Sustainable Income Generating Investment Group (SINGI)

Ecosystem: Sub-humid agricultural area

Area Impacted: 1,000 ha

Production Quantity: 150,000 Kg valued at $52,500 per season

People Employed: 8 full-time staff

Population Impacted: 500 households/farms

Kenya

The Situation

Busia County in Western Kenya is rich in biological diversity with a variety of agroecological zones suitable for growing a diverse range of plants and crops and sufficient rain. Yet it is facing severe environmental challenges and is among the poorest and food insecure counties in Kenya. Large farms have been divided into smaller portions, leaving most farmers struggling to earn a living off less than 0.6 hectares. Increased pesticide use pollutes water while food production has declined due to soil erosion. Changing land use and management practices have contributed to the loss of biodiversity and diminished nutritious genetic resources critical to agricultural productivity, sustainability and resilience to stresses. Changes in eating habits and lack of access to quality seed has left most Kenyans relying on a handful of food crops for their sustenance. In Busia County, two out of three citizens are unable to meet their basic food needs and 26.6% children under five are stunted, 11% are underweight and 4% are dangerously thin due to malnutrition.

The Solution

Once perceived as food for the poor, African Leafy Vegetables (ALVs) and other forgotten crops are making a comeback in Busia County, Kenya, thanks to a pilot project and a participatory multi-sectoral platform that connects farmer organizations, NGOs and national and international agencies. ALVs are weedy, semi-cultivated species that are adapted to local environments and provide affordable access to key nutrients. SINGI has worked with partners to develop and test a workable food procurement model based on ALVs to promote the conservation of local food biodiversity while improving farmer livelihoods and promoting healthier school meals. To avoid food losses, farmers grow the vegetables directly on school land. The school purchases the produce at an agreed market price and has a reliable source of quality ALVs, while the farmers cut their transport costs and have a dependable buyer for their produce. Training has been provided to 25 farmer groups to build capacity in the sustainable production of ALVs, while nutrition education activities were carried out to improve the capacity of schools and clinics to benefit from ALV consumption. To date, eight farmer groups have now signed contracts with thirteen schools and one hospital for the provision of ALVs to be included in their institutional meals. When established on school land, the plots double as educational tools for students who learn about sustainable agriculture, balanced nutrition and get hands-on experience in growing and using local crops.
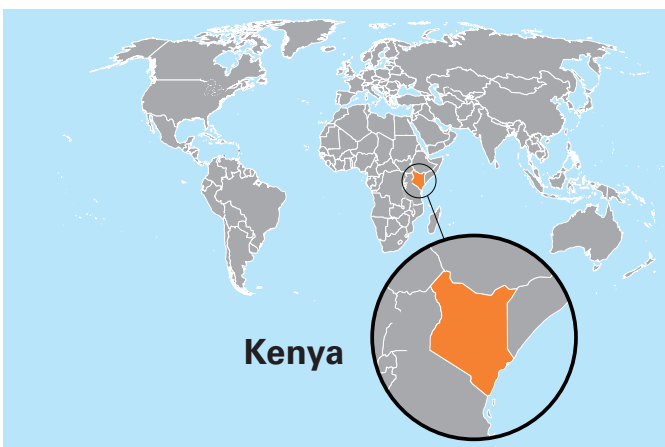
Farming for Biodiversity

Unsustainable agricultural practices remain one of the greatest threats to ecosystems and biodiversity. As the world population is expected to reach nine billion by 2050 and climate change further threatens livelihoods, we have to find ways of agricultural production that support farmers and the environment we all rely on.

The good news is these solutions already exist: From modern beekeepers who work on reviving ancient local wisdom to phone apps connecting rural farmers with urban consumers.

With Farming for Biodiversity, we are on a global mission to surface these local solutions, celebrate them and bring them to scale.

Our vision is to make these community-led initiatives shine and reach:

- Over 200 million globally through media impressions and publications
- Over 100,000 active website participants and readers of online publications
- 200 selected agriculture & biodiversity pioneers through eight technical and campaign trainings, hosted across the globe
- 800,000 farmers, conservationists and other land users at the community-level

STEP 1
Find what works

Through our crowd-sourcing contest Solution Search, we have identified over 300 innovative and replicable ideas that connect agriculture, livelihood and the environment. These selections were assessed by our renowned panel of expert judges from leading organizations around the world.

STEP 2
Demonstrate, scale and replicate solutions

Based on the solutions surfaced, we will host eight in-country workshops to introduce the most promising approaches to local influencers. Trainings will equip participants with the skills to implement locally driven solutions in their own communities. Longer term grants will provide an additional incentive to continue their work. These efforts will expand these approaches globally, reaching 800,000 people!

STEP 3
Feed local solutions into global policy

Throughout the project, we will gather, analyze and publish lessons learned. An online peer-to-peer network will connect all solution providers and facilitate interactive exchange across countries and themes. We will actively engage in global environment and agriculture policy processes – such as the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) meetings, drawing attention to community leaders and local champions.