

LEISA
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Participants of a documentation workshop visit a local farmers' organisation in Mhezi village, Same, Tanzania. Photo: Rik Thijssen

The editors have taken every care to ensure that the contents of this magazine are as accurate as possible. The authors have ultimate responsibility, however, for the content of individual articles.

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10 The Lagos State Fish Farmers' Association

Y. O. Basorun and J. O. Olakulehin

With more and more fish being brought into the state of Lagos to satisfy consumer demand, the Lagos State Agricultural Development Authority realised that fish farming could offer the possibility of increasing fish production, as well as creating employment opportunities and providing an additional source of income for urban dwellers. Fish farming was successfully promoted, but after some time fish farmers realised that they were at a disadvantage when working independently: they had limited access to extension services and prices were set by middlemen. In response, the Lagos State Fish Farmers' Association was started up in 2004 with less than 10 members and has since grown in numbers and influence, benefiting small scale farmers as well as other stakeholders in the local fish farm industry.

15 Learning together for organic farming

Hans Peter Reinders

In the 1980s, Dutch farmers started cultivating new land in an area that formerly had been at the bottom of the sea. Although there was a growing interest from consumers in organically grown products, organic agricultural practices were still hardly developed in the Netherlands in those days. A group of farmers started a club with the aim to develop and share knowledge on organic production systems. Over the years this initiative developed into a formal organisation for organic farmers with more than 70 members. Once enough knowledge had been generated by this group, their mission has shifted towards strategic representation in influential agricultural organisations and lobbying activities.



LEISA is about Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. It is about the technical and social options open to farmers who seek to improve productivity and income in an ecologically sound way. LEISA is about the optimal use of local resources and natural processes and, if necessary, the safe and efficient use of external inputs. It is about the empowerment of male and female farmers and the communities who seek to build their future on the basis of their own knowledge, skills, values, culture and institutions. LEISA is also about participatory methodologies to strengthen the capacity of farmers and other actors to improve agriculture and adapt it to changing needs and conditions. LEISA seeks to combine indigenous and scientific knowledge, and to influence policy formulation to create an environment conducive for its further development. LEISA is a concept, an approach and a political message.

ILEIA is the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. ILEIA seeks to promote the adoption of LEISA through the LEISA magazines and other publications. It also maintains a specialised information database and an informative and interactive website on LEISA (www.ileia.info). The website provides access to many other sources of information on the development of sustainable agriculture.

Readers are welcome to photocopy and circulate articles.

Please acknowledge the LEISA Magazine and send us a copy of your publication.



20 From local committees to a district association

César Gonzales Alfaro

Faced with decreasing productivity and an increasing population, farmers in the district of San Luis in Peru decided to participate in the Ministry of Agriculture's National Soil Conservation programme. The programme began by setting up a number of "conservation committees" based in the villages. After some years' progress, San Luis was chosen as a pilot area for a new project with the objective of "developing a participatory approach to natural resource management". This project built on the existing local and district committees to form a district association, which, despite some initial difficulties, has seen concrete results such as securing funding for a reforestation project, as well as small scale production projects. This has recently motivated the association to move in other directions.

22 Traditional farmers' groups supporting sustainable farming

Mihin Dollo

The traditional farmers' groups of the Apatani people, in the Arunachal Himalayas, India, have been successfully managing their natural resources for many years. However, in recent times, many of their traditions, practices and knowledge are in danger of being diluted or lost. The Apatani are known for their system of paddy rice and fish cultivation, which is a highly evolved indigenous farming system, producing enough rice to export after meeting local needs. The farmers themselves recognise that, without farmer groups, agro-ecosystem management could easily weaken, and the technical ecological knowledge which supports it could quickly erode. Their challenge is to maintain and preserve their production system and the knowledge and practices it is based on, when faced with changing conditions and outside influences.



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DEAR READERS

Since the beginning of January, the team at ILEIA has been happy to welcome our new Director, Edith van Walsum. She has extensive experience working with local organisations in Africa and Asia, has written for the *LEISA Magazine* before, and we are excited by the new ideas and contacts she brings. She says "I look forward to further broadening the ILEIA network and to forging new forms of collaboration and partnership. Let ILEIA continue to be a vibrant and open-minded player in the growing global movement for a fair and sustainable agriculture!"

One way in which we are planning to broaden our network and activities is through our new Documentation programme. As part of our activities, with this issue of the Magazine we are enclosing an English version of the methodology we have been working with. Please read more on page 14 and on our website.

Also inside this issue you will find the 2007 Readers' Survey. We are always trying to improve the *LEISA Magazine* for our readers, and to be able to do this, we need your opinions! We would appreciate it if you can give us your constructive comments about the quality and usefulness of the magazine. Please fill in the questionnaire and return it to us, and we will ensure that you continue to receive the magazine regularly. If you have access to the internet you can also fill in the questionnaire on our website – www.leisa.info – and send it to us that way. We hope to share some of the results and improvements with you before the end of the year!

We look forward to hearing from you.

The Editors