

Ecological/Social standards and MDGs - Sustainable agricultural production and marketing

In Ecuador, it is very hard for small and medium-sized producers, particularly indigenous fringe groups, to find sales outlets for their agricultural products. By forming producer associations in certified organic farming they can export products and supply the gradually developing local market with organic products.

On international markets they can frequently charge price premiums for organic products and raise turnover though increased sales on local markets. Consumers in developing countries are increasingly demanding 'uncontaminated' products. Often, the advantage for the producers is that they can reduce production costs by doing without costly pesticides and charge the same prices, making a higher profit as a result.

Small farmers in particular can convert to organic farming relatively easily since they often apply traditional farming techniques which are not far removed from those required in organic agriculture. Nevertheless, organic farming is not just about avoiding chemicals. It calls for specialised knowledge of a number of cropping techniques and experience in handling plant diseases and their natural prevention or treatment. Organic farming requires a considerable degree of know-how but it frequently produces a superior yield over traditional cropping methods. A key concern is preserving soil fertility which is essential for sustainable agriculture. Many producers, however, have no access to know-how about organic farming techniques and many governments in developing countries need advice on how to promote ecofarming within the framework of their agricultural policy.

With the objective of providing small and medium-sized producers access to an improved supply of advisory, marketing and certification capacities for organic farming, GTZ intervenes at macro, meso and micro level.

At macro level, GTZ advises agriculture ministries in developing and more advanced countries in drafting statutory norms modelled on EU legislation governing the production, processing and certification of organic products. At meso level, for example, it assists research stations of the *Instituto Nacional Autonomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias* in providing smallholders with practical cropping and marketing advice. Moreover, GTZ provides advice in setting up local control points and networking all local actors to facilitate the exchange of information and know-how. At micro level, it supports marketing activities by organising a stand for producer associations at *Biofach*, the world fair for organic products in Nuremberg. GTZ also initiates partnerships with the private sector in this field.

As organic agriculture improves soil fertility and (re)introduces mixed cropping, the project makes a contribution to implementing MDG 7. Organic farming also contributes to erosion control and drinking water purity, and it can help sustain or even enhance biodiversity. Many agricultural workers in developing countries suffer from illnesses due to the use of agrochemicals. As organic farming manages without these pesticides, promoting these practices improves the health of the rural population (MDG 5). Market access and more efficient production techniques generate and increase income and stabilise the production base (MDG 1).