

Title of project

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Current scientific degree and university: M.Sc in Agricultural Development, KVL

Source(s) of funding: DFFE

Background

There is an increased conversion to organic farming (OF) on a global scale both in developed and in developing countries such as China, Vietnam, Uganda, Egypt, Brazil and Argentina. The primary driving force for this is the increased demand for imported organic products in the richer countries in the North and the increasing domestic market in some developing countries. The organic food system has been transformed, from groups of loosely coordinated producers and consumers, to a globalized system of regulated trade linking socially and spatially distant sites of production and consumption. While organic farming policies, practices and institutions in Europe have been thoroughly studied; state interest in organic agriculture remains low and weakly institutionalised in many other parts of the world. The development of certified OF in some tropical countries has been driven by demands from companies and organisations with the aim of supplying consumers in the North. Therefore, the organic ideas and principles are not always embedded within the local farmers. These characteristics represent both a possibility and a challenge to organic farming, because they hold the potential to increase the volume of organic products sold, but at the same time threatens to dilute the specific organic ideas as expressed in the principles formulated by IFOAM and local organic movements. Potentially, certified organic farming can offer food security, livelihood and poverty alleviation opportunities and less liquidation of natural capital. That is why development bodies such as IFAD and FAO increasingly perceive organic farming as representing a development potential. Outside Europe, however, developmental – livelihood and sustainability - implications of organic globalisation are under-researched and so is the question of the necessary local institutional set up for organic farming to be locally embedded and benefit smallholder farmers. No major study has yet analysed the ideas, practices and institutions, which comprise and coordinate the increasingly global organic agro food network.

Objective

The overall objective of this project is to establish to what extent different organic production systems in developing countries build on agro-ecological principles and to what extent and how that particular system promotes the sustainability of the production system under influence of different market spheres. The project consists of four broad tasks with the following headings:

1. Nutrient management and recycling
2. Planned diversity on organic farms
3. Productivity assessment and yield predictions on organic farms
4. The impact of organic farming on farmer's livelihoods

Progress – 2007

Research activities: Data collection for PhD

Stays abroad: Sweden, May 2007; China July/August 2007; Egypt September 2007

PhD courses: Systems Theory, Application in agroecological Analysis at different scales (12ECTS); SOAR summer school 2007: Scales and cross-scales in Ecosystem Services.

Conferences etc: Attended Danida Development Days

SOAR activities: SOAR Summer School

Leave or part time periods: Parental leave: January 2007 (2 weeks); April 2007 (4 weeks), October 22-Dec 1 2007 (7 weeks)

Plans – 2008

Research activities: Continued data collection

Stays abroad: Brazil Medio 2008; Italy June 2008

PhD courses: Case study course

Conferences etc.: IFOAM World Congress, June 2008

SOAR activities: SOAR summer school; SOAR seminars

Time schedule details (whole PhD period)

Total period(s) of leave (not working on PhD project)

13 weeks

Total period of extra employment on PhD project

13 weeks

(Planned) date of submission of thesis

23 December 2009

(Planned) date for defence