

# Organic Agriculture for the real Green Revolution in Africa

*Organic agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.*



The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) was launched in September 2006. Its initiators, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, claim that the New Green Revolution will increase the productivity of small farms while significantly reducing poverty and hunger in Africa, mainly through improved hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers.

History proves that green revolutions of the past did not solve world hunger problems. The first Green Revolution introduced in the 1970-90s in Asia, for example, was far from being a sustainable solution to poverty and hunger, instead it resulted in:

- Farmers' dependency on expensive chemical inputs
- Land degradation and desertification
- Destruction of natural resources
- Dramatic decrease in ground-water level
- Farmers' suicides due to debts

Africa may experience the same problems, or worse, with the technological packages of new seed varieties, genetically modified crops, and chemical farm inputs promoted by AGRA.

Once introduced in Africa, the costly technological packages of the Green Revolution will shift African agriculture to a system dependent on expensive agro-chemicals and hybrid seeds. This shift will lead to farmer indebtedness and the destruction of both Africa's agro-biodiversity and natural resources which are the very foundation of agriculture.



## Organic Agriculture contributes to a real green revolution in Africa

The final report of the World Agrarian Council (IAASTD) concluded that a new agriculture paradigm, focused on small-scale farmers and agro-ecological farming, provides the way forward to avert the current food crisis and meet the needs of local communities in a sustainable way.

An internationally acknowledged computer model of the Danish Research Center for Organic Food and Farming on the global food supply concluded that a 50% conversion to Organic Agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa would increase food availability and decrease food import dependency.

Organic Agriculture is highly relevant to smallholders in Africa through:

- Increasing yields over the long term
- Combating desertification through improving soil fertility, preventing soil erosion and land degradation
- Maintaining a healthy environment
- Increasing income and building social capital of rural areas
- Reducing the financial risk by refraining from using expensive chemical inputs and increasing returns to labor

### Therefore:

**AGRA** should change its focus and instead support organic plant breeding programs and engage in participatory research that promotes organic and community-based agricultural practices.

**Governments** should develop favorable policies and promote Organic Agriculture as a key tool to achieving and sustaining national food security.

**Donors and development agencies** should support and help the uptake of Organic Agriculture as the best agricultural development strategy for Africa.



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