adaptation rooted in place, shaped by experience and informed by a deep relationship with land and water.

Climate Sensitivity: A Responsibility We All Share

By Fortunate Nyakanda, Editor-in-Chief

Climate change is no longer an abstract global crisis; it is a lived reality shaping our everyday choices, industries and communities. Increasingly, individuals and groups in diverse sectors are embracing climate sensitivity—a conscious awareness of how our actions affect the environment and a deliberate effort to minimise harm.

Climate sensitivity in every sphere of life

Recently, I attended a flower arrangement workshop in Zimbabwe where participants explored how even this delicate art form can embrace sustainability. We discussed using locally grown flowers requiring minimal water, incorporating dried plant materials and air plants into designs, and avoiding imported varieties to cut down on carbon footprints.

Participants also highlighted practices such as replacing plastic wrapping with eco-friendly alternatives and composting organic waste. It was inspiring to see creativity and responsibility intertwine, proving that beauty and sustainability can go hand in hand. In the same spirit, I came across a local initiative cultivating sisal to produce briquettes for tobacco curing—an innovation that helps curb deforestation by providing a renewable alternative to firewood. Both examples show how climate sensitivity can be integrated into our work, creativity and lives.

Understanding Climate Sensitivity

Climate sensitivity goes beyond awareness of climate change. It involves aligning our decisions with sustainability principles—whether in farming, energy use, consumption, or cultural practices. It asks us to pause and ask: What impact will this action have on the environment? Is there a greener alternative?

For individuals, this could mean rethinking lifestyle habits - conserving water, reducing waste, adopting cleaner energy sources and choosing sustainable products. For businesses, it may involve reengineering processes to cut emissions, adopting renewable energy or embedding circular economy models. At community level, it could take the form of tree planting, climate sensitive agriculture or innovative projects like sisal briquettes.

Reflections on Climate Sensitivity

- Climate sensitivity is about **inclusivity**. Just as a single flower contributes to the beauty of an arrangement, each personal decision adds up to a collective impact.
- Climate sensitivity demands **creativity**. Traditional practices can be reimagined through innovative solutions that protect livelihoods and ecosystems.
- Climate sensitivity requires **accountability**. It challenges us to recognise that the burden of change cannot be outsourced.
- Climate sensitivity is deeply tied to **resilience**. Communities that adopt climate-sensitive practices are better prepared to withstand shocks like droughts, floods or energy crises.

Moving Forward Together

The road ahead demands collective action. Being climate sensitive does not mean abandoning development or culture, it means pursuing them more thoughtfully. If every person, household and institution embraces this mindset, climate sensitivity will evolve from a noble idea into a living practice.

When that happens, we will have taken a decisive step toward a more resilient, just and sustainable world.

South Africa needs climate finance that delivers for people, not only in global declarations

By Thabo Molelekwa

South Africa entered 2025 on the back of two major diplomatic moments: hosting the first G20 Summit on African soil and participating in the conclusion of COP30 in Belém. Both meetings produced ambitious commitments, including scaling climate investment "from billions to trillions", tripling adaptation finance by 2035, and pushing for reforms to global financial institutions so developing countries can access more affordable finance. These are encouraging developments. The challenge now is turning global ambition into meaningful progress at home.

Insufficient Funding for Meaningful Action

Recent data from South Africa's Climate Finance Landscape report shows that the country mobilises about R188 billion a year for climate action. This is a significant amount, but still below what is required to meet national emissions and resilience goals. Much of the funding flows to large renewable energy projects, while adaptation, which protects communities from heat, floods and water shortages, receives only a small share.

This imbalance is becoming increasingly visible. South Africa is warming at roughly twice the global average, and communities are already feeling the effects. Early in 2025, KwaZulu-Natal experienced destructive floods that led to loss of life and major infrastructure damage. Local governments, expected to manage these growing climate risks, struggle with limited resources and little access to concessional finance that could expand resilience measures. At the same time, the Just Energy Transition Partnership, once seen as a breakthrough, is facing pressures of its own. The withdrawal of a portion of United States funding and concerns about transparency have raised questions about the partnership's momentum. Ensuring that coal dependent communities are meaningfully involved in transition planning remains essential for maintaining trust.

Opportunities for South Africa

Still, these challenges should not overshadow the opportunities. The commitments made at the G20 and COP30 give South Africa a chance to reshape its climate finance model so it supports both economic renewal and social protection. **Three priorities could help move the country in the right direction.**

First, increase investment in adaptation so climate impacts do not continue to outpace our preparedness. Improved storm water systems, water security measures and heat-resilient public infrastructure can protect lives while creating local jobs.

Second, strengthen the "just" element of the transition. Clear information on funding decisions, genuine community participation in coal regions and support for small businesses can help ensure the transition is seen as fair and inclusive.

Third, integrate climate finance into broader economic planning. Coordinated action across Treasury, regulators and municipalities can accelerate the shift towards cleaner energy, more resilient infrastructure and long-term economic stability.

The world is signalling its readiness to scale up climate finance. South Africa now has an opportunity to channel that momentum into a transition that is not only greener, but fairer, and that strengthens resilience where it matters most: in the lives of ordinary people.

Food & Farming Systems

This **Food and Farming Systems** section explores the grounded, place-based approaches reshaping agriculture across the continent. It looks at how agroecology, regenerative methods and other ecological practices are restoring soils, repairing ecosystems and strengthening the social fabric of rural life. Drawing on stories and case studies, it highlights practical solutions developed by farmers and communities themselves. These examples demonstrate that sustainable agriculture is not a distant ambition. It is already taking root in fields, homesteads and landscapes where people are reclaiming control of their food systems and advancing food sovereignty in real time. What becomes clear throughout is that these approaches are not simply sets of techniques.

They are ways of living and working that honour relationships, heritage and care for the land. From revitalising indigenous knowledge and stewarding diverse seed collections to designing farms that follow natural patterns, each practice offers insights into farming in harmony with nature and building a resilient food future.

Growing Resilience: How Agroecology is Shaping Zambia's Future

By Rabecca Mwila, Staff Writer

Caption: PeaceCorp Volunteers at Loctaguna Farm, Lusaka, Zambia Credit: Rabecca Mwila

Southern Africa is on the frontlines of climate change. Droughts, erratic rains and deforestation are pushing rural households into cycles of food insecurity. Farmers who once relied on predictable weather now face harvests cut short, degraded soils and shrinking forests. Yet in Zambia, communities, government agencies and development partners are proving that resilience is possible when people and nature work together.

The LIFE Project: Linking Income, Food and Environment

Since 2004, the Linking Income, Food and Environment (LIFE) Project has been at the heart of Zambia's push toward sustainable agriculture. A collaboration between the Zambian Forestry Department, Peace Corps/Zambia and local communities, the project supports smallholder farmers with climate-smart practices that protect forests while boosting incomes. Through tree nurseries, fruit tree propagation, fuel-efficient cookstoves, aquaculture, mushroom cultivation and bio-intensive gardening, the LIFE Project offers households practical ways to feed their families and earn a living without stripping the land bare. Women, in particular, are central to these efforts, leading initiatives in gardening, nutrition and decision-making at the household level.

Partners in the Field

Peace Corps Volunteers live and work in rural villages, bridging knowledge between communities and government extension officers. The Forestry Department provides technical expertise on tree planting and conservation, while farmer cooperatives and schools serve as local anchors for training and innovation. Together, these partnerships create a chain of support that ensures practices are not only taught but adopted and sustained.

Inspiration from Organic Leaders

That spirit of partnership was on display when 22 Peace Corps Volunteers visited Loctagona Organics in Lusaka, Zambia, an organic farm run by Kanangwa Newlove, an Ecological Organic Agriculture leader and trainer. On her farm, Newlove demonstrated techniques such as mulching, minimum tillage, vermicomposting, and organic pest control—practices that restore soil health and reduce dependence on costly chemical inputs.

For the volunteers, the experience was more than technical training, it was a lesson in empowerment. "Seeing a woman-owned farm leading the way in organic practices is inspiring," one Volunteer reflected. "It motivates me to work more closely with women in my community, who are key agents of change."

Planting for a Resilient Future

From tree nurseries in rural villages to knowledge hubs like Loctagona Organics, the LIFE Project shows how agroecology can tackle climate change head-on. By combining the efforts of the Forestry Department, Peace Corps, and local communities, Zambia is not only restoring forests but also growing a more food-secure and climate-resilient future.

As Ms. Newlove put it, "It's time for a change to sustainable agriculture in the wake of climate change." Thanks to projects like LIFE, that change is already taking root.

Relearning Africa: How Agroecology Is Teaching a Continent to Listen to the Land Again

By Isaac Mafuel, Staff Writer

I grew up believing that learning doesn't always happen in classrooms. It happens in conversation, in repetition, in seeing something done and trying it again until it works. This approach to learning might be slow but it is practical and collective. It depends less on who teaches and more on who listens because if one pays attention to the universe, anyone or anything can teach you. After all, didn't Abraham Maslow say, "All of life is education and everybody is a teacher and everybody is forever a pupil"?

That idea stayed with me as I read through a set of interview responses from two young Africans redefining how learning and land connect: Innocent Mac Chaphinza, founder of Econature Farm Enterprise in Malawi, and Keamo Rakgoadi, youth leader at Project Biome in South Africa. Both are part of the Biodiversity Partners Program (BiPP) Community of Practice, a network that supports "pro-nature" enterprises across Southern Africa. Their work shows how agroecology education is shifting away from lecture halls and toward real-life experience, blending indigenous wisdom with modern tools to rebuild both ecosystems and livelihoods.

The Classroom with No Walls

Econature Farm Enterprise in Malawi sits at the heart of this change. In his written responses, Innocent describes a 'solar-powered classroom' that travels from one rural community to another. The technology is simple; a small projector powered by sunlight, pre-loaded with short videos in local languages on composting, organic pest control and soil management.

There are no PowerPoint slides, no WiFi, no blackboard. The sessions happen in open spaces where farmers can gather freely. Between clips, facilitators pause the video to discuss what they've seen, answer questions and compare experiences. "The visual format makes it easier for farmers of all literacy levels to grasp complex ideas," Innocent wrote. He calls it "learning from the soil up."

The approach is low-cost, replicable and surprisingly democratic, everyone has a voice. The goal, he said, is not only to teach organic farming but to "turn learners into educators." In one example, a young farmer from Mzuzu who joined Econature's video sessions began composting with local materials and later trained others in his village. "That's how we measure success," Innocent said. "When the students start teaching."

For now, the biggest challenge is scale. The organisation runs on a single projector and limited transport. Expanding the model means more equipment, more facilitators and more investment. Yet the idea itself, practical, local and visual, has already proven powerful. It represents the kind of innovation that grows out of constraint rather than abundance.

Rewilding the Imagination

In South Africa, the approach takes a different form but carries the same spirit. Project Biome, where Keamo Rakgoadi works, offers a youth fellowship programme as one of its offerings, which combines agroecology, Indigenous knowledge and systems thinking. Keamo explains that the fellowship would start in Venda, guided by elder and cultural guardian Makhadzi Mphatheleni Makaulule. There, participants learn the stories of the landscape — which trees signal rain, which plants heal and how sacred sites connect people to water and soil. "We will teach the science of ecology alongside the spirituality of care," Keamo explains. From there, fellows will move into fieldwork in permaculture and community projects, blending ancestral knowledge with regenerative design. The idea, she said, is to "train youth not only to farm, but to see themselves as part of the ecosystem." For Keamo, this kind of learning is an act of reclamation. "Colonial education taught us to extract," she wrote. "Agroecology teaches us to give back."

Across Africa, Learning Takes Root

Similar efforts are appearing elsewhere. In Malawi, the Malawi Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology Project (MAFFA) trained more than 6 000 households between 2012 and 2017 through peer-led education and participatory learning. In Zimbabwe, a Renewable Energy for Agriculture initiative teaches women farmers to integrate solar irrigation and composting. Each example offers a practical answer to the same question: how can communities feed themselves without depleting the land that feeds them? The emerging picture is consistent. **Agroecology education across Africa is becoming more localised, participatory and inclusive of women and youth. It draws from existing knowledge systems rather than replacing them. It treats learning as a process of remembering as much as discovering.**

Remembering as Education

What stands out in all these accounts is that the classroom, in this context, is both physical and symbolic. For Econature, it is a space of shared experimentation lit by solar light. For Project Biome, it is a living landscape animated by memory and meaning. Neither model is about charity or rescue. They are about ownership, of knowledge, of culture, of agency. They remind us that innovation in Africa is rarely about importing ideas but about rearranging what already exists until it fits our reality. Innocent wrote that his vision is to see "organic food systems built from the ground up." Keamo described hers as "a return to balance."

Their words echo across distance and difference, meeting somewhere in the middle, in a continent that is learning to teach itself again. Perhaps that is what the future of education looks like here: not grand institutions or perfect syllabuses, but communities in dialogue, connected by solar power, ancestral knowledge, and a belief that the soil still remembers.

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Seeds of Resilience: CTDT's Work with Farmers in a Changing Climate

By Rabecca Mwila, staff writer

In the fields of Rufunsa, Zambia, farmer-led seed banks are becoming lifelines. Here, smallholder farmers exchange and store traditional seed varieties, ensuring their crops can withstand the unpredictable rains and rising heat.

Strengthening Local Food Systems

Behind this effort is the Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT), a non-profit making organisation that has been working with smallholder farmers since 2009 to strengthen local food systems through biodiversity conservation, agroecology and farmer-managed seed systems.

CTDT's work is rooted in a simple but powerful idea: resilient communities begin with resilient seeds. The organisation has established five community seed banks across five districts of Chikankata, Shibuyunji, Rufunsa and Chirundu, giving 12 000+ farmers access to diverse and climate-resilient planting materials. Through participatory plant breeding, it links farmers with researchers to develop crop varieties that reflect real community needs whether it's drought tolerance, early maturity or nutritional value.

This work could not be more urgent; across Southern Africa, climate change is reshaping agriculture. Prolonged droughts, shifting seasons and soil degradation threaten household food and nutrition security, especially for smallholder farmers who rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture and commercial seed. Monocultures and hybrid varieties often fail when weather patterns shift. By contrast, traditional seeds adapted over generations and offer diversity, resilience and the promise of survival.

For farmers, the benefits are tangible. During the recent seed and food fair in Rufunsa,, Joyce Mumba, a farmer's rights advocate working with CTDT, shared how her household food and nutrition security has improved through access to diverse seeds.

"Our nutrition has improved because we now eat from diversified diets. The seed banks established by CTDT give us sustainability in seed provision. We no longer worry about where to find seed each season,"

- Joyce Mumba

CTDT's initiatives go beyond seeds. Through farmer field schools, training of women entrepreneurs, and support to "champion farmers" who mentor their peers, the organisation is spreading agroecological practices that rebuild soil fertility, reduce dependence on chemicals, and strengthen household nutrition.

By putting knowledge and biodiversity back into the hands of smallholder farmers, CTDT is helping communities adapt to climate change while reshaping Zambia's food systems for a more sustainable future.

From Waste to Abundance: Heart & Soil as an Agroecology Hub

By Jo Hunter-Adams, Heart & Soil, South Africa

Redefining What's Possible in Urban Food Systems, One Connection at a Time

South African cities face converging crises: mountains of organic waste going to landfill, energy constraints limiting development, food insecurity affecting millions, and persistent unemployment. The problems seem so big, yet sometimes the solutions can be small, affordable, and rooted in community.

At Heart & Soil Agroecology Hub in Cape Town's Lochiel Smallholdings, we've spent 10 years learning about these problems, and finding opportunities! Every week, organic waste arrives at our one-acre property. What neighbours and businesses discard becomes valuable inputs. Kitchen scraps feed goats and chickens. Invasive Port Jackson feeds our goats, with the leftover branches chipped to produce mulch. Organic materials fuel our Black Soldier Fly operation and biodigester, generating protein and, in the future, cooking gas. Everything becomes food, fertility or energy, directly addressing urban waste management while producing resources.

Our interconnected systems prove that integrated solutions work economically. Solar panels power water pumps and generate surplus energy. Rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling reduce municipal water demand. Composting toilets safely process humanure. Together, these systems demonstrate how urban properties can contribute to energy, water, and food security simultaneously.

We do this without expensive infrastructure, through slowly improving our systems at a human scale. An agroecology hub's real value lies in multiplication.

We're Not Just Producing Food, We're Producing Producers

Our Good Food Club cooperative connects small farmers to markets while creating community around quality food. The community broiler project enables neighborhoods to produce ethical meat collectively, adding a small amount of money to household budgets. Our black soldier fly breeding protocols are replicated by organisations across South Africa, each creating micro-enterprises processing waste into valuable protein. Workshop participants establish home nurseries, composting operations, and urban gardens. This addresses a critical urban development goal: creating sustainable micro-enterprises.

Every person trained in black soldier fly breeding, seedling production or composting has the tools for low-overhead side businesses. The model scales not through centralised facilities but through distributed networks of small operators. This is what cities need for inclusive economic growth.

Our systems work because they are economically viable and have low capital startup costs. We've built diversified revenue streams. This includes direct sales, value-added products, training, breeding stock and cooperative organising.

Our experience demonstrates the ways that agroecological farming can generate livelihoods without permanent subsidy.

That said, our capacity to amplify this model is constrained as we've just begun our journey as a non-profit. Since we do the day-to-day work of farming ourselves, we have limited time to document methods, train more practitioners and support replication efforts elsewhere. We're hoping that as a non-profit we'll gradually be able to amplify this capacity.

Our systems are replicable. More urban sites could process neighbourhood waste, train entrepreneurs and demonstrate integrated solutions to energy-water-food challenges. We believe we're a living model of what can work. What's needed is strategic support to transition from proof-of-concept to systematic replication: research partnerships to rigorously document outcomes, resources to develop training curricula, capacity to mentor emerging hubs.

An urban agroecology hub transforms how cities work. It's where waste becomes wealth, consumers become producers, and urban challenges become opportunities. It's where small-scale solutions to big problems become replicable, economically sustainable, and socially transformative.

Heart & Soil
Agroecology Hub

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THE URBAN AGROECOLOGY ADVANTAGE

WHAT'S AN AGROECOLOGY HUB?

An agroecology hub is the interface where a homestead radiates and amplifies agroecological knowledge, skills, and materials out to the immediate community and beyond.

As an urban agroecology hub, Heart & Soil demonstrates how urban spaces can transform waste into abundance, consumers into producers, and ecological knowledge into community resilience.

It has taken us ten years to reach the point where our 35 interconnected systems are functional and resilient. We are now building the infrastructure for others to create their own regenerative systems. We support other farmers and producers in reaching the urban market through workshops and farm tours, by supplying the community with seedlings, fruit trees, chicks and produce, and by running a cooperative that connects small-scale producers to consumers.

From Waste to Abundance

- **80+ tons of organic** waste diverted annually (~1,000 tons over 10 years)
- **2,000 kWh solar generated** monthly; 700 kWh sold back to grid
- **6 million calories per** acre—matching monoculture yields
- **No synthetic inputs, no** fuel costs, no transport

From Consumers to Producers

- **Food cooperative supporting 35+** small farms and food businesses over 9 years
- **Direct sales:** producers earn R30–90/kg vs R4–6/kg wholesale
- **Highly diversified income streams:** eggs, livestock, seedlings, compost, larvae, fruit, vegetables, value-added products

From Knowledge to Resilience

- **Hundreds learn through workshops** annually
- **9,000 people reached monthly** via WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, newsletter
- **60+ small-scale producer** stories shared
- **Masiphumelele youth supported in** green entrepreneurship
- **10 years of mistakes** made—so others don't have to

1

View Heart & Soil's systems mapping brochure here.

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Heart & Soil

The Future of Food

Across Africa and in many parts of the world, food systems are shifting fast. New ideas about what we eat, how we grow it and how it reaches consumers are transforming everything from everyday meals to long-term agricultural planning. Plant-forward diets, climate-aware production and emerging technologies are opening new possibilities, while also raising important questions for those committed to agroecological and organic pathways.

The **Future of Food** section looks at the trends shaping this transition. It explores how regenerative practices, changing consumer preferences and thoughtful innovations can reinforce organic farming, open market opportunities and support more sustainable, nourishing food systems. Alongside reflections and enterprise profiles, this section includes recipes that honour indigenous and often overlooked crops. By celebrating these ingredients, we uplift food traditions, promote dietary diversity and strengthen the cultural and ecological value of local foods. Each recipe is an invitation to reconnect with land, history and the everyday joy of eating well.

The Art of Food

By Womba Mufundi, AfriFOODLinks Ambassador

The evolution of Zambian food has been one of rediscovery and re-identification over the past few years. We continue to watch its story unfold in such an artistic and inspiring way with the birth of many new multi-cuisine restaurants run by passionate chefs, the emergence of creative addition of nutritious ingredients to our foods and the unique recipes that home cooks and bloggers so openly share to the rest of the world that highlight the beauty of our cuisine. **I asked six talented chefs/bloggers based in Lusaka what the art of food means to them and here's what they have to say..**.

"The art of food is a sacred expression of love, a canvas where creativity meets devotion. For me, 'La Comida Es Amor' - food is love - is more than just my slogan, it's a testament to the divine connection between nourishment, passion and are. Through the art of food, I believe we experience God's love, masterfully crafted in every bite."

- Chef Kate, Head Chef, Anabezi Camp, Lower Zambezi National Park

"The art of food is about community and diversity. Food has taken us to different parts of he world and exposed us to so many cultures we never thought we would immerse ourselves in or experience. Keeping this in mind, it has also exposed Zambia to the world with how we love to tinker with local cuisine and a modern-day feel to it."

- William and Lulu, The Wood Kitchen

"The true art of food is when a dish not only satisfies the palate but also captivates the senses with its aroma and visual appeal and the reward is seeing the pleasure in people's faces. For me, it lies in transforming familiar flavours into extraordinary experiences. My self-taught journey has been a journey of experimentation, blending traditional ideas with innovative techniques." **- Mutepa Puta, Mr Ps Recipe**

"Food is the essence of family, where each dish tells a story and brings people together. Zambian cuisine, rich in tradition, is a celebration of culture and connection. It unites diverse flavours and traditions, turning every meal into a shared experience that nourishes both body and soul." **- Black Garlic**

"Cooking transcends the kitchen, it's an art form, a medium of expression where flavours become the palette and each dish tells a unique story. The kitchen is the canvas and ingredients are the vibrant hues that allow us to express our creativity." **- Shiros Kitchen**

"Cooking in itself is an expression of one's creativity. Each component of a dish has a story leading to its completion, from how it was sown, grown, harvested and prepared. As a chef, it is my obligation to honour the hard work of each person that has contributed to my final product. A dish is a concoction of history, a memory and a feeling - and every sense of the body is utilised to bring to life an edible masterpiece. The addition of diverse cultures in Zambia further highlight the beautify of our ever-evolving cuisine. To me, that is the art of food."

- Chef Womba, Head Chef, WomzNomz Catering

The AfriFOODlinks project is revolutionising urban food systems from Africa to Europe, with a special focus on empowering young leaders through its Youth Ambassadors Programme. Read more about the project here.

AfriFOODlinks

Chef's Corner

Top Herbs for a Sustainable Kitchen Garden

By Odette Mavunga, Staff Writer

Herbs are a great addition to any kitchen garden, providing fresh flavour and fragrance to various dishes; many also offer medicinal value. Here are some popular African herbs perfect for your sustainable kitchen garden.

African blue basil: A hardy perennial basil developed in East Africa, loved for its strong aroma and resilience. Excellent for teas, sauces and natural pest repellent uses.

African ginger: A prized indigenous medicinal herb with aromatic rhizomes used for teas, tonics and flavouring. Prefers shady, protected areas.

African mint: A strongly aromatic indigenous mint used for steaming, flavouring meat and treating stomach ailments. Thrives along wet or semi-shaded edges.

African wormwood: A powerful medicinal and culinary herb widely used across South Africa. Excellent for teas, steaming and traditional cold remedies. Very drought tolerant.

Hibiscus sabdariffa: Leaves and calyces are used across West, East and North Africa for herbal drinks, relishes and sauces. Heat and drought tolerant.

Lemongrass: Although globally known, several Cymbopogon species are native to Africa. Used for teas, steaming and flavouring broths.

Lippia javanica: One of southern Africa's most versatile herbs, commonly used for colds, coughs, relaxation and insect repellent. Thrives in dry conditions.

Moringa: Technically a tree, but young leaves, pods and powder are widely used as a nutrient-dense herb. Grows well in warm climates and poor soils.

Scented pelargoniums: Indigenous to southern Africa with fragrances including rose, lemon and mint. Leaves are used in teas, baking and natural remedies. Very water-wise.

Wild garlic: A delicious indigenous herb with a mild garlicky flavour. Leaves and flowers can be used in salads, sauces and stews. Easy to grow and excellent for pollinators.

Wild rosemary: A fragrant South African herb used in roasting, barbeques and herbal teas. Much milder than Mediterranean rosemary and far more drought adapted.

Benefits of these plants

- **Climate-adapted:** Most of these herbs thrive in heat, drought or irregular rainfall.
- **Culinary diversity:** They reflect actual African flavour traditions rather than European herbs.
- **Medicinal value:** Many are long-established in African healing systems and household remedies.
- **Pollinator friendly:** Indigenous herbs support local bees, butterflies and beneficial insects.
- **Low input:** Most require little water, fertiliser or labour, making them ideal for sustainable or low-resource gardens.

WOMEN & YOUTH

Across Africa, women and young people are central to the continent's food systems, yet their contributions are often overlooked. Women produce, process and market much of the food that sustains families and communities, while young people bring energy, innovation and new forms of knowledge. Despite this, both groups face persistent barriers to resources, land, finance and decision-making power. Their leadership is essential, but the spaces to exercise it remain limited.

Much of the public narrative still frames women and youth as vulnerable groups rather than agents of change. What is often missed are the creative strategies they are already using to strengthen livelihoods, protect biodiversity and build more resilient local economies. This section brings their work to the forefront. It explores how women and young people are redefining leadership in food and farming, not through grand declarations but through daily acts of care, skill and imagination.

Women, Youth and the Future of Agroecology

By Isaac Mafuel, staff writer

Agroecology, by its very definition, thrives on ecological, cultural and social diversity. But diversity without equity risks becoming a hollow concept.

The Promise and Paradox

Recent reports by Biovision Africa Trust (2023) and ISRA-BAME/CIRAD (2024) illuminate both the promise and the paradox of gender in agroecology across Africa. They show that women and young people are not passive participants; they are innovators, custodians of biodiversity and the driving labour force of farming in Africa. Yet they continue to face systemic constraints that limit their agency and ability to shape the very systems they sustain.

Women are at the heart of agroecological farms. They save and exchange traditional seeds, manage compost and use mulching techniques to heal degraded soils. Their work is both practical and deeply ecological, rooted in generations of indigenous knowledge. Young people can complement this by introducing innovations such as agroforestry, large-scale composting and mechanised soil conservation, bridging ancestral knowledge with modern tools. But despite their critical roles, decisions on land use, crop choice and resource allocation remain largely in the hands of men and elders. Women's influence is often confined to the 'smaller' decisions like seed saving, household food management or minor trading, tasks that are essential, yet undervalued.

The report on The Role and Position of Youth in Agroecology in Africa paints a broader picture of a generation ready to transform Africa's food systems but constrained by structural barriers such as limited access to land, capital, markets and training.

For young women, these challenges are compounded by gender-based inequalities and social norms that deny them ownership rights and exclude them from leadership spaces.

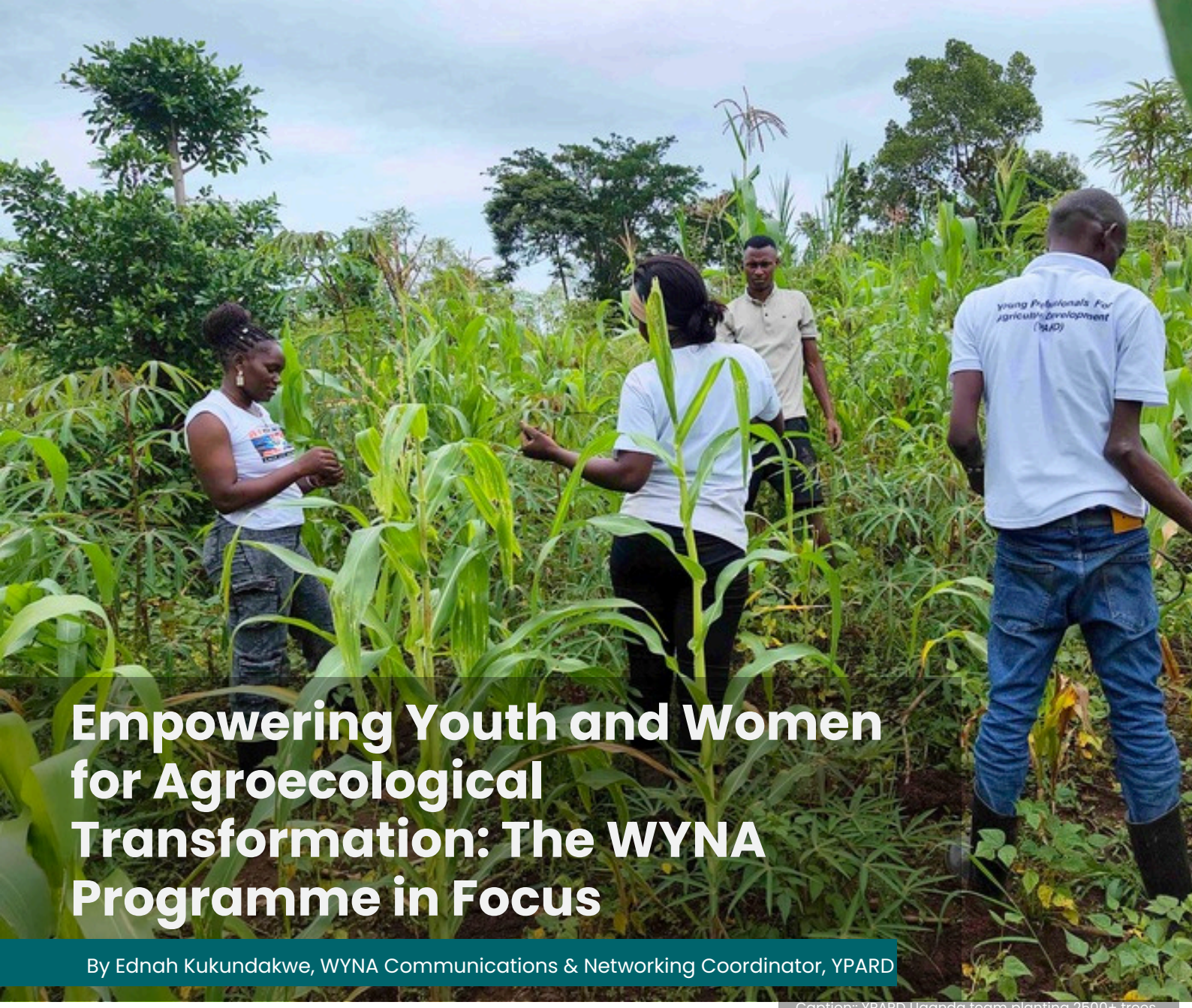
The agroecological opportunity

Agroecology offers a unique opportunity to reimagine gender relations in agriculture. It values cooperation over competition, sustainability over exploitation, and collective wellbeing over individual gain. In many ways, it reflects the values that women have practiced for centuries: care, reciprocity and stewardship.

Recognising and elevating women's leadership in agroecology is therefore not just a matter of fairness, it is essential to the resilience and future of African food systems. **But recognition alone is not enough; structural change is needed.**

Land reforms must ensure women and young people can access and control productive resources. Financing models must be reimagined to include them through microcredit, savings groups and youth investment schemes tailored to agroecological enterprises. Training and mentorship must go beyond technical skills to include leadership, advocacy and digital literacy, enabling young women to shape policies and markets, not just work within them.

The future of agroecology in Africa will depend on how deeply we listen to women and youth, how courageously we dismantle the barriers they face, and how intentionally we build systems that value care as much as production. Because when women thrive in agroecology, entire ecosystems, both social and ecological, begin to heal.



Empowering Youth and Women for Agroecological Transformation: The WYNA Programme in Focus

By Ednah Kukundakwe, WYNA Communications & Networking Coordinator, YPARD

Caption:: YPARD Uganda team planting 2500+ trees on the 2025 Restoration Day event Credit: WYNA

In Africa's rapidly evolving agrifood systems, the role of youth and women is no longer optional, it is essential. Despite this fact, the FAO notes that young people are often sidelined and in precarious conditions. Youth and women face limited access to land, credit, markets and decision-making power. The 2024 GIZ African Union Annual Report states that more than 72 million young people, two-thirds of whom are women, lack employment and training opportunities.

Introducing the WYNA Programme

Against this backdrop, the **Building Women & Youth-led Network Alliances for Agroecology and Organic Agriculture (WYNA) Programme** is a timely and bold initiative. WYNA seeks to strengthen the leadership of young people and women in Africa's transition towards sustainable and regenerative food systems. With its inaugural Fellowship & Internship Track, WYNA is equipping a new generation of changemakers with the networks, training, skills and institutional backing needed to drive agroecological solutions at community, national and continental levels.

Connecting Markets, Networks and Entrepreneurship Through Agroecology

WYNA is implemented under the umbrella of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology (KCOA) in partnership with Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Kenya and the African Green Store Network (AGSN). This multi-actor, multi-country model mirrors the systemic approach called for in global youth and women in agriculture agendas.

From more than 500 applicants across Africa, 6 emerging leaders were competitively selected representing Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Cameroon; they embody WYNA's inclusive vision and commitment to innovation, impact and sustainable livelihoods. **Rather than treating youth and women as simply beneficiaries, the programme positions them as active leaders who are developing and implementing agroecology-based initiatives focused on circular economy, soil regeneration, value-chain transformation and food sovereignty.**

The Fellowship and Internship tracks provide seed funding, tailored coaching, peer-learning, mentorship and linkages to partner networks. Fellows and interns lead their own initiatives in their communities; Interns are hosted in KCOA institutions where they engage with policy, practice and community outreach. Through this Fellowship and Internship and other activities, WYNA also places key focus on women in agrifood systems. By placing young women at the forefront of agroecological innovation from organic value chains to school-based farming clubs, the programme and the KCOA network fosters both gender equity and food-systems resilience.

Systemic Partnerships to Promote Inclusive Transformation

Importantly, WYNA goes beyond individual projects. The programme serves as a platform that brings youth and women into dialogues with markets, mentors, institutions and policymakers.

It promotes knowledge-exchange, digital peer-networks and youth-led hubs of practice. This aligns with GIZ's analysis emphasising the importance of systemic enablers like policy, capacity building and networks for promoting youth engagement in agriculture. The selected cohort is already showing what this looks like in practice: from circular-economy models turning farm waste into value to school-garden clubs nurturing agroecology among children; from women-led organic production driving both livelihoods and soil health to interhousehold mushroom-farming models in waste-rich landscapes. Each initiative contributes to resilient food systems, intersects with climate-smart practices and brings new actors into agriculture.

What makes WYNA particularly breakthrough is this combination of youth and women leadership, agroecology and organic agriculture, and systemic partnerships. This echoes global evidence: FAO estimates that engaging youth meaningfully in agrifood systems could raise global GDP by about 1.4 %, roughly USD1.5 trillion if their potential is unlocked.

Looking ahead, WYNA's contributions matter not just for the six fellows and interns, but for the broader shift toward inclusive, sustainable agrifood systems in Africa. In doing so, the programme supports and advances the KCOA's core goals of knowledge dissemination, capacity building and advocacy for agroecological transformation. For more info, email WYNA.

Caption: Participants at the WYNA Programme launch event in Entebbe, Uganda Credit: WYNA

Farmers' Tips & Voices

This **Farmers' Tips & Voices** section centres the people whose hands and knowledge sustain Africa's agroecological and organic farming movements. Their stories offer practical guidance, hard-won lessons and everyday innovations that speak directly to the realities of working the land. From soil care and pest management to seed saving and community organising, these insights reflect the depth of local expertise that drives truly sustainable agriculture.

Through their accounts, we see how farmers are navigating climate pressures, shifting markets and declining soil fertility while holding fast to ecological principles. Their willingness to experiment, adapt and share what works is helping to shape more resilient farming systems across the continent. These voices also push back against the idea that meaningful innovation must come from outside. Instead, they reveal how solutions rooted in lived experience, culture and environment can be both practical and transformative, offering pathways that others can learn from and build upon.

Unsung Security Heroes: Why Guinea Fowls Beat Dogs on a Farm

By Dr Brix, Agroecology & Agribusiness Expert

In the quiet rhythms of rural life, where danger often creeps in with the night, many farmers reach for conventional security measures — big dogs, high fences or even night guards. But what if the best form of protection does not bark, does not bite and does not need to be fed meat every day? What if your most loyal alarm system came feathered, sharp-eyed and entirely self-sufficient? Welcome to the underestimated world of guinea fowls — nature's most loyal, low-cost and incorruptible farm sentinels.

The Power of the Feathered Sentinel

"An empty pen invites trouble, but a watchful eye keeps the wolves at bay." Guinea fowls do not just guard — they raise hell when danger lurks. Their piercing cries slice through the night like a trumpet at dawn, alerting not only the farmer but the entire homestead that something is not right. Whether it is a snake slithering by, a thief sneaking through, or a strange dog trespassing, guinea fowls erupt in a loud, unified chorus that no intruder wants to face.

While dogs may sometimes snooze through alarms, guinea fowls sleep with one eye open — literally. Their sharp alertness, flock mentality and territorial instincts make them natural watchdogs.

Dogs Bite, Guinea Fowls Warn

"The hand that feeds the dog is not always spared from its teeth." Many farmers have lost more than just peace of mind to aggressive dogs. Veterinary bills, lawsuits from injured workers and frightened children are all too common. A poorly trained dog may bite a farmworker's child, scare off buyers or even kill livestock. Guinea fowls, on the other hand, are non-aggressive toward humans yet ruthless toward danger.

They do not attack people — they expose threats. Their alarm system is reliable, loud and bloodless.

Feed Costs? Forget It.

"A hungry dog howls, but a guinea fowl scratches its own supper." Feeding a full-grown dog, especially a large breed, is no small task. As feed prices rise, many farmers struggle to justify the cost of meat-based diets and regular vaccines for guard dogs. Guinea fowls, by contrast, are natural foragers. They patrol your land, feeding on ticks, insects and weeds — reducing your pest control costs while keeping your property safe. They are hardy, disease-resistant and low-maintenance. With minimal shelter and access to water, guinea fowls thrive even in harsh climates where other livestock might struggle.

A Bonus Army: Eggs and Meat

Beyond their security role, guinea fowls also provide protein-rich eggs and lean meat — both prized in gourmet and health-conscious markets. Their distinct flavour is considered a delicacy across Africa and Europe. So, imagine a security guard that pays rent in eggs. Try getting that from your Rottweiler.

In Conclusion

"Not all heroes wear capes — some wear feathers and walk on two legs." Guinea fowls are nature's overlooked guardians — blending fierce loyalty with sharp senses and economic value. They do not need chains, collars or costly feed. They will not turn on your workers or scare your children. Instead, they will patrol your land, sound the alarm at danger and reward you with food in return. For the farmer who values wisdom over tradition, guinea fowls are not just an alternative — they are the superior choice. Let the dogs rest. The feathers have got it covered.

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