

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Kenya

Project/Initiative Title: The Manor House Agricultural Centre, Kitale
1984

Scale: Regional

Nos. farmers: 70,000

Hectares: 7000

Agro-Ecological Zone: V

Improvement types

1x	2x	3x	4	5x	6x	7	8	9
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Success and Limits to spread

Success	Limits
2a,3a,4a,4b	4a,5a

A. Key Impacts

A1 – Productivity

	Before/Without	After/With	% change
Vegetables	none	New crop	
Maize	2.25 t/ha	9.0 t/ha	300

A2 – Impacts on natural capital

- ?? vegetable production up eg. Brassicas, local varieties, amaranth etc.;
- ?? Bio-intensive gardening,
- ?? double-dug beds for vegetables
- ?? vegetative duration is large
- ?? soil fertility sustained at lower cost
- ?? soil erosion reduced drastically and environmental conservation technologies more appreciated
- ?? Biodiversity given more emphasis since the system promotes diversity of crops primarily for pest / disease control and companion planting

A3 – Impacts on local community (social capital)

- ?? Impact is especially high among the resource poor farmers and womens' groups
- ?? Community/farmers' groups previously marred by leadership wrangles have become more cohesive. Most farmers are comparing conventional vs bio-intensive yields – especially with maize (experimentation)

A4 – Impacts on households and individuals (human capital)

- ?? food security improved
- ?? About 80% of the individuals who have adopted these techniques have become self-reliant in food production and are meeting most of their basic household needs
- ?? Health and nutritional status of children has especially benefited from the diversity of crops and livestock kept
- ?? Most households are now able to afford fees for their children both for school and

- college through sale of produce
- ?? Some households have actually been able to invest in capital assets like dairy cows, poultry projects, rental houses, maize millers etc from as low as 1/4 acre plots under Biointensive within less than a year of practice

A5 – Key changes in farm / regional system

- ?? pesticide use fallen to zero
- ?? Use of botanical pesticides has almost entirely replaced synthetic pesticides in all of the farmers reached
- ?? Use of fertilizers has also reduced drastically
- ?? 100% of farmers/communities reached are now raising their own food effortlessly
- ?? Those in close proximity to water are raising food in the dry season successfully
- ?? Crops grow for longer on double dug beds even without watering

B. Types of Sustainable Agriculture Improvements

- Type 1: Better use of available renewable natural capital
- Type 2: Intensification of single sub -component of farm system
- Type 3: Diversify by adding new productive natural capital and regenerative components
- Type 4: Better use of non-renewable inputs and technologies
- Type 5: Social and participatory processes leading to group action for making better use of natural capital
- Type 6: Human capital building through training-learning programmes
- Type 7: Access to Finance
- Type 8: Add value by processing to reduce losses and increase returns
- Type 9: Add value by direct or organised marketing of produce to consumers

	Yes/No	Narrative
Type 1	x	Bio-intensive gardening, double-dug beds for vegetables, close spacing, IPM, companion planting
Type 2	x	Double-dug beds
Type 3	x	
Type 4		
Type 5	x	
Type 6	x	
Type 7		
Type 8		
Type 9		

C. Key Lessons: Success, Spread and Constraints

C1 – Key Lessons Learned

- ?? Regular follow-up and extension activities to target groups need to be encouraged
- ?? Capacity building seminars and refresher courses are vital for greater impact
- ?? Indigenous communities have got traditional resources way beyond normal expectation and should never be taken for granted

C2 – Aspects of local/national context contributing to success

- ?? Community cohesiveness (through training in leadership and group dynamics)
- ?? Community common interest in the technology as a necessity to survival
- ?? Registration of groups as “self-help” groups facilitated by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services
- ?? Growing government support of the system (although still largely vocal)

C3 – Limitations preventing spread

- ?? Competing interests among different agents linked to the groups
- ?? Vested interest of cliques within community groups especially leadership
- ?? Too much expectation of handouts by implementing community
- ?? Poor road infrastructure to market produce

C4 – Policy issues

- ?? Lack of financial assistance – especially credit facilities
- ?? Lack of credit facilities and tangible government support
- ?? Unfavourable market policies (local) pitting conventional vs organic produce
- ?? Reluctance of government to recognise and/or accredit institutions promoting the techniques
- ?? Too much bureaucratic tendency to formalise groups and marketing of produce – need for licences for operations, taxes etc
- ?? Changing donor/support base policies (unfavourable mostly)

C5 – Scaling-up

- ?? Setting up mini project centres within communities for training
- ?? Scaling up extension follow-ups and refresher courses for target groups
- ?? Increase meaningful collaboration and distribution of responsibilities among the various stakeholders to limit conflicts and duplication
- ?? More meaningful government support
- ?? More donor support as activities involved are mostly voluntary

D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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E. Project Narrative

The Manor House Agricultural Centre, Kitale, Kenya

Manor House Agricultural Centre was founded in 1984 in response to a three-year drought. The Centre's training and research complex includes demonstration gardens and livestock facilities that provide a working model of bio-intensive agricultural systems for trainees, visitors and members of local communities. The Centre provides practical training to young people, farmers and staff of government agencies and NGOs, as well as conduct adaptive research. It employs 16 staff, and runs an 18 month certificate-level programme for secondary school graduates, some 25 one-week workshops each year for farmers, and one three-month course per year for agricultural professionals.

Bio-intensive agriculture is based on the principle that production and sustainability can be enhanced using technologies that use soil, water, plant and animal resources available on most smallhold farms. The key is to improve the use of renewable resources and reduce the use of external inputs. Farmers have been able to raise soil fertility, improve productivity and increase household income, but the technologies producing these benefits do require more labour use.

The Centre has trained some 6000 farmers in 185 community groups, of whom 3000 are known to have adopted bio-intensive agriculture. The main impact has been on vegetable production. Many have doubled their yields by adopting double digging and composting, using local methods of pest and disease control (such as planting sunflowers to attract predators, local plants extracts to control maize stalk borer, and intercropping to reduce tomato blight). There have been big savings on pesticides, as farmers have cut out their use. Farmers have found phosphorus to be limiting over periods of 6 years of composting, and so bonemeal is being brought in to add to compost. The centre encourages these farmer groups to train neighbouring farmers.

A successful group is the Pondeni Farmers Cooperative. This began when 15 farmers were trained at Manor House. They then deputed a keen local student to go for more training who, on return, found that the support from just 15 farmers was too little to guarantee a livelihood. He then acted as a village extensionist, persuading everyone in three villages to adopt bio-intensive gardening. The cooperative was then formed, and this now pays his salary. It is very strong, active and proud of its success, and makes money from two sources: it organises the sale and marketing of the organic produce (there are no premiums received), and it sells compost, for which there is an increasing demand. It is sieved and mixed with bonemeal, packed into 90 kg bags, and sold for about \$20 per bag.

The Centre also works closely with the government at District level, encouraging informal sharing of information. Some local extension agents are being sent to the Centre for training. It also passes farmers innovations in pest and nutrient management to the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute for further testing and development.

Focus is now centring on export market of produce as a result of which special packaging and certification is gaining significant attention. A few organisations initiated through MHAC's influence are specialising in certification and packaging

