

ECHO EAST AFRICA

(REGIONAL IMPACT CENTER)

NEWSLETTER

April 2014 Issue 003

Greetings from ECHO East Africa!

In This Issue:

1. Pastoralist Symposium
2. Burundi Visit
3. Seed Bank East Africa
4. Banana Passion Fruit
5. New Sweet Potatoes
6. Topics for Thought

Upcoming Events:

Permaculture Design Course
Presented by
FoodWaterShelter
May 26th – June 6th
English and Kiswahili!
[Details Here!](#)

Farming God's Way Training
May 5th – May 8th
Kijabe, Kenya
[Details Here!](#)

Nane Nane 2014
Agricultural show in Ngiro
August 1st – August 8th
[Details Here!](#)

ECHO East Africa Highlands Symposium
October 28th – 30th 2014
Mark Your Calendars Now!
Details coming soon

ECHO East Africa Pastoralist Symposium

During the first week of March, over 125 individuals from 11 different nations gathered in Machakos, Kenya to discuss best practices in pastoralist areas. The three day event included plenary talks during the morning and break-out sessions during the afternoons. An optional fourth day activity included visiting a mature sand dam. Several of the broad topics were:



- Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration, FMNR (Hands-on practical shown in photo above)
- Sustainable practices and health of livestock
- Animal immunization programs and community animal health workers
- Integration of pastoralism and conservation
- Conservation Agriculture
- Various water storage methods and purification techniques
- Peace making among people and livestock
- Farming God's Way

ECHO is grateful for everyone who attended the symposium. We look forward to hosting similar networking events in the future! If you have photos or stories from the event, please share via ekinsey@echonet.org or at www.echocommunity.org!

Are you having trouble using the ECHO website?

[Check out our basic tutorial here.](#)

Introducing: Brian Lawrence



In early February, ECHO East Africa received its second intern from the ECHO Florida internship program. Brian studied Biology at Hanover College in Indiana, USA before joining the ECHO team as an intern in 2012. In 2013 he worked as an Interim Manager for the ECHO Florida seed bank. He is currently at the East Africa Impact Center to design and set up a seed bank along with assisting with daily tasks.
blawrence@echonet.org

Symposium Presentations Available Now

During and after the symposium we were able to collect many of the presentations and make them available to our network online! The presentations are available for viewing through ECHOcommunity.org. Even if you did not attend the symposium, you are welcome to view the [2014 Pastoralist Symposium Presentations](#).

You must be signed in as a member to download or view the files. Not a member yet of ECHOcommunity? [CLICK HERE](#) to Join!

Burundi Visit

ECHO East Africa Director traveled to Burundi during the week of 6th – 13th April to assist with a three day training hosted by [FIDA International](#). Twenty seven senior pastors from 15 provinces of Burundi's Pentecostal Church of Burundi – CEPBU's were taught on topics of food security & climate change, environment management & protection, conservation agriculture and tree planting. Sessions were translated between English/Kiswahili/Kirundi for the senior pastors who were encouraged to promote similar training in their respective areas.



Images above clockwise from top: A roadside market in upland Burundi, a typical view along the roadside, and children who bear the brunt of being returnees.

Following the training, a two day visit was made to the following areas to visit CEPBU churches and partners: two communities of returnees (ex-refugees to Tanzania) in Rutana, Giharo, the Bukemba Church, CEPBU-run Gakwende disability center owned by Kirembe church, CEPBU-run Itab Mweya Agriculture Technical School in Gitega province and the Gitega Pentecostal Church.

ECHO East Africa Director participated as a joint author in a newly released FAO publication. [Decision Tools for Family Poultry](#) which you can access online!

The trip gave ECHO's Director an opportunity to share a vision about holding a highlands sustainable agriculture symposium either late 2014 or early 2015. There was a uniformly positive response and this theme will be pursued with ECHO leadership and partners in order to move forward.



Image above: ECHO Director with other participants in Burundi.

Construction of the ECHO East Africa Seed Bank

ECHO East Africa is proud to announce the beginnings of the regional seed bank! Construction began to create a cold room for long-term seed storage in March and we are already beginning to move in seeds. ECHO also has obtained a vacuum packing machine to extend the health and life of seeds stored and packaged. Regional seed banks are able to capture local, indigenous, and important food crops of the region while networking and transferring seed between other seed banks. ECHO hopes that the seed bank will be an opportunity to supply small scale farmers trial seed packets of green manure or cover crops (GM/CC's), locally adapted seeds, seeds that grow well under difficult conditions, and indigenous fruits and vegetables in risk of being lost from cultivation. Protocols for safe seed sharing are being explored across boundaries in the larger East Africa region so that members can benefit from our seed bank.

ECHO East Africa wants to know what types of seeds you would like to see available in the region! Tell us your ideas and discuss seeds on the online forum: [HERE](#)



Image: Some of the seed varieties to be stored at the East Africa seed bank.

How does this affect you? ECHO depends upon the East Africa network of missionaries and development workers to supply you with the types of seeds you want to try. Like all of our seed banks including our regional

seed bank in Thailand and our international seed bank in Florida, USA, we encourage all of our network to utilize local seed sources rather than depending upon ECHO. However, we also encourage you to send us clean, disease and pest-free seeds and information if you find a seed variety that performs especially well in your area. Let us know about your seed stories on the [Seed Forum](#) and let us know your thoughts about the upcoming seed bank in East Africa here: [Recommend Seeds Here](#)

New seed to try: Banana Passionfruit

The passionfruit family certainly has its surprises. Recently ECHO East Africa has obtained seed from the banana passionfruit: *Passiflora tarminiana* from Kenya. Originally from the highlands of South America, this fruit is more often grown as an ornamental than for fruit. Like other passionfruit, the plant is a vine and grows vigorously but the banana passionfruit's flowers are soft purple to red while fruits are oblong and resemble small straight bananas. The pulp may be eaten fresh, made into juice or deserts. Another great feature of the species is that it is self-compatible and should fruit regardless if pollinators present or not.



- Did you know that banana passionfruits are less sensitive to the cold and are used as root-stock for other passionfruits in cooler climates?



Images above: Ripe banana passionfruits ready for seed harvest, cleaned seeds.

Interested in receiving seed? Stop by our office near Arusha in the next few months. Passionfruit seeds do not stay viable for long. Find directions to our office here: [Directions to the ECHO East Africa Center](#)

Do you have extra seed that you might want to donate to ECHO East Africa Impact Center in Arusha? Perhaps your seeds could increase our biodiversity within the East Africa seed bank!

Contact: blawrence@echonet.org or ekinsey@echonet.org

This Document is for
your voice!

Please share your stories
or announcements with
ECHO East Africa to be
included in this
newsletter!

Sweet Potato Vines Available

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are among the seven most produced food crops in the world, surpassed only by wheat, rice, corn, potato, barley, and cassava (Franklin Martin, [ECHO Technical Note](#)) Orange Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP) are rich in vitamin A, which is very commonly deficient in children under five living in sub-Saharan Africa and dangerous, and can cause blindness, poor cognitive development, low immunity to diarrheal disease, measles and other diseases.

In Nov 2013, an African pioneer biotechnologist, Wilfred Mushobozi, who founded [Eco Agri Consult](#) invited ECHO staff to a seminar on sweet potato vine dissemination, and shared his vision of engaging ECHO and other NGO's in the 4 stage process of disseminating the vines. Eco-Agri Consult's Bio-technology Tissue Culture Laboratory lies near ECHO East Africa center and currently produces tissue culture plants of bananas, cassava, coffee, and four types of OFSPs (Stage 1 in the 4 stage process of OFSP dissemination). In December of 2013 ECHO spearhead its participation in promoting adoption of OFSP for nutrition at the house hold level by constructing two tunnels containing 600 vines (stage 2) to produce disease and pest-free vines for village vine producers who provide vines to their neighbors (stage 3), and who then grow the vines for tuber production (stage 4). ECHO also has allocated an area of the demonstration garden to grow out vines for direct dissemination to farmers (stage 3). This production system is aimed to improve distribution systems to reach more clients and partners.



Above: Adivickson Harold shows new sweet potato vines growing at ECHO.

These efforts were appreciated with some of the development agents such as Dr. Francis Shao who asked the ECHO staff (Adivickson Harold, demo plot assistant) to assist him in establishing 2 tunnels of OFSP vines in his village school 140km from the ECHO Regional Impact Center. There he aims to equip youth to acquire life skills in sustainable agriculture practices while improving home nutrition. These efforts were recently recognized by FIDA – Coordinator Lomayani Laizer who noted, "*ECHO solves the problem of poverty among our people by rolling simple and adaptable innovations for the betterment of our communities. Press on*

producing such products (like orange flesh sweet potatoes) to alleviate malnutrition and maximize protein intake. Eastern Africa Regional Food Security and Climate Change Project Office, located within Habari Maalum premises, nearby the main gate joins ECHO in fighting poverty which is our common goal. God bless your efforts!"

In this rain season, ECHO and [Eco Agri Consult](#) has supported trainings and the delivery of 20 cuttings to each farmer to promote the adoption of OFSP as home garden for nutrition purpose. Others are invited to come to ECHO to look at the vines and receive information about OFSP vines.

Currently ECHO is continuing networking with other partners in rolling out and disseminating these new potatoes. ECHO is growing both the 'Kabode' and 'Beira' varieties from tissue culture, as well as traditional 'Matembele' vines excellent for greens, production and sale. Interested in any of these three orange fleshed sweet potato varieties?

Contact: cbonaventure@echonet.org or visit our impact center in Arusha.

Regional Topics for Thought

Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease in East Africa

With farmers all across East Africa planting maize during the rainy season, the Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease (MLND) disease is something to be aware of. The Disease which is a result of a combination of two viruses: the Maize Chlorotic Mottle Virus and any of the cereal viruses (Sugarcane Mosaic Virus, Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus, and Maize Dwarf Mosaic Virus) has occurred in the Arusha area including our farm at the East Africa Impact Center. Learn how to identify the Virus [HERE](#). Fields are commonly infected by insects which transfer the disease. Since the virus often allows other infections to enter the plant and grain, it is not advised for people nor livestock to consume the infected plants. Infected plants should be removed from the field once detected while using crop rotation is a great way to prevent the disease.

Predictions for El Niño 2014

Recent forecast models have projected that this year's El Niño could be equal to the El Niño event of 1997-1998. Changing weather patterns affected millions of lives and impacted farmers around the world due to heavy flooding, droughts, and changes in temperature. If forecast models are correct, the East Africa region including Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania could experience more rainfall, while areas in the south including Mozambique and Zimbabwe could have much less rain than normal. Learn more about El Niño predictions [HERE](#).

ECHO East Africa News

Edited By: Erwin Kinsey and
Brian Lawrence

www.ECHOcommunity.org

www.echonet.org

