

## Organic School Gardens

Many children in poor countries have inadequate and unbalanced diets. This results in malnutrition, causing health problems and weak learning abilities. Vegetables and fruits are lacking, while these are essential ingredients for growing children. And if they are available, produce is often laced with pesticides from improper use of agrochemicals.

**The strength of organic school gardens** School gardens produce vegetables and fruits for the daily meal of the pupils. Vegetables and fruits are considered extremely important ingredients needed in the feeding of children. Thanks to the organic production methods, both the production and the produce are safe. They are without any pesticide residues and environmentally friendly. At the same time, the fields serve as demonstration fields for Farmer Field Schools. Local farmers learn how to make compost and how to farm organically. The farming families can use the fruits and vegetables for their meals and when production is sufficient, the surplus of the produce can be marketed which will increase the income of the farmers households substantially.

**Farmer Field Schools** Participants of the farmer field schools are farmers who live close to the school. In most cases, they are parents or other relatives of the school children. They are being trained in organic practices (general principles, fertility management, composting, pest & disease management) and participate in the farming activities of the organic garden. The farmers are encouraged to have their own vegetable gardens, individually or in a group. Experience has learned that in many cases the FFS groups start a vegetable garden, either with the whole group or with the most active members of the group. In some cases farmers prefer to have their own individual vegetable garden. The organic produce from the farms is used for home consumption and the surplus is marketed locally. The availability of organic vegetables from these farms will thus contribute to the provision of healthy meals for the schoolchildren and their families at home.



**Women participation** In order to offer women and men equal chances to participate in these projects, we use a gender sensitive approach. Gender differences in labour calendars, income, decision-making power, crop ownership and other gender related socio-economic aspects are being considered. Because in most countries and communities women are mainly responsible for vegetable production and food security within families, women are being approached actively to participate in the FFSs.



**Focus on systems that work** The Agro Eco-Louis Bolk Institute approaches poverty alleviation from a broad perspective. We take into account the complexity of local factors. For us, sustainable agriculture is the driving force behind rural development. We cooperate with national organic movements. Thanks to our long lasting experience in agricultural development projects, we are able to set up systems that work.

In 2008 AE LBI started the Organic School Garden Project in Ghana, together with the Ghanaian organisation GOAN (Ghana Organic Agriculture Network). The project has set up 16 organic school gardens in the past two years and will implement 8 more in 2010. This project is funded by Oxfam Novib.



**Do you want to know more about our services?** Please contact

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