

FSN FORUM - DISCUSSION TOPIC NO. 17, 2008

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction message

My name is Poonam and I am working as a Senior Technical Expert with the Sustainet Project of GTZ. Sustainet is an acronym for "Sustainable Agriculture Information Network." (website <http://www.sustainet.org/index-en.html>)

Sustainet is composed of a German network and three further networks in the pilot regions of India, Kenya / Tanzania and Peru / Bolivia. As the name suggests, the program aims to establish networks between institutions involved at local, regional and International levels. Through Sustainet (Sustainable Agriculture Information Network), we are working to highlight the issues and to demonstrate the benefits, viability and widespread applicability of sustainable, locally adapted land use as a strategic way to overcome hunger and poverty.

Millions of farmers in remote rural areas of India struggle to feed themselves and their families. Most of these are small farmers with small landholdings. By practicing the India's so called Green revolution methods their lands have slowly become unfertile and they are not in a place to produce food to feed them. At the same time, their environment - the resources on which they depend - is deteriorating daily: their yields decline as erosion and deforestation gnaw at vital resources, and wells run dry as the groundwater sinks. Driven ever further into debt by the pressure to pay for expensive yet unnecessary inputs, thousands of desperate farmers have taken their own lives. Agriculture is both affected by climate change but also contribute to it. The continuing emission of greenhouse gasses is changing the world's climate and creating extreme weather phenomena, worsening problems of droughts, floods and storms. Biological diversity is diminishing and soils are losing their fertility.

Sustainet (India) is working on the up scaling of good agricultural practices in different agro ecological zones of India. **As organic farming could be one of the coping mechanism and adaptations to climate change in rural areas, I would like to know more about the experiences from different parts of world. How do organic agriculture systems utilize traditional skills and knowledge, manage with weather extremes, and enhance productivity and resilience?**

Warm Regards,

Poonam

More information about Sustainet India:

In India, Sustainet is a group of eleven partner organizations that have a background for working on issues based on organic farming, creating linkages between farmer and markets, advocating public private partnerships and tackling issues of dry land agriculture by watershed approach keeping in mind the protection of biodiversity. The best agricultural practices identified with the Sustainet partner organizations shows how sustainable agriculture can help India's farmers - especially those in poor, remote areas - pull themselves out of poverty. It details 14 examples of how development initiatives have helped farmers in variety of different areas of India including in some of the remotest parts of the country break out of the cycle of poverty, debt and environmental degradation, and improve their lives and livelihoods through agriculture that is economically, ecologically and socially sustainable.