

Locally rooted globally connected the AgriCultures network

AgriCultures is a global network that presently consists of eight organisations active in knowledge sharing for sustainable agriculture. Ileia is the global coordinator and secretariat. The network members collaborate with a wide range of partner organisations in the South and in the North. Each member is solidly grounded in its own national and regional context: the Andes, West and East Africa, India, Indonesia, China and the Netherlands. This allows each member to source, mobilise and exchange relevant experience in relation to small-scale

farming from their own region. At the same time information is shared with others in and beyond the global network. This offers unique possibilities for fast-track learning through connecting local developments with global trends. All members of the network publish their own regional editions of Farming Matters; these appear in Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Bahasa Indonesia and Chinese.

Vision The AgriCultures Network envisages a world wherein ecologically sound family farming is widely recognised as the foundation for resilient rural livelihoods and a sustainable global society. Small-scale family farmers - women and men - produce adequate supplies of food and commodities for themselves and for local, regional and global markets. Doing so, they contribute to finding solutions for global challenges: climate change, hunger and environmental degradation.

Mission The AgriCultures Network facilitates practice-based knowledge building on sustainable small-scale family farming and food production, and a wide dissemination of such knowledge, both at local and global levels. Connecting different stakeholders and different types of knowledge, it empowers farmers and it contributes to society-wide learning and to upscaling and replication of sustainable farming practices and approaches. Members of the network actively exchange experiences and know-how on policy, institutions, markets, human, social and

cultural capital, science and technology, and natural resources and climate.

Branching out The network and its activities continue to grow. In 2009 we welcomed a new member: the Arid Lands Information Network, in short ALIN, based in Kenya. ALIN has been publishing Baobab, a magazine for rural development fieldworkers, for more than 20 years. Together we decided to infuse the Baobab with more agriculture content and thus to make it a full-fledged member of the AgriCultures 'family'. The renewed Baobab magazine is expected to take over many East African subscribers of Farming Matters in the near future.

In India, new regional language editions of LEISA India have started in Hindi, Tamil and Kannada. They were launched in March 2009 and turned out to be a welcome complement to the ten year old English language edition. More local language editions are planned to be released in 2010. These are partly supported by local sponsors, such as the Canara Bank.

The Spanish and Portuguese language editions of the magazine are growing fast, their readership is almost equal to that of the global edition. These editions constitute an important forum for the Agro ecology movement in Latin America.

Impact studies During 2009, all AgriCultures partners carried out an impact study of their magazines. They learnt that their magazines influence readers in a variety of ways. They serve as

In Tanzania, readers use the magazine for background information about innovations that the Government or NGOs introduce.

Some readers interviewed in Dodoma, Morogoro and Iringa regions in Tanzania are regularly involved in implementation of new ideas by the Government or NGOs. Such ideas include: voucher systems for subsidized fertilizer and seed supplies, identification of local manuring materials and emphasis on local inputs and on-farm recycling, urban farming and home gardening, Farmers Field Schools for smallholder farmers, and value chain development for chickens and pigs. The magazine provides articles from various parts of the world where such ideas have been tried out in practice. Fifteen out of twenty respondents stated that they had read such articles that covered subjects they are carrying out in their own professional practice. They also stated how they used such ideas in their daily work. Tanzania had a total of 800 subscribers at the time of interviewing.



a source of inspiration for giving greater public visibility to sustainable agriculture and for influencing the public debate. They are used in teaching and training, research, and help in systematising one's own experience and interaction with other practitioners. The magazines motivate readers to translate content into local languages, and serve as inspiration source when writing proposals for funding support. Most importantly, the AgriCultures network magazines have influenced many farmers to implement sustainable practices (e.g. IPM and SRI), as shown by numerous examples and impressive numbers mentioned. Finally, the magazines continue to change mindsets.

From the Indonesian editorial team:

- *'We found one interesting example in Bajawa, in Nusa Tenggara Timur, where a village is growing its own vegetables. Previously, the villagers focused on cultivating cash crops and in the mean time bought their vegetables elsewhere. Then a field assistant from a local NGO brought some SALAM magazines, which became reading material for the farmers. They discussed the articles, did field trials and tried to find substitutes for expensive or rare materials. The trials were satisfying and the villagers now grow their own vegetables.'*

From the Agridape team in Senegal:

- *'We applied the field school approach that we learned from Agridape to train rice producers in the village of Agoua. The results were great' (Loko Bernadin, Calavi, Benin)*

- *‘Thanks to the magazine I found some recipes on how to feed my goats using some tree leaves which also contribute to fighting against intestinal infections from parasites’ (Inoki Milenge Mayembe, Buyumbura, Burundi)*

From Brazil:

- *‘We began to use texts from Agriculturas Magazine in the ongoing training programmes for educators. The teachers began to use them in their training courses for young farmers. When we had to produce a new version of the course book (35,000 copies for the whole of Brazil), we decided to incorporate some articles related to the issues under discussion (gender, identity, young people etc).’ (Romier Sousa, Escola Agrotécnica de Castanhal)*

Globally connected In many cases, the magazines cover ‘hot issues’ facing small farmers, such as access to land, water, seeds and credit and production techniques that make more sustainable use of inputs.

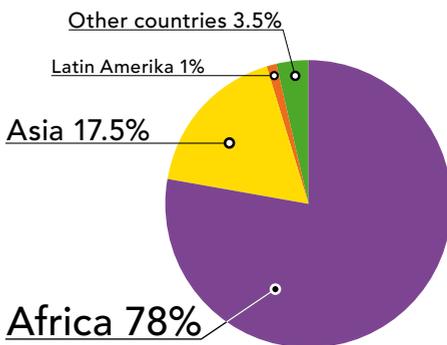
There is added value in having regional editions that highlight local practices and a global one that focuses on global developments and policies: the global edition can put issues on the agenda, while the regional editions have been very instrumental in spreading ideas across the globe, such as Farmer Field Schools or the System of Rice Intensification (SRI).

Locally rooted In the impact studies we also looked at how our organisations and magazines are

positioned in the wider institutional and political context. This position does have important consequences for the organisation’s credibility and its effectiveness in reaching target audiences.

The magazine matters - Facts and figures

Farming Matters, the global edition, has 21,000 subscribers in 154 countries (up from 17,500 in December 2008). The majority of the readers come from Africa; this is likely to gradually change, with new regional editions coming up, and ileia giving increasing importance to global developments and Europe. Compared to the global edition, the regional editions have a combined total of 41,300 subscribers; 2 times more than the global edition. Together, all editions now have 62,300 subscribers; a 25% increase since at the end of 2008 when we counted 49,500 subscribers. The number of readers for all editions of the AgriCultures Network is now estimated to exceed 300,000.



What does the AgriCultures network mean to its members?

‘The AgriCultures Network is a forum which ALIN has used as a source of inspiration for Baobab magazine’ (Noah Lusaka, our partner from ALIN, Kenya) ‘The network keeps us globally connected and informed on issues related to small-scale farmers across different regions’ (Radha, our partner from AME-foundation, India). ‘The AgriCultures Network should also involve in the national, regional and global movement on sustainable agriculture and small-scale farm issues. We succeed in giving information to people on many issues, but our topics do not become a strong reference if we are not close enough with the movement’ (Indro Surono, our partner from PETANI, Indonesia). ‘The network allows us to tackle problems together’ (Ren Jian, our partner from CBIK, China).

Regional editions

- **LEISA Revista de Agroecologia:** 11,500 in Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Cuba and Argentina.
- **LEISA India:** 11,000 in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- **AgriDape:** 2,800 in Mali, Niger, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso and Cameroon.
- **Majalah Petani:** 3,500 on different islands of Indonesia.
- **LEISA China:** 2,500 in 23 provinces in China.
- **Kilimo Endeluvu Africa:** 4,500 in Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Uganda.
- **AgriCulturas:** 5,500 mostly in Brazil.

The Brazil study lists impressive concrete examples of the strategic positioning of the AgriCulturas magazine in the agro-ecological movement. The magazine has linkages with national press, the small farmers’ movement, the GM-free Brazil Campaign, science societies, women movements, and others. The material in the magazine is used for developing textbooks for colleges,

training material for municipalities, libraries, farmers’ training activities and the landless movement. The magazine is indexed on the Periodicals Portal for higher education personnel reaching 268 educational institutions. Authors are contacted by 1-10 readers and generate interaction between different actors. The magazine takes a key role for people wanting to document their experiences.