



# ECHO®

## East Africa Newsletter

August 2013  
Issue 002

### Greetings from ECHO East Africa!

Here in the Arusha office we are anticipating the return of warmer weather, and continuing our efforts to promote conservation agriculture (CA) and increased food security.

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#### Upcoming Events

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### Seed Bank Update

We have secured a small store room nearby that will serve as our seed bank, after the insulating materials needed to build the cold room have been imported from Kenya. Following the example of ECHO's seed bank in Thailand, we will utilize the innovative Coolbot (<http://storeitcold.com/>) to create a cold room using only the power of a standard air conditioner. We are looking forward to improving our seed storage capacity in this way. The recent Tanzania Agricultural Society fair ("Nane Nane") also offered the chance to make new contacts with regional seed suppliers, and we are working on compiling a database that can help network members access the seeds they need. Will you help improve our database? Where do you source seeds? Fill out our brief survey and share your experiences. <https://echocommunity.site-ym.com/?SeedSurvey>

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### Students Visit ECHO EA Office

On the 30th of July, over thirty students from nearby garden clubs came to visit the ECHO East Africa office. The clubs are organized by the Jane Goodall Institute's Roots & Shoots program, and facilitated by interns and teachers. After watching a short video introducing them to the Farming God's Way method, the students toured ECHO's 1/8 acre demonstration plot, learning about compost, water conservation, minimum tillage, drip irrigation, and highly nutritious plants. The students loved the simple idea of a hafir, were impressed by the ever-productive Tropical Lettuce in our plot, and enjoyed the visit so much that the facilitator plans to bring a new group of garden club students each month!

**Course: Health, Agriculture, Culture & Community**

Florida, USA

30 Sept – 4 Oct 2013

Hosted by ECHO

For details [click here](#).

**Conference: The Digital Springboard for Inclusive Agriculture**

Kigali, Rwanda

4-8 November 2013

Hosted by CTA and the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

For details [click here](#).

**No-Till CA Conference**

N. Drakensburg, South Africa

3-5 September 2013

Hosted by The (South African) No-Till Club

For details [click here](#).

*Photos from recent training events*



Flora Kola, Extension Agent, teaches about contour bunds



Simon Kutingala, model farmer, demonstrates ox-drawn CA equipment



much that the facilitator plans to bring a new group of garden club students each month! You can learn more about R&S garden clubs here: <http://rootsandshoots.org/>

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## Local CA Training Events Well-received

Simon Kutingala is one of the most successful farmers in Ekenywa village, the area surrounding ECHO's East Africa office. Chosen by his village as a Sustainable Agriculture Motivator (SAM), Simon teaches other farmers about conservation techniques, participates in veterinary extension services, and advises on the use of ox-drawn CA implements.

In our first ECHO East Africa Newsletter, we described the April 2013 floods, which brought destruction and washed away significant amounts of soil in the surrounding areas. Since then, ECHO staff have been involved in mobilizing the neighboring 10 villages to arrest the situation. Partnering with Simon and Mrs. Flora Kola (a local extension officer), ECHO's East Africa Director Erwin Kinsey has been leading training events for village leaders to promote contour farming, agroforestry, and CA techniques using both hand hoes and ox-drawn equipment. As the training events were attended by local leaders, the presenters also urged that they use their influence to revive village by-laws about contouring, furrows channeling water away from roads, and post-harvest grazing. Throughout the three gatherings, eight agriculture extension workers and fifty six village leaders and farmers participated

In Simon's presentations, ECHO staff and village extension officers admired the way he used different teaching methodologies including visual aids and practical examples. He brought along his own ox-drawn CA equipment (including a Makoye ripper), and ECHO showcased Le planters, jab planters, and a subsoiler that can be attached to a standard plow. Simon's six years of experience with Farmer Field Schools helped to address participants' questions regarding problems with livestock, weeds, and access to equipment. Participants organized exchanges visits, which will happen this week at Simon's and on the land of other key farmers. These training events were an excellent example of the power of a key farmer to lead others to become trainers of their neighbors, practicing informal training among those who fail to attend formal training, hence causing faster adoption of appropriate innovations.

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## Staff Transitions

The past two months have been a time of transition for ECHO, as three Technical Advisors finish their terms and two more join the team. Please welcome Robert and Bonny! In July, ECHO Directors visited the TOGETHER Project in Kotido, Karamoja to say congratulations for a year of good work and then goodbye to Vanessa Reed and Ruth Portnoff, two ECHO Technical Advisors who worked with the TOGETHER project. During their term in Karamoja, Vanessa and Ruth helped to establish a pilot watershed restoration project, creating contour bunds planted with diverse trees and grass, in addition to teaching Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration techniques in nearby gullies. They demonstrated CA at three schools and in various communities, and also initiated the use of hafirs for water harvesting.

ECHO is pleased to welcome Mr. Robert Okumu Obonyo as a long-term Technical Advisor for the TOGETHER project. Robert has a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture, and 5 years of practical experience in community development, food security and sustainable agriculture projects in Uganda and South Sudan, working with the International Organization for Migration and Deutsche Welthungerhilfe at the Karamoja Regional Office in Moroto. His passion is to conserve the earth's biodiversity and reduce desertification through sustainable food systems which encourage local production, healthy and affordable food and healthy ecosystems. The four main focuses of ECHO in TOGETHER's Year 2 plan are: scaling up CA, promoting FMNR, initiating ECF Immunization, and controlling Newcastle Disease with the I-2 eye-drop vaccine.

August has brought more staff transition, as Amy VanNocker finishes her one-year assignment to help establish the ECHO East Africa office here in Arusha. During her time here, Amy helped to organize the February 2013 ECHO East Africa Symposium, coordinating registration, logistics, and correspondence with 180+ participants. She worked to develop the demonstration gardens at our office, to organize the conservation farming forum in northern Tanzania, and to establish ECHO East Africa's seed collection and resource library.

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Charles Bonaventure (called "Bonny"), as a long-term Technical Advisor for ECHO East Africa. Bonny worked with the Tanzanian government since 1986 before joining World Vision Tanzania in 2004 as Agriculture Trainer. For eight years, he served with World Vision Tanzania in various capacities as Team Leader of Food

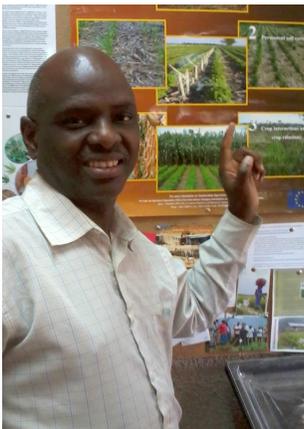


Participants compare run-off from "fields" with and without mulch

Please welcome our new staff!



Robert Okumu Obonyo,  
ECHO Technical Advisor  
Kotido, Uganda



Charles Bonaventure ("Bonny")  
ECHO Technical Advisor  
Arusha, Tanzania

## In the News

In the past two months, Tanzania has received visits from three U.S. presidents. Just two weeks ago, the Tanzanian government signed on with the Clinton Development Initiative for efforts intended to double seed production from the current 30,000 tonnes to 60,000 tonnes by 2015. [Read full article.](#)

Early in July, the Tanzanian government, in partnership with World Vision Tanzania, called on environment stakeholders to support Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) work in an

years, he served with World Vision Tanzania in various capacities as Team Leader of Food Security Project, Policy Review Officer, and Program Coordinator. Prior to joining ECHO, he worked with Global Service Corps as M&E Officer. Bonny comes from the Kilimanjaro region and is blessed with three children. He holds two bachelor degrees in Horticulture (Tanzania) and Rural Development (The Netherlands). Bonny joins ECHO with a passion for agricultural development and practices that will reduce hunger, improve livelihoods, and increase community resilience.

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## Resources for Organic Certification

Erwin Kinsey was grateful to attend the recent East African Organic Conference in Dar es Salaam, focused on the promotion of organic agriculture and certification in East Africa. Below you will find links to the organizer's website (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), as well as online resources that were shared with conference participants. Perhaps they can help you or your neighbors become certified organic producers!

<http://www.ifoam.org/en/events/east-africa-organic-conference>

Presentations and a general summary of this IFOAM conference

<http://www.oisat.org/>

A website specializing in non-chemical plant disease & pest control

<http://www.eprints/>

A repository for organic agriculture research papers

<http://www.organic-africa.net./training-manual.html>

African Organic Agriculture Training Manual

<http://www.organic-services.com/groupcertification.html>

A website describing the concept of participatory guarantee system for groups

to obtain organic certification

<http://www.ifoam.org/en/osea-ii-project>

A website on the OSEA II project which has helped to create a common standard for certification

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## The Debate Over GMOs: Where Do You Stand?

For a review of two perspectives on the issue, we recommend the following sources.

Look on the Namibian Organic Association website to see their statement concerning the dangers posed by GMOs and their irrelevance for creating world food security, with suggested alternatives. <http://www.noa.org.na/>.

Then read from [www.b4fa.org](http://www.b4fa.org) their book *Insights* which extols the benefits of biosciences in solving world food insecurity, and promotes GMOs. (You can download the book for free here: <http://www.b4fa.org/insights-biosciences-africa/> )

Another source explains the threats posed by use of conventional fertilizers, and suggests alternatives. <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2013/07/02/fertilizer.aspx>

What is a today's small-scale farmer to do? ECHO welcomes debate, but seeks to offer fact to counter any falsehood and poor data presented from any source. As Rick Burnette (ECHO's Head of Agricultural Training) states, *"ECHO's approach for smallholders is not strictly organic, but in fact focuses on 'least external inputs' which puts GMO technology [and high external input conventional agriculture] at an overall disadvantage. The spotlight has been shown as to how GMO technology has fallen short of initial claims and emerging issues, such as the super weeds and other forms of pest resistance and collateral damage. Additionally, GMOs are illegal in many countries. If we follow those parameters, then we [ECHO] are not in a very good position to recommend GMOs."*

Regeneration (F-MNR) work in an effort to combat deforestation.  
[Read full article.](#)

Add your thoughts to our forum: <http://www.echocommunity.org/members/forums/posts.asp?topic=633902&group=83350>

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## What's New on [www.ECHOcommunity.org](http://www.ECHOcommunity.org)?

Log in to read our latest Best Practices Note (#3), authored by Erwin Kinsey and focused on Assisting Pastoralists in East Africa.

The latest issue of ECHO Development Notes (#120) is now available online. As a follow-up to the last edition's article on creating a Farm Plan, this issue highlights management practices that can make your plan a reality. You will also find a summary of and link to an interesting new report from Norman Uphoff on the application of SRI principles to crops other than rice.

The first issue of ECHO's East Africa Notes is now available online. It highlights an interesting East African crop (*Telfairia pedata*) and Erwin Kinsey's recent experiences from an exchange visit to Zambia and Zimbabwe with the African Conservation Tillage network and regional leaders.

## Join Our Online Network at [www.ECHOcommunity.org](http://www.ECHOcommunity.org) (For Free!)

We encourage you to join our online network, where you can access downloadable resources about organic agriculture and the transition to low-external input sustainable agriculture. You can also connect with colleagues working your region, report feedback on ECHO trial seeds, and participate in interactive forums. Karibuni sana! (Welcome!)

Are you having trouble using the ECHO website?  
Check out our basic tutorial [here](#).

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## New Online Resources

Grant Dryden has recently released a Farming God's Way Vegetable Guide, which can be downloaded here:

[http://www.farming-gods-way.org/Resources/Farming\\_Gods\\_Way\\_Vegetable\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.farming-gods-way.org/Resources/Farming_Gods_Way_Vegetable_Guide.pdf)

It is a 3MB free download of 30 pages including home nutrition gardens & field scale, 11 vegetable crop details, planting schedules, nurseries, raised beds, flood irrigation design, composting and other subsections. Join one of the regional FGW groups on Facebook (Kenya, Uganda, Eastern Cape, Tanzania) to

stay informed of events and publications like this one.

The RIPAT Manual explains step-by-step how to organize and implement a robust group-based agricultural development project. It should be read by those interested in improving the food security and incomes of small-scale farmers: primarily practitioners, but also teachers, researchers and decision makers. The manual is especially relevant for staff of NGOs and development organizations at programming and field levels, and for local government officials involved in agricultural extension and rural development. <http://www.ripat.org/downloads/>

On its 30th anniversary, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank hosted a conference for development professionals which examined the successes and future challenges of three key approaches to fighting hunger: conservation agriculture and agroecology, implementing the human right to adequate food, and expansion of the ways in which food assistance is delivered. You can benefit from the presentations, recorded and shared here: [http://foodgrainsbank.ca/fighting\\_hunger\\_conference\\_details.aspx](http://foodgrainsbank.ca/fighting_hunger_conference_details.aspx)

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*Please keep in touch, and let us know how we can be helpful in your work to reduce hunger and alleviate poverty.*

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