

# Organic Agriculture and Agro-Ecosystem Health in Uganda

In July 2014 Florian Leregger took part in the *International Training on Organic Agriculture (ITCOA)* which lasted for three weeks in Uganda. During this he got an overview of organic agriculture and the social, economic and ecological conditions of the agro-ecosystem in the East-African countries.

## Report Uganda

*Florian Leregger (IUFE)*

The main target of this course was gaining knowledge about organic agriculture and agro-ecosystem health. Forty students from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Austria had the chance to learn about the ecological, social and economic conditions of organic farmers in Uganda. The main focus was on coffee and banana production. Several scientists and experts accompanied the course, such as professors from Kenya, Tanzania and Austria as well as representatives of farmer associations and organic farming movements.

### Chronological overview: The ITOCA-programme from 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of July 2014

- **Makerere University in Kampala (Capital City)**

I was a member of the group of the 40 students. We started our programme in the capital of Uganda. At Makerere University in Kampala we had the chance to learn about theoretical issues of organic farming and agro-ecosystem health. In addition to the information in our preparation phase (from May to July 2014 at the Centre for Development Research, BOKU Vienna) it was a good introduction to develop basic understanding of local conditions, strengths of organic agriculture, global trends and challenges, regional and national agricultural players and different independencies of stakeholders.



- **Agricultural Trade Show in Jinja (Eastern Region)**

In the first week we visited one of the biggest Ugandan agricultural fairs in Jinja near the Blue Nile. Organized by the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) under the theme “Take

it to the farmer: Family farming for agricultural revolution in Uganda” over 200 exhibitors presented their plants, animals, innovations, agricultural techniques, machines and networks.

- **RUCID – Training College in Mityana (Central Region)**

After the fair we stayed at RUCID for three nights. On this training farm we learned about the local farming conditions, coffee and banana production, composting, soil and water conservation, animal welfare, pest and diseases, juice-making and fruit-processing by talks, discussions, workshops, games and practical sessions.



- **Makerere University in Kampala (Capital City)**

In the second week we spent a few days at Makerere University again to prepare our research on the farms in Bushenyi district. In these days we defined goals, developed indicators in terms of agro-ecosystem health and designed the questionnaire for the field work. Several facilitators and local experts assisted this process.

- **Field Work in Bushenyi (Western Region)**

After these days of preparation we went to Bushenyi district in the western part of Uganda to work on 48 farms. Our research methods included farm walks, observations and interviews with male and female farmers. For each farm we had around two hours. The 36 questions on the questionnaire regarded social, economic and ecological issues like pest and diseases, animal welfare, feeding shortage, yields, food availability, market access, waste management, housing conditions, work load between men and women etc. Besides we took soil samples for analysis. After the data entry we generated a strength-weakness-analysis with recommendations for improvement for each farm. Through individual talks we gave tailored feedback to each farmer.



- **Makerere University & Public Workshop in Kampala (Capital City)**

In the last days of ITCOA we spent our time at Markerere University. After we had completed our work with the farmers in Bushenyi we prepared the results of our research for the public

workshop “Sustainable food secure: organic agriculture for the Vision 2040” on 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2014. Organized by ITCOA and GO ORGANIC in the conference hall of the Uganda Industrial Research Institute several keynote speakers talked about strength, potential for the youth, production and trade opportunities of organic farming. Afterwards we presented our results to the audience on several posters with different topics like “social, ecological and economic health”, “organic agriculture as an answer to climate change” and “complex stakeholder system”. Finally we had the chance to speak with policy makers, public officers, farmers and students.

- **Personal Resume**

To sum up I feel that the time in Uganda was truly enriching for me. I got the chance to see the country and the conditions of life and with the local people I could learn a lot about cultural issues, the society and of course about organic agricultural and agro-ecosystem health. In addition many friendships were newly-formed. However, one of the most important aspects was the positive impact we had through our work in Uganda and I have the hope that our work will help some of the farmers in the future too.

**Information about Uganda**

[The State House of Uganda](#) | [The Government of Uganda](#) | [The Parliament of Uganda](#) | [Kampala capital city authority](#) | [Bushenyi district](#) | [Ministry of agriculture, animal industries & fisheries](#) | [Uganda National Report](#) | [FAO](#) | [Organic Agriculture in Uganda](#)

**International Training Course on Organic Agriculture (ITCOA)**

The International Training Course on Organic Agriculture is a three weeks academic capacity development project that annually takes place in Uganda. ITCOA started in July 2005 and is a direct response to the expressed demands for training and field exposure of university students on organic agriculture. It is organised by the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Makerere University, Sokoine University of Agriculture, University of Nairobi and Bahir Dar University in cooperation with CIAT. <http://itcoa.wordpress.com>

**Centre for Development Research (CDR)**

The Centre for Development Research at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, is coordinating the ITCOA project. The CDR conducts applied development research and training in areas related to sustainable natural resource management works towards poverty reduction, food security and well-being for the most vulnerable population. In a multidisciplinary network of scientists the CDR collaborate with a wide range of partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America. [www.cdr.boku.ac.at](http://www.cdr.boku.ac.at) & [www.facebook.com/CentreforDevelopmentResearch](http://www.facebook.com/CentreforDevelopmentResearch)

**Go Organic - Young Professionals Networking for Organic Agriculture in East Africa**

“Go Organic” was founded in 2012 by ITCOA (International Training Course on Organic Agriculture) alumniees to provide a platform on which to build a sustainable organic network across East African borders. The movement brings individuals, companies, students, organizations and institutions together to promote organic principles and values. It is a multi-national initiative being managed under country-specific chapters. <http://www.go-organic.org>