



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Organic Farming

Organic farming is an important type of agriculture that can be used to reduce the impact of climate change. For one thing, it discourages the use of chemical fertilizers.

The promotion of organic farming in the country has not been too intense. This can be attributed to the fact that there has been much promotion on the use of fertilizer and because there are many fertilizer support programs in the country.

For instance, in the case of the government, the fertilizer support programme has come under intense pressure due to the fact that it is not making the farmers self-reliant. Every year farmers depend on agriculture for their farming inputs and this puts a burden on the treasury.

The original concept of the farmer input support program or FISP has been to graduate farmers, as a certain number of years, off the program. The aim is to make farmers self-reliant and allow others to join the program.

The Weekly Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

Benefits of organic farming in Zambia

Organic foods protect the environment from pollution since chemicals which cause environmental pollution are not used in cultivating organic crops.

For example, certain chemicals when used in crop production will kill the micro-organisms or even pollute nearby streams.

Organic soils contain more micro-organisms than conventional soils. These micro-organisms store carbon in the soil which helps keep carbon out of the atmosphere. Organic farming helps to conserve the soil and water.

Another advantage of organic farming is that the foods taste good. They also have higher nutritional values compared to non-organic foods.

Recent studies have found that organic foods contain more mineral salts and other healthy nutrients than non-organic foods.

Organic foods also can help to control

weight. The preservatives added to most foods, such as canned goods, can sometimes cause consumers to gain unwanted weight. So one of the ways people try to control their weight is by watching their diet. Some even try to avoid non-organic foods

Since organic farming doesn't include chemical fertilizers and pesticides, it requires less energy. That is, it takes considerable amounts of fossil fuel to create the synthetic fertilizers and pesticides used in conventional farming.

What's more, organic farming increases the amount of carbon returned to the soil, which in turn lessens the impact on the greenhouse effect and global warming.

It is said that every culture shares one thing in common: food. It is a universal celebration. Organic farming celebrates healthfulness and biodiversity. It removes damaging chemical toxins from our environment and our food and this is something to promote and foster.

Activities for Journalists

Instead of promoting the use of expensive chemical fertilizers there is a simple and cheap type of fertiliser. It's called manure. Here are some of the ways that manure can be applied on the farm and get high yields:

1. Cover and protect manure from direct sun and rain to increase the nutrients in the manure by up to ten times.
2. Five bags (50kg weight) of cattle manure can have as much nitrogen as one bag of fertilizer.
3. Protect manure by piling up fresh droppings every day and covering them to protect from the elements.
4. Make sure the manure is properly covered so that chickens can't scratch it into the sun and rain.
5. Always cover manure which has been applied in the field the same day.
6. Never plant seeds too close to fresh manure --- it can burn the seeds.

The use of open pollinated crops needs to be promoted. These crops are mainly called indigenous or local crops since they have been used by Zambians for a long time. For instance, there is a maize variety, locally called "Gangata," which is drought resistant and it can grow without the use of chemical fertilizer. It is nutritious as compared to the hybrid variety. The local seed is not modified.

One of the biggest challenges that face organic foods is that it is very expensive

compared to non-organic foods.

This is because most farmers only produce conventional foods. Also most farmers and food producers want to maximize profit, by using chemicals to increase the size and quantity of their produce.

The cost of production of non-organic foods is less as compared to that of organic foods which results in a much lower price for non-organic foods.

Is anyone doing organic farming in your community? If so, interview them.

What kind of crop yields are they getting? Are they satisfied with their crops? How is organic farming different from conventional farming?

Ask an extension agent to talk about organic farming during a call-in show so that people can ask questions and learn more about organic farming. Are organic foods more healthy to eat than non-organic foods?

Useful Link

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