

## **DSE/DITSL International Training Course- Workshop on "Ecofarming: Ecologically and Socially Sustainable Land Management"**

From November 16 - December 11, 1998 in Ethiopia

### **1 The International Workshop**

Under the sponsorship of the German government, the Food and Agriculture Development Center (ZEL) of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), in co-operation with the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), conducted an international workshop entitled "Ecofarming: Ecologically and Socially Sustainable Land Management", which was initiated on November 16, and was closed on Friday, December 11, at the Wabe Shebelle Hotel in Addis Ababa.

The workshop took place at various locations in Addis Ababa, Debre Zeit, Sodere, Dodola, and Awassa, close to projects, research stations, and farmers' communities which were visited during the event.

The workshop gathered together 24 senior agricultural experts, coming from Ethiopia, Cameroun, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanazania and Uganda, who work in governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in rural development, planning, research, education, and extension. Mr. Roland Bunch, an internationally recognized advisor in ecofarming technologies, participatory technology development and extension, living in Honduras, Central America, guided the workshop as main lecturer and moderator, sharing with the participants the experiences of the hundreds of development institutions with which he has worked over the last thirty years in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Ethiopian scientists based at Debre Zeit, Melkassa, Alemaya, and Awassa, substantially contributed to the workshop, highlighting specific Ethiopian experiences. Unlike the so-called "modern", or conventional farming, which relies on a high level of inputs, such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides, ecofarming technologies are based on intensive research work done worldwide in the last twenty years, which is incorporated indigenous farmers' knowledge and their own way of experimenting, to achieve locally appropriate, sustainable and economically viable solutions for their specific farming systems.

Based on their own experiences back home, and joint findings elaborated at the end of the workshop, participants are convinced that ecofarming is the most modern, convenient, and sustainable way of farming in tropical and subtropical environments. As already proven in many countries and farming communities around the world, ecofarming is at least as productive, or more, than conventional farming, supporting food security at a high level, with fewer risks and costs involved. Ecofarming allows rural people to maintain their natural resources in good condition, while even improving soil fertility. Applying ecofarming technologies, even Africa's large areas of wasteland can be brought back into intensive production at surprisingly low costs. For instance, farmers the par-

ticipants met just south of Awassa, who were applying an intensive ecofarming system to their garden coffee, stated that their "soils are growing."

Basic elements of ecofarming technologies include the use of green manures or multi-purpose plants into site-appropriate crop rotations and mixtures, to supplement or replace chemical fertilizers, the application of any other organic fertilizers, soil retention and recuperation technologies, the use of locally adapted stress- and disease-resistant varieties, and the use of alternative plant protection methods. Animal and plant production at farm level are closely integrated with each other. In conclusion, ecofarming works with nature, within the sustainable ecosystems, rather than against nature. It is much more beneficial for the farmers that their plants fix atmospheric nitrogen free of charge, than that they spend valuable cash on chemical fertilizers. Ecofarming is thus a highly beneficial alternative, especially for small farmers with scarce capital.

Programs of ecofarming in many parts of the world were very successfully, where researchers, extensionists, and farmers worked closely together, developing appropriate technologies to fit into the specific ecological, social, and cultural conditions of each site.

Participants of the workshop decided to move in the same direction and to promote ecofarming within their institutions and organizations, as well as at the national level. For that task, the participants will found their own associations or networks to promote ecofarming within their home countries.

To facilitate the further exchange of experiences among participants, the staff of the workshop and other people, networks, and organizations working in the same direction, the participants founded and joined their newly-founded network, called the *Network for Ecofarming in Africa (NECOFA)*, which will act as a forum to support all national activities along this line.

## **2 The Declaration of formation of a NETWORK FOR ECOFARMING IN AFRICA –“NECOFA”-**

**Name: NETWORK FOR ECOFARMING IN AFRICA.**

**Acronym: “NECOFA”**

### **Objectives:**

1. to coordinate ecofarming activities in Africa
2. to ensure the effective implementation of ecofarming practices
3. to facilitate exchange of information and achievements in ecofarming research and extension at national and international levels
4. to solicit internal and external resources for ecofarming development in Africa
5. to promote small scale projects on ecofarming at grass root level
6. to publish a quarterly news letter called NECOFA NEWS

7. to train farmers, extension agents, staff of NGO's policy makers, teachers and researchers on the concept of ecofarming
8. to create commitment amongst members to implement ecofarming program at grass root level

## Membership

Membership is opened to any natural person or institution/organizations who share the same ideas of ecofarming

## Structure

NECOFA shall have the followig structure to implement its activities.

### 1. The international coordination unit

This unit shall serve as the international secretariate and coordinate all NECOFA activities. The Network shall be headed by International/General coordintor and shall be located at DITSL/German Institute of Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture) in Germany

### 2. Advisers and country coordination units

The international coordinator shall have two advisers and 7 country coordination units which shall be run by elected country representatives. Each unit shall coordinate activities at national level

### 3. NECOFA Committee:

The international coordinator with his two advisers, and the country representatives shall form the NECOFA committee. This committee shall meet to delebrate when the interantional coordinators deems necessary or as need may arise on issues concerning ecofarming in Africa.

### 4. Officers

1. International/General coordinator is Mr. Sahle Tesfai of DITSL, Germany who will deal with the administrativ issues concerning the national representative and the international activities.

### 5. Advisers

- a. Mr. Hartmut Gast of DSE (German Foundation for International Development)
- b. Mr. Roland Bunch of COSECHA, Honduras-Central America

### 6. Country representatives

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|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Asfaw Tuhuneh -             | Ethiopia |
| 2. Immaculate Luwedde Sekitto- | Uganda   |

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 3. Lawrence Kofikrampa-        | Ghana    |
| 4. Richard Adriano Mwanakulya- | Tanzania |
| 5. Edward Olumunyiwa Ogungebe- | Nigeria  |
| 6. Cornel Ouma Odour -         | Kenya    |
| 7. Moki Princewill Ogen-       | Cameroon |

For any information concerning the organisation please contact our International/General Coordinator, Mr Tesfai, at DITSL-in Germany.

### **3. The reaction of the Ethiopian Media to the Ecofarming -Workshop**

As well as the TV and Radio reporting of the international workshop in 3 to 4 different languages, coverage was given to it in the daily news papers by the Ethiopian press. The Ethiopian Herald reported as follows:

**Researchers Say Ecofarming Has Great Potential To Increase Production**

ADDIS ABABA, Dec. 12 (WIC) - An ecologically and socially sustainable land management system has been described by scientists as an effective farming method capable of achieving increased food production at minimum cost. This was disclosed at the closing of a 25 - day international training workshop at the Wabe Shibelle Hotel yesterday which was held under the theme, "Ecofarming: Ecologically and socially sustainable land management." In an interview he gave to WIC, workshop coordinator, Ato Sahle Tesfaye, said ecofarming which makes use of traditional fertilisers as well as modern technology without damaging the peoples' culture has a great potential in supporting food security system with fewer risks and costs involved. He said the ecofarming system carried out through conventional methods also has the potential to increase agricultural production.

He went on to explain that ecofarming system enables farmers to buy locally - available inputs at reasonable prices with which to undertake sustainable agricultural activities. Ato Sahle also disclosed that an organisation called Network for Ecofarming In Africa has been established in Addis Ababa to conduct training for farmers in a sustainable manner.

One of the trainers, Mr. Roland Bunch, explained that Ethiopia was selected for the training because of its considerable agricultural potential and because of the broad experiences it has in the application of fertilizers and anti-pest chemicals. Mr. Ronaldo said coffee growers in the south of the country should be warned against extensive application of chemicals.

The participating professionals drawn from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroun, attended the workshop in Addis Ababa, Debre Zeit, Sodere, Dodola and Awassa.

The workshop was jointly organized by the German Government, the food and Agricultural Development Centre, the German International Development Founding Association, and the German Tropical and Sub Tropical Agricultural Institution.



**Figure 1:** Excursion during the Eco-Farming Workshop. Discussion with farmers, Germale, Ethiopia, 1998.

**Sahle Tesfai, Dipl. Ing./MSc, Program co-ordinator.**

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