

Discover News-sheet for colleagues in Africa

August 2020

Food security



Dear Friends

The corona crisis with the imposed lockdown coming on top of the climate crisis has caused much suffering. Many families have experienced hunger.

If families have enough to eat:

- The intake of proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals helps to maintain good health.
- There is less domestic violence, no “sex for food” and less thieving.
- The sale of some foods leads to better family wealth and income.

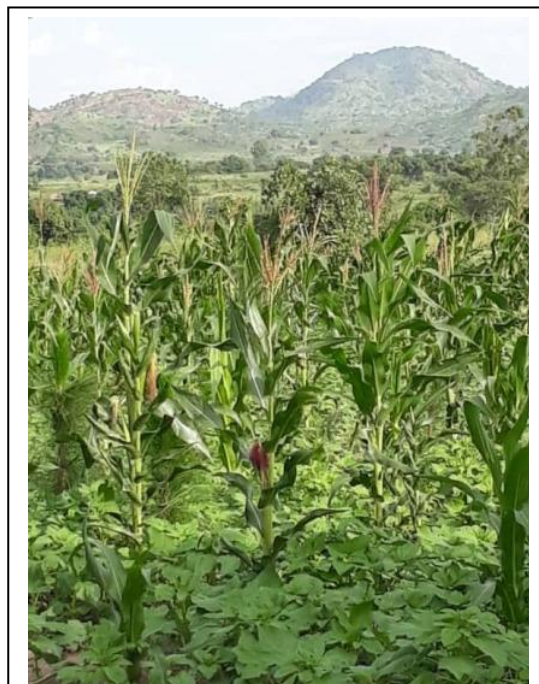
As both the climate and corona crises will continue, it is essential to ensure that families have enough to eat. Be prepared!

But how?

1. Practice agroforestry using indigenous or leguminous trees, such as *Faidherbia albida* or *Sesbania sesban* – to increase soil fertility, enhance the absorption of rainwater, provide shade and to encourage rainfall.

Eric Kihuluka wrote last week, “Recent downpours destroyed many crops, but not of those who had trees around their gardens. Many people are now appreciating agroforestry and tree planting”

2. Use cover crops to prevent water loss by evaporation and water runoff, and sometimes to provides an extra crops or improve soil fertility, such as cowpeas, groundnuts, pumpkins, jack beans, green grams, lab-lab beans, Bambara nuts, gotu cola (*Centella asiatica*), mucuna beans.
3. Never burn crop residues. Rather use them as mulch or compost.
4. Grow different food varieties; cereals (millet, sorghum, rice, maize), legumes (beans, ground nuts, soya, peas, mucuna beans), vegetables (amaranth and grain amaranth, black night shade, egg plants, bitter berries, cabbages, spinach, carrots, onions, pumpkins), fruits (pawpaws, water melons, passion fruits, oranges, avocado, mangoes, Jack fruits, guava, gooseberries, bananas), root tubers (cassava, sweet potatoes, yams).



Maize with simsim as a cover crop.
The garden of Christopher Nyakuni
near to Arua, Uganda

5. Grow many drought resistant crops, such as sorghum, sweet potatoes, mucuna bean, cocoyam, moringa. Moringa loses its leaves in a drought, but the tree survives.
6. Grow some cash crops (coffee, cotton, vanilla, sunflowers) for both home consumption and sale.
7. Rotate your crops to break the cycle of pests and ensure higher production.
8. Avoid all agricultural chemicals. Maintain soil fertility with leguminous crops, compost and animal manure. Control pests with natural means. Charles Olupot in Katakwi writes, "I have trained farmers to use urine as medicine for spraying crops. When you allow the urine to stand and add red pepper you get the best results. To get rid of locusts, mix urine, neem and red pepper."
9. Integrate livestock such as pigs, goats and/or chickens into the farm. Do not let them roam but house them well. They mature for eating or sale in 4 to 6 months. Use the composted manure on the garden.
10. Store grains in granaries so that they will keep for a long time without getting spoiled.
11. Dry foods in a solar drier and store. Foods which may be dried include: Cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, bananas, pumpkins, maize, soya bean, beans, peas, rice, moringa leaves and fruits such as banana, mango and jackfruit. Having a good stock of dried moringa leaf powder will ensure that you have a source of vitamins, minerals and protein in any extended period of drought.
12. Plant trees along riverbanks and wherever there is danger of landslides. On slopes plant vetiver grass or citronella grass along the contours to stabilise the soil and to encourage terracing.
13. "Drought-ready farming" includes having sunken beds, trenches, rainwater runoff dams, mulching and cover crops.
14. Always look out for the opportunity to learn more. Talk with other farmers. Form a cooperative with other farmers for the exchange of knowledge, for the purchase of seeds and the sale of products.
15. Keep a record of what you do – learn from successes and failures.
16. Last but not least, do not forget your medicinal plants, especially *Artemisia anna*, aloe, garlic, ginger, rosemary.



A solar drier construction by Obaikol Gideon in Soroti being used to dry, pineapple, peppers, avocados and banana.

For more ideas, see the Discover Document "Coping with Drought"; see <http://discover-src.net/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Drought-management-DISCOVER.pdf>

Many thanks to all colleagues who helped me with ideas for this newsletter.

With my best wishes – hoping that you and your families keep well and well-fed!

Keith Lindsey