

Finding and Filling the Knowledge Gaps on Agricultural Biodiversity and Smallholder Farmer livelihoods

Report of the Thika Meeting, 10 – 12 October 2011

1. Introduction to the report

From 10 – 12 October 2011 a group of academics and practitioners met in Thika, Kenya to discuss biodiversity for small holder farmers in the view or resilience and transformation.

The meeting was organised by Oxfam Novib and Hivos and took place at the [SACDEP](#) Training and Conference Centre. [PELUM](#), whose office is situated at the SACDEP compound, kindly assisted the initiators with the preparations for the meeting and hosted the group. The meeting brought together 28 participants (54% women) from 11 countries. We all flew in, like a flock of birds to then settle down for a brief period on the beautiful compound of SACDEP.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss the needs for, and the content of, a three year knowledge programme on agricultural biodiversity small holder farmers and climate change with a group of academics and practitioners.

The draft mapping report (to be found on the D group), based on a literature review and extensive interviews, produced by the Stockholm Resilience Centre, as well as the wide experience of the participants, provided the basis for this meeting.

The shared interest of all present was that small holder farmers, pastoralists, fisher folk, forest dwellers (men and women) are enabled to contribute to, and benefit from, biodiversity based and climate proof production systems.



2. Main outcome

The three days of intensive working together produced the following main outcome, framework and building blocks for a knowledge programme.

Main outcome: There is general support for and interest in developing a new knowledge programme on Agricultural biodiversity, smallholder farmers and climate change, not only expressed by those present but also by others who have been involved in the mapping exercise and who could not be present.

The main aim of the knowledge programme is to develop new knowledge that is focused on **catalyzing change**, building on - and adding value to - what is already there.

The knowledge programme seeks to contribute to bio-diverse, ecologically sound, resilient food systems that create sustainable livelihoods for small scale food producers. The programme will aim to help strengthen the ability of the organizations of those small scale producers to defend and develop their knowledge and production systems. It seeks to analyze, expose and challenge existing power relations –including associated knowledge systems- that undermine resilient and bio-diverse food production and the livelihoods of small holders that maintain it and depend upon it. Ultimately the programme seeks to contribute to a paradigm shift in the thinking about who and how to nourish the world, making the case where relevant and accurate, for smallholders and their (potential) contribution to sustainable and productive food systems.

To achieve this, the programme departs from the knowledge and agency (*the capacity to act and have impact*) of these small scale food producers. It seeks to value their knowledge, and facilitate its development and innovations.

The programme seeks to collaborate with those who defend and protect the bio-diverse production systems and eco systems in their daily practice. It will seek to help find ways to mitigate the negative impacts upon these systems, and stimulate the positive ones, such as institutional support and markets that value and stimulate diversity and sustainability.

The programme aims to support - with knowledge and action- to break through the “glass house” that seems to limit the up-scaling, institutional embedding and horizontal extension of bio-diverse resilient food production systems. The ceiling of the glass house may be formed by political barriers within governments and private sector, where - despite growing evidence of alternatives- industrialized/high tech production chains remain dominant and gain even increasing power and monopolies (such as in the seed sector). With the floor of the glasshouse we mean the limiting factors to the implementation of international biodiversity and rights frameworks into national policies and laws that could well support bio-diverse food systems.

The walls of the glasshouse may be formed by institutional, infrastructural and cultural factors that block the horizontal spreading of good practices and producers’ mobilization.

The programme aims to be in support of, and forge game in changing knowledge processes. In this, the programme builds on the existing good experiences, initiatives, networks and platforms that use innovative methodologies (for example tribunals, citizen’s juries, ICT) , and tries to add value to and expand upon them by building bridges and adding pieces of the puzzle for them to have more impact. The programme will support peer-to-peer learning in a network/platform like setting, stimulate the analysis and challenging of existing power relations (the breaking of the glass house), build bridges and influence mainstream research and programmes and give platform to innovations (also in means of communication).

Building blocks

These building blocks are interlinked and can not be seen as separate, however the knowledge programme will build activities for each of the four building blocks as identified during the workshop and aim to focus on specifics of each building block.

- Experiences with **the glass house** - identifying and breaking the walls – ceiling and floor. What are the mechanisms creating these elements of glass houses and how can they be overcome? How can the formation of a critical mass of multiple stakeholders influence policy reforms from local to national and international levels and vice versa (vertical). At the same time it will aim to build peoples’ capacities to exercise active citizenship from local to global and global to local.
- **Scaling up**¹. How does this work? Something can only be scaled up if it is worthwhile so we need insight in what is worthwhile: success stories of producers and their organizations: in agro biodiversity; (PPB, PVS etc), in agro-ecological systems or biodiversity conserving production processes (including organic agriculture – eco intensification); in words of working group: focus on different sectors to become knowledgeable on what works for farmers - transformation). Focus on peoples’ capacities to organize, learn & act to continuously innovate & engage in policy, not merely imparting techniques but embedding learning; gender lens: men & women farmers have different access & preferences; scaling out spatially in both favourable & unfavourable areas in response to changing market demands (SEARICE, Vietnam); across geographical boundaries, & thematic expansion (horizontal). Management of holistic approaches.
- Specific **innovations** what can we learn from here? These can belong to so-called strong **undercurrent** movements and activities like e.g. the organic movement and or **path-breaking and game changing** activities and projects that

¹ IFAD: ‘Scaling up means expanding, replicating, adapting and sustaining successful policies, programmes or projects in geographic space’ For us scaling up is also about **social change**, power with both its positive and negative forces, is an important facilitating & hindering factor. It includes **gender** and **power** analysis.

would need to be copied on a wider scale. How can these be put in the limelight without creating its own glass walls in the process? Special attention for youth and their role.

- **Resilience thinking** and linked to that the work done using the **landscape and/ or ecosystem approach** in relation to the primary production approach. How does this work – from A to Different – from A to Better – or from A to conserve and protect A? and its shortcuts. Show the vibrancy of peoples’ agency; as managers of biodiversity & food security and emphasize the high quality & resilience of people’s food agriculture and seed systems; convince other people’s communities & policy makers that such innovations are not mere “one-hit wonders” and that these innovations can be sustained through scaling up and out.

The next step is to write a concept note that gives the basis of the knowledge programme, based on the above outcomes. This will be written by Hivos and Oxfam Novib in collaboration with a number of the participants and shared with all.

3. Day to day report of the 3 day programme

3.1. Sunday, 9th of October (arriving participants)

Most of the participants arrived on Sunday the 9th of October. They were welcomed by OxfamNovib and Hivos with a welcome dinner. After dinner the group got to know each other through an introduction exercise led by Gine.

➡ [to List of participants: annex 1](#)

3.2. Monday, 10 October (fieldtrip)

On Monday we had our fieldtrip. The participants were divided in two groups. One group went, with by [INADES](#) Foundation to the Kasambani Community, a self help production group in a dry area of Kenya. The other group went with the Institute for Culture and Ecology ([ICE](#)) to the Kamburu Community, to a self help group for disabled people and a group of organic farmers in a relative high potential agricultural area.

During the bus travel to the communities both groups were asked to keep a blog on their impressions of the visit using 3 questions:

1. Does this rural area come close to how your (ideal) rural world would look like?
2. What needs to be different here?
3. What will be needed in terms of knowledge to make the situation you have seen to come close to that?

Both field trips were very interesting and provided good illustrations for the further deliberations during the workshop.

➡ [Blogs of the participants: annex 2](#)

3.3. Tuesday, 11 October (workshop)

This second day was the first actual meeting day. We started with the reflections on the fieldtrips of the two groups.

Geordi gave an impression of the trip to the Kamburu Group organized by ICE.

★ Reflection Kamburu group



The Kamburu Selfhelp Group is a community garden for disabled people. The community is a seemingly well organized cohesive group of farmers with a high number of people over the age of 65. The 20 members are mostly women. The group started in 2005 and are getting help form ICE since 2006. The community

gradually became the owners of the land. The local administrative chief organized trainings offered by extension officers to acquire more knowledge & skills.

The farmers have tree nurseries that they sell. From the profits they buy seeds that they use at home. They learn and practice agriculture for food security and economic empowerment. ICE facilitated the group with goats, poultry and rabbits.

After the visit to the demo garden our group made visits to all member farms to see how they are doing. There was beautiful tree planting in organic vegetable gardens and tea plantations as far as the eye can see. The women farmers were impressive.

The farmers own the land, but are worried about being limited to the international markets and the vagaries of prices and speculation. They see them self as able to do what 'normal' people do. The local administration has provided an enabling environment by offering support to the group.



The community is a powerful statement of ability by an aged group of disabled community members, who also take care of disabled children.

Sweet tea warmed the afternoon chats as our group exchanged our reflection of the farm visits. The men were surprising forthcoming about their 'previous' machismo + exploitation of women. Now they work side by side. A cheerful farewell followed a thank you prayer. The Kamburu visitors found that needed knowledge for the group could be capacity building for more home based livelihood activities for the disabled, more appropriate cultural management technology for animal raising and more interaction with other farmers.

Vasimalai then gave some reflections about the visit to the Kasambani Production Group, which was hosted by INADES.

★ Reflection Kasambani group

After a long drive of two hours the group was welcomed by the staff of INADES at their office in Machakos. After that they drove further accompanied by Bernard Kitonyi, the director of INADES. Soon they arrived at the farm. The bus got stuck in the mud (it was a rainy day) and the last few meters they had to walk.



The group was welcomed by the women of Kasambani with singing, so they felt very welcome. The community was very open and interactive. The visitors sat together with the members of the community and they introduced themselves to each other. After that the visitors went to the field.

On this farm mixed vegetables were cultivated, like mangos, tomatoes and spinach. The way that this community was harvesting water was very interesting. They had built terraces, and dug large holes that would be filled with water when the rain came. The farmers bought a big plastic tank and had a deep well with a pump. They had selected crops for a dry area, like cassava, which is now becoming a common food crop. Another income generation is the making of briquettes.

After the visit to the field the visitors again sat down with the community and the women showed their products and told about how they cooked them. The group was very creative in finding recipes for cooking the food they cultivated and thereby adding value to the products. After this presentation both visitors and farmers had lunch together which was a good opportunity to taste the food.

Then it was time to ask questions to the women. The community was very enthusiastic and they were proud on what they achieved so far, but they were also keen to get more information and knowledge to improve their farming skills. They rented the land for a year through a contract for the amount of Kenya Shillings 3000 per year. This year is the first year. This agreement between owner and the one who rents is weak because it has no legislative basis. There is no official agreement under concerned government office. It was possible that after a year the owner of the land didn't want to extend the contract.

It was a pity that we didn't have more history of the location. Then we would have seen where the community came from.



Both trips generated a diverse range of reflections on the community formation (male/female, collective positions) and their achievements (food security) and challenges (drought, animal welfare), the agricultural system (mono cropping/multiple cropping).

After the reflection session we were officially welcomed by **Mr. Eliud Ngunjiri**².

★ Welcome of Vice Chair of PELUM

"If you ask the right questions the chance is that you get the right answers. We should always ask ourselves: what can I/we do for my/our people for them to benefit? If no answer is coming, which is likely, you can ask the people and they will be more than willing to tell you!"

There are many obstacles for smallholder farmers to improve their quality of life but allow me to share three of them. One is the approach used in development. Don't say you are working for the poorest of the poor, then they have to prove they are the poorest of the poor and get overwhelmed by their problems. Focus on what people have in terms of resources, not on what they don't have. That is what energizes them. Focus on a resource-oriented development approach, not a problem-approach.

The second obstacle is that farmers are not organized to be able to face the many challenges that they face. This makes them be taken advantage of by everybody including the government.

The third obstacle has to do with trade policies and practices. For example: Kenya is a leading producer of tea, horticulture crops, nr 1 in production of cut flowers, Kenya's coffee is used to blend coffees but in spite of all that, Kenya is one of the poor countries. Many reasons (corruption etc), but ultimately the problem lies in international trade agreements (denying ourselves good prices, building industries, employment and wealth). What farmers produce, ultimately impoverishes them. Four: more emphasis on fighting for fair and just international trade and practices. We should say no to unfair trade policies and practices if we are to ensure sustainable biodiversity management goes hand –in –hand with fair and equitable development.

Of course these three are not the only ones, but they are very important. They should be tackled and then poverty will eradicate."

After the inspiring words to the Mr. Ngunjiri we continued with the next topic on the programme and that was 'harvesting ideas'.

★ Harvesting ideas

The participants were invited to do a whisper session with their neighbour to look at the future based on their own experiences. After this session the shared ideas were written down on post its and put on the wall.

² Mr. Ngunjiri is the founder Executive Director of Resources Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI), a Kenyan NGO registered as a charity in the UK. He is also the Vice Chairman of PELUM National Board and the founder Chairman of SACDEP Board of Trustees.

After lunch **Heleen** gave a reflection on what was written down and she asked for some explanations of the writers.

Ideas that were brought forward focused on topics for knowledge development on the:

- Why: small producer agency
- What: ecosystems, livelihoods, climate change, up scaling
- How: documentation, think tank etc.

Some mentioned their focus on change and what they wanted to do with the knowledge e.g. policy influence.

Two propositions were highlighted by Heleen. One was around building a unified agenda for farmers taking the lead in the conversation management of our agro biodiversity. The other was about an upscale programme based on research & documentation experiences with value addition as a key issue. An important issue was: about whose knowledge we are talking. Is it about defending the knowledge systems of food providers? Facilitating the development of knowledge & skills (= technology)? Or is it about issues around water, agro biodiversity etc.? Countering those that are infringing their technologies on others? We talk about knowledge of all food providers: pastoralists, farmers etc. How do we describe knowledge? How to protect knowledge from those who use it wrongly? Let's avoid making knowledge too abstract.

Next topic on the programme was a presentation of what a knowledge programme could look like presented by Josine Stremmelaar. She gave the group an idea of what the role can be of knowledge in change processes and shared the experiences of Hivos and ON with knowledge initiatives.

★ Presentations on Oxfam Novib's, Hivos' work on knowledge and the resilience theory

Josine started with a short presentation of Oxfam Novib and Hivos:

"In general knowledge is embodied information upon which people can act or not as the case may be. Knowledge endeavours can stimulate new ideas, practices, strategies and alliances, but it can also create new discrepancies, dilemmas and conflicts."

" Knowledge and Innovation Management Strategy (KIM) is ON's 4th intervention strategy (next to Direct Poverty Alleviation, Lobby& Campaigning and Building Civil Society). With this choice ON expresses its ambition to become an organisation that excels in learning, innovating and managing knowledge in the years to come.

In Hivos' view the development sector needs new knowledge and, more specifically, appropriate knowledge to tackle specific knowledge gaps. Together with its academic partners, it is integrating knowledge on issues imperative to the work of civil society organisations and the development sector."

"Oxfam Novib and Hivos have collaborated in a Biodiversity Fund for 8 years. Recommendations in the evaluation of the fund were: addressing new developments and challenges, up scaling and market opportunities."

"Last year Oxfam Novib and Hivos decided to work together on a three-year Knowledge Programme on Biodiversity Conserving Agricultural Production, Knowledge and Marketing Systems that can reduce risks and improve the livelihoods of rural people living in poverty. They asked the Stockholm Resilience Centre to conduct a mapping on the current knowledge and gaps on agricultural biodiversity, smallholder farmers in the context of resilience and transformations in preparation of this meeting."

After this presentation **Britta** continued with a presentation about the Resilience Theory (*presentation to be found in D group*).

Resilience is the capacity of a system to deal with change and continue to develop, while maintaining the same function, structure and feedbacks. It is useful for understanding and describing the role of agricultural biodiversity for risk reduction and improved livelihoods.

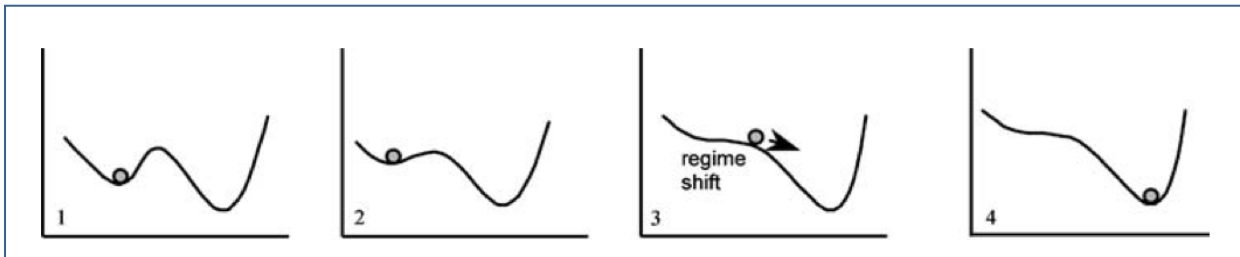


[More on the Resilience Theory](#)

Investigating **transformations** in social-ecological systems can provide key tools for successful adaptation, exchange and internalisation of knowledge (learning)

Regime shifts are defined as rapid reorganizations of ecosystems from one relatively stable state to another. In the marine environment, regimes may last for several decades and shifts often appear to be associated with changes in the climate system. Regime shifts are also found in many other variables. Social-ecological systems can have multiple regimes, separated by thresholds.

The Regime Shift:



Discussion

The introduction of the resilience theory generated various questions around the definition of resilience. Patrick shared his ideas from a power angle. The Resilience Theory is not new. It could be a helpful way forward. Experimentation and learning is needed to build an understanding of complex systems. Adaptation decision making needs to integrate knowledge of multiple actors. Adaptive capacity is about: experimentation, creating local adaptation options, knowledge and information that capacitate adaptive decisions and power sharing. Key is transformation and empowerment. The exercise on examples of regime change resulted in threats to nature and to sustainable livelihoods. Shifts focussed on changes in seed systems, level of ground water, biofuels, land reform and grabbing. Main questions were on how knowledge could play a role in moving forward and to overcome regime shifts towards a more sustainable system.

Subsequently Britta detailed the knowledge gaps that were presented, coloured by examples. Key questions were around the role of external (f)actors such as the policy environment. Needs included a “more political” approach to knowledge gaps and to how a resilience framework can help in our work.

Patrick wondered where resilience ends and adaptivity takes over? Learning is important. The possibility to change is dependent of knowledge and capacity for local adaptive actions is depended of several factors and actors.

[Read more on Food Sovereignty](#)

The role of the engaged outsider is to help people help themselves. Help them to do a power analysis that can help them to approach the power holders. Doing a power analysis is important to understand what other theories are posing. Where does power come in? The power cube as developed by the IDS is seen as inspirational for many to use when doing power analyses. [Read more about the power cube](#)

Also key is how to improve marketing for small farmers without it having a negative effect on biodiversity. More on Global Food and Farming in the report: [The Future of Food and Farming of John Bettington](#)

After the discussion and explanations we went back to the 5 knowledge gaps. Five key issues were identified:

- transfer of knowledge is very key
- key individuals are needed
- adaptive cycle can help to find where knowledge is needed
- taking a holistic approach is very important
- linking local knowledge to global and feeding into policy

Next we formed group to talk about regime shifts. Did the participants have experience? Have they seen it? Are there examples to be shared in the group? The following examples came up:

- Role of farmers of using traditional seeds and protecting is slowly changing. Traditional varieties are changing into using more modern seeds. Governments play an important role through policies. Roles: government, farmers.
- Change of waste agriculture into sustainable waste agriculture and different use of ground water and free electricity for farmers. These issues have changed many things for farmers.
- The decision to change from growing bananas into growing Macadamia led to lot's of farmers being out of jobs.
- Biofuels international and relation to land grabbing. Have implications for small holder farmers. Lives have been transformed.
- Global food prices had implication of food economy.
- The Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe: had lots of implications for small farmers.
- Access to markets that is now possible because a road was build: now access to extension workers and better access for agricultural chemical producers, leaving the community food in secure as they are using far less rice seed varieties as opposed to food secure which they were before the road came in

After this exercise **Gine** introduced the group to the next topic.

★ Intro to Workshop: what kind of knowledge is needed to play an effective role to change?

Two sorts of knowledge gaps can be identified. They are the

1. Vertical knowledge gaps: local to government, policy
2. Horizontal knowledge gaps: process question of learning (amongst farmers themselves).

What is a knowledge gap. Isn't it mainly a topic of the researchers and academics? Whose knowledge do we speak of? How can we make it available? Why isn't everything we already know not leading to the change we want? Is the power not challenged enough? We should not speak of gaps but of opportunities. And focus on different sectors to become knowledgeable, like researchers, government, farmers and extension agents. So that we can achieve:

- empowerment and capacitate farmers to make informed choices
- agricultural biodiversity realised by farmers initiatives
- identification, documentation and merging indigenous knowledge
- personal changes
- get agriculture related knowledge by:
 - water resources development
 - weather indexed insurance crop mutual
 - microfinance for rain fed agriculture
 - produce marketing enterprise
 - IT based agriculture
 - holistic approach

After Gine's introduction the participants were invited to explore the 5 knowledge gaps.

The knowledge gaps identified in the SRC mapping

1. How do transformations take place (scientific gap)
2. Transfer of knowledge and the process of learning. Is knowledge in the right place? (revitalisation & internalisation of knowledge)
3. Identifying champions
4. Lack of understanding of casual loops (systems approach & interconnectedness)
5. Policy gaps (how to link local action with policy)

★ Group work on knowledge gaps

One group was facilitated by Willy and the other group by Heleen. The knowledge gaps and possible contours of a knowledge intervention were discussed on the hand of two questions:

1. Do you recognise the gaps we identified?
2. What kind of knowledge is needed to play an effective role to change?

★ Presentation outcome group 1 (Heleen)

Group 1 questioned the notion of gaps in their discussion. The framing appeared unclear. And they had questions like: what type of gap do we speak of and for whom, how come transformations do not work? Gap 1 and 2 were seen to be most relevant by which gap 1 is overarching. Knowledge (research) often needs translation first before it was suitable to work with for a farmer. Key question is whether knowledge is really lacking. On farmer community level appropriate knowledge is. Flow of knowledge to the community is key. On policy level, there is often lot's evidence, but this does not lead to change. Gap 5 is about knowledge on global level. Here is need for experiences, more networking. Is it power blocks (policy/political) that prevent knowledge from leading to change? Are they the bottlenecks to up scaling? We have so much knowledge. Why is this not leading to change?

★ Presentation outcome group 2 (Willy)

Group 2 worked on the specific knowledge gaps.

Gap 1 was considered quite big and doesn't have a goal. What is transformation and for what is it? This gap was also considered an overarching gap. There is a gap between researchers and community needs. We have many success stories of transformation, but also a lot of gaps, like knowledge that is not shared, due to for example cultural constraints. Sometimes knowledge is not acknowledged or valued. And not all knowledge is well documented. Transformations and success stories do not always reach others. There is need of understanding of what works well to get motivation for change. Gap 2 on transfer of knowledge/process of learning was seen as a very important gap. There are many existing processes & technologies. But how to link the users to it (= process)? Empowerment is the main aim here. But the agent seems to be the problem. Sometimes there are conflicting messages that overlook the local knowledge. These can lead to conflicting knowledge between the researcher, agricultural/development extension agent and the farmer/community. Other problematic issues are: language, literacy, access to learning materials, researcher dominance, and extension of the system (who controls?), patenting knowledge, ignorance, resistance, cultural barriers and the mechanisms of transfer.



Gap 3, identification of factors that initiate processes of change was seen as a sub gap of the 1st one. It is not a subgroup though, but it is more about the how. Policy is the main constraint here. Economic gains are the trigger for joining change. Other issues mentioned are: nutrition /health motivation, individual 'community' gains, change makers, holistic gains, visions future farmers, competition, exchange/link farmers between/to researchers, link with early warning, 'receptive' communities and private sector. Gap 4 was unclear. Gap 5 was seen as linked to gap 2.

★ Plenary after working groups: first reactions

Transfer of knowledge and process of learning was deemed the central gap to group 2. Empowerment is the aim. The agent is often the problem ("messenger") disempowering with conflicting messages. Transfer has many challenges: access, types of knowledge, translation, cultural barriers. Needed is mechanisms of transfers when talking about up scaling (of what and how? principles? knowledge?). What kind of knowledge is needed (roles: farmers' organisations, technology, scale)? Improve the knowledge ability of sectors (researchers, government, consumers). Empower capacity farmers to make informed choices. Issues: farmers' initiatives in agricultural biodiversity. Indigenous knowledge: identify, document, etc. This is already happening in part. Agriculture related knowledge: water

resources development, weather indexed insurance, microfinance for rain fed agriculture, holistic approaches. What are policy and political constraints that hamper the up scaling of good experiences?

How to break through the glass ceiling/walls/floors? There are many good conventions but they don't make a difference on the ground. You may have an agricultural law, but the processes of certification are very restrictive. So these are walls, you cannot manoeuvre much. The government may listen better, but this doesn't mean this leads to transformation. In the case of farmers they need more information. We also need more information about who's behind it. We need mechanisms/platforms/citizen journals/campaigns to break through glass ceilings/floors and walls to upscale/ mainstream/empower small holders bio-diverse production systems. Such mechanisms should include repackaging of information to systematically understand what is going on (like GRAIN). Is the time ripe to break the glass house that is around us, are we building the bricks?!

In the evening everyone "pitches" his or her work. **Willy** introduced the elevator pitch.

★ The elevator pitch

The participants were invited to picture themselves in an elevator with the president of Kenya. The building had 6 floors. It took 3 minutes to get to the top floor. In these 3 minutes there was time to tell the president about your organisation. This turned out to be a challenge for everyone. Some did very well and were even ready before the 6th floor. Some almost lost their breath in the haste to present their organisation. See results of all these elevator pitches in a word cloud and drawing.

3.4. Wednesday, 12 October

★ Reflection on previous day

The meeting started with a reflection on the previous day. Anthony gave a summary. He tried to grab the feelings about yesterdays work. Especially the resilience theory brought a lot of questions. Britta and Josine showed a drawing of the work people do and a tag cloud of topics mentioned.



Gine further clarified what a knowledge programme can look like, which was detailed by Josine.

★ Building blocks for the programme

Gine started with the wish to scale up, innovate and to empower the undercurrent. This last term raised some questions in the audience and Gine explained what is meant with undercurrent. Undercurrent is about the ideas and practices that happen in a specific niche, they are not (yet) mainstream. When the undercurrent is strong and big it is most likely to surface, even though this often takes some time (examples: fair trade movement; organic movement; occupy it movement; micro finance.) The main goal is a small producer programme in relation to knowledge. Josine

told more about the experience that Hivos has on projects on knowledge programmes. She continued that the wish is to go beyond case studies. What we want is **knowledge for change**, with an added value to what is already there. This is the main challenge. The following building blocks were identified for the programme:

1. glass house/breaking the walls
2. scaling up that what works
3. Resilience- short cuts from A to Better
4. management of holistic approaches
5. getting new innovations in the lime light

The group is challenged to explore these blocks. Are these the right ones? What is needed to address any building block?

Discussion/first reflections

Resilience is not necessarily from A to Better. It is defending the existing systems, and in some areas it is good to do this. A power analysis has to be taken up for all proposed building blocks. Can't we match building block 3 and 4? We are talking about holistic approach in resilience. We have horizontal work and vertical work. We want to scale up things that work. What works to strengthen the undercurrent? The undercurrent can break the glass house. Building blocks need to be interactive and dynamic. Why scaling up? Because everybody is mentioning it? But when should we go to scaling up? Do we want transformation through scaling up? Should be after breaking the glass house. Scaling up will allow us different pillars. But what are those pillars?

Block 3 and 4 are too abstract for organisation working on the ground. Resilience is our core business. It cannot be seen as just a building block. Innovation can also be another way of looking at things; looking through another lens. Shouldn't we put things in perspective? Strengthen the undercurrent so that the glass house can break!

After the discussion it was decided to break up in four groups to write a framework and to explore the building blocks.

★ Group work on next steps

The participants were splitting up in 4 groups:

1. Talking about frame work, how does that look like? Heleen
2. Innovation, Willy
3. What do we mean with/need for scaling up? Vasimalai
4. Strengthen the undercurrent. Gine

The outcomes of the group were presented by their group leaders:

Framework: The programme seeks to contribute to bio diverse, ecological, resilient food systems that create sustainable livelihoods for small scale producers. The programme is centred around the knowledge and agency of small scale food producers. The programme seeks to value that knowledge, and facilitate its development and innovations, also among and for those who start, have to adapt or rebuild such resilient production systems. The programme could strengthen the ability of those small scale food providers to defend and develop their knowledge systems. It seeks to analyze, expose and challenge existing power relations – including associated knowledge systems – that undermine resilient. Framing in terms of food sovereignty? The programme will build on the many good initiatives, networks and platforms and tries to expand and add value to.

The group of Willy on innovation talked about new ideas, not recycled knowledge. Parameters are: agriculture, biodiversity, climate change. Innovation happens from the resilience theory when there is reorganisation. The example of the Russian seed bank was given. Innovation is needed for short cuts from A to Better. Other examples were given, but how to build a collective towards activities that strengthen resilience? The Youth is an important group that can be engaged. Storytelling was mentioned to disseminate innovations. Another topic is the knowledge on landscapes. It is about making space for innovation, networking to enable innovation, and bringing those innovations in a wider domain.

The group of Vasi on up scaling looked at what enables scaling up. There should be a felt need. There should be a model that scales up. That in itself should not be sufficient; the model should have an adaptation feature (different contexts). It also includes packaging the model so that people can use it. When you get to scale up there is a threshold before the model comes out of it. The model needs to be sustainable and transformative. The spread factors of up scaling needs to be considered such as appropriate knowledge, language, gender sensitive, culture. Networking can word as a platform for scaling up. Selection of a theme for model building is important. In known places demonstrating the model is important from the community level to business and government. Thereto you need marketing of these models. Drivers of scaling up could be a network, there could be different stakeholders. Resources are needed and farmers exchange. Meaning of up scaling is a product which has space for adaptation so you can apply it in larger/other areas.

Strengthening the undercurrent is to work on potentially path breaking or game changing work. The example of GRAIN is mentioned and MASIPAG. The undercurrents can be defined into concepts, methods (citizen juries), lenses (GRAIN), and challenges (hijacking). How to manage these undercurrents? There are several examples such as the Organic Farming Law in the Philippines which has become to be restrictive. What do we want to know about it? They are changing the game e.g. the ecological movement but they risk choking the initial intention. Transformation can also lead to a retrogressive session. How undercurrents change the game and how they developed (including pitfalls). For instance what happened to the organic agriculture movement? This is the start of making the building black.

★ Shape of the knowledge programme and next steps

Subsequently we discussed how to move forward. First issue is about the shape of the knowledge programme. Several ideas have come up. A priority setting needs to be made. But unfortunately there is no time left.

Policy breaking through the walls: how to work with existing platforms and networks. We didn't have time to describe the 'Glass House', but it is a wonderful image. The programme should describe how we got in the box and how to get out. How can we optimise the knowledge that is already out? We have to find a good methodology for that. The discussion is not conclusive. So this should be taken up in the writing phase of the concept-note.

★ Fundraising

And what about fundraising? ON and Hivos have capacity, a network and content as well as some seed money available, but they would like to expand. Therefore fund raising will be essential too.

★ Reports

The mapping report is now a draft. It will be finalised (done in the mean time). Metha will write the workshop report. These two documents should help us to write a concept note. Partners who are not present but showed interest will be get workshop report and the final mapping report.

★ Role participants

The participants were invited for input and co-creation. Prosper, Thomas, Balu, Neth, Anthony, Jean, Wanja, Caroline, Tenaw and Caroline are willing to be involved. The rest of the group will provide input after the receipt of the first draft.

★ Actions - next steps - planning

- Josine will create a D-group for sharing documents (and photo's)
- The final mapping report and the meeting report should be finished around the 24th of October.
- Short version: first draft by Hivos 1 December
- Draft concept note 5th of December
- Final concept-note by the end of this year.
- send to the participants before Christmas

All participants will be kept updated about the progress.

★ Closure of the meeting

In the last plenary exercise everybody was asked to pick a tulip with a specific colour that inspired them and to share their general feelings about the meeting. There were many compliments for the organisation and the facilitation. Generally people felt it worth their while to travel so far and spend their precious time to interact with each other on the subject. This is summarised in the following word cloud:



We flew in from all over the world, we settled for three days on the beautiful compound of SACDEP and we are now flying out again, energised and full of new ideas, ready to work in our own areas, with an enriched network of friends, experts and knowledge.

The closure words were from the **chair of PELUM**:

“Participation in diversity is a rich platform for sharing knowledge and experiences. This workshop has opened a new chapter on the sustainable development paradigm. It is for all of us to make it a reality. There are many gaps (knowledge, attitude, and practice), problems of growth, climate change, as well as challenges in documentation, dissemination, empowerment (agency, co value of sustenance). Knowledge, not cultivated, cannot be harvested. It is the beginning of the task we have in front of us serving small scale producers. “

After these final words of SACDEP the meeting was closed.



3.5. Public debate

After the group photo, which was taken many times, we had a public debate organised by PELUM with the subject **Can the World feed it self?** Participants were farmers, CEO's and staff of NGO's and the workshop participants. The speakers were Gine Zwart (Oxfam Novib-Netherlands), Neth Dano (ETC-Philippines), Ngugi Mutura (SACDEP-Kenya) and Thomas Mupetesi (FACHIG-Zimbabwe). Caroline Mukeku of PELUM facilitated the debate.

The round of discussions generated questions about the cases and larger questions around the role of the private sector and the future of food, human adaptation to biodiversity changes, the ecosystem, the role of water, land grabbing, the role of citizens and more. The answer to the question can the world feed itself is concluded to be **yes, if!**

 [See annex 4 for the presentations](#)

3.6. African Night

In the evening we were treated with an African Party with music, food, drinks and dancing. All participants were challenged by Caroline to sing a traditional song from their home country. Everybody made an effort to give a nice performance, but Cheattho from Bangladesh and Balu from India did get the show on the road! We practiced African dancing with the band members and that was great fun!

Several people used the opportunity to say thanks to those who organised the meeting and the programme, with special thanks to the PELUM staff en Metha.



4. Annexes

Annex 1 Participants List

Annex 2 Blogs Fieldtrip

Annex 3 Collecting Ideas

Annex 4 Public Debate

List of Participants Thika Meeting 10-12 October 2011

Bhutan

Asta Tamang, National Biodiversity Centre, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests

Cambodia

Cheattho Prak, General Directorate of Agriculture / Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries

Ethiopia

Tenaw Hailu Tedela, Sustainable Land Use Forum (SLUF)

India

Angarai Balasubramanian (Balu), Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems

M.P Vasimalai (Vasi), DHAN Foundation

Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, LIFE- Network and League for Pastoral and Endogenous Livestock Development (LPP)

Kenya

Gathuru Mburu, African Biodiversity Network (ABN)

Anthony Mugo, Arid Lands Information Network Eastern Africa (ALIN)

Yasuyuki Morimoto, CGIAR Biodiversity

Bernard Kitonyi, INADES Formation International (Kenya office)

Nelson Njihia Muiru, Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO)

Wanja Kinuthia, National Museums of Kenya

Caroline Mukeku, PELUM

Netherlands

Josine Stremmelaar, HIVOS

Willy Douma, HIVOS

Metha Spaans, Oxfam Novib

Gine Zwart, Oxfam Novib

Heleen van den Hombergh, Nature and Poverty Network

Philippines

Neth Daño, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC)

Georita Pitong, MASIPAG, Inc (Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development)

Jean Yasol, S Florence Daguitan, Montanosa Research and Development Centre, Inc /Tebtebba Foundation Inc.,

Philippines outh East Asia Initiatives for Community Empowerment (SEARICE)

South Africa

Mariam Mayet, African Centre for Biosafety (ACB)

Sweden

Britta Skägerfalt, Stockholm Resilience Centre

UK

Patrick Mulwany, Practical Action

Zimbabwe

Prosper B. Matondi, Ruzivo Trust

Thomas Mupetesi, Farmers' Association of Community Self-Help Investment Groups (FACHIG Trust)

More extensive participants list with email addresses and websites on D-group

Blogs of visitors to communities on the 10th of October 2011

Info on the Kasambani Production Group

This production group is a self help group which started in 2005 when it started to eradicate poverty in the community. The main function of the group was to:

- a. Chicken rearing for both eggs and meat
- b. Preparing nursery beds for plants and also planting seedlings to the homesteads
- c. Planting drought resistant crops and how to add value to them
- d. Bee keeping
- e. Planting vegetables in small scale

Due to lack of financial support the group decided to have a merry go forward. The group raised some amount of money that enabled them to build a kiosk for selling its products; i.e. honey, eggs and value added food. The challenges that the group is facing are:

- a. The group is located in a semi dry area where the lack of water is the main problem.
- b. There is no ready market for the products.

1. Does this rural area come close to how your (ideal) world would look like?

- The area falls in an ecological zone with minimal rains and a number of structures of harvesting water are visible in the area.
- No, not really but the eagerness of these women group will slowly lead them to improve their 'world'.
- Not an ideal rural area. The community is however well organized and active in coming up with ways to mitigate their circumstances. The way that they are organized into a group is a .. that they can improve their households.
- It does not look like the ideal rural area, but I notice many positive things. A strong community, involvement of women, integration of farming, live stock such as chicken, well maintained houses.
- In terms of commitment, ideas, willingness to try new things and learn from others, I think this community sets a good example and could teach others on how to approach this. I noted, though, that they still label themselves poor and it is obvious that a lot of things could be improved. I would not say that it's close to an ideal world living under such harsh and uncertain conditions.
- The area is not suitable for intensive cropping mainly due to scarcity of suitable water (salinity).
- Through drought tolerant limited market value.

2. What needs to be different here?

- Water harvesting by small water bodies, check dams, farm ponds have to be created; choice of trees and diversity have to be improved; improved agronomic practices for crops; total transition to new crops; participatory varietal trial required; seed production not internalized; tenure is not clear.
- More tree species would add to the 'greening' of the area and may increase productivity items of income/sale of wood(timber), soil conservation etc.
- There is a need to improve on water and soil concentration methods, be it on the farm or outside the farm. Also improve on the forestry by planting more of fruit trees as well as fuel trees. A good and modern KILN structure should be used to reduce and economize fuel used. The KILN should be in such a way that the heat produced be used without wastage.
- Capacity building on seed production and conservation for future use.
- Assisting them on the issue of land renting /use and the possibility & use their own land for sustainability.
- Explore more on the use of different varieties and crops for vegetable production.

- The community can endorse varieties of trees that can do well in the area. They can introduce droughts resistance hedge tree varieties.
- Water harvesting and storage would improve the productivity and sustainable use of the farmland.
- Why not they buy land instead of renting it?
- More permanent vegetation could improve their situation and decrease vulnerability (trees, bushes? etc.) Agro forestry, as they are already practicing, could be further developed. However, seeing the increased pressure from climate change I wonder if they wouldn't need to diversify their sources of income even more.
- Where are the men?

3 What will be needed in terms of knowledge to make the situation you have seen to come close to that?

- No idea of earlier knowledge system on agriculture; external dependence on knowledge system; interaction with knowledge rich community required; deforestation happened, how?
- Preservation of indigenous knowledge; knowledge assimilation weak. Information on water harvesting.
- More community participation needs to be felt (youths?)
- Soil erosion control measures needs to be in place.
- Information passage needs to be enhanced to have it more often maybe and include more partners (ministries).
- There is need to be given more knowledge on seed preservation from great grain producers.
- More knowledge on the use of locally available materials to construct concrete tanks for rain catchment and water harvesting.
- Added knowledge of collective marketing where groups can pull their products together.
- There's need to compose the animal dung before using on their farms, because this reduces introduction of weeds in the farm.
- What the group has been doing is impressive but not enough as they also indicated themselves. What could be different is some security of tenure of the vegetable garden and water harvesting.
- In terms of knowledge it seems the group has learned a lot but could do with more information & information exchange. It would be interesting to see how the group work affects the individual choices.
- Strengthening the group and linkage them & other groups/communities for marketing.
- More info and experience sharing & other farmers.
- The community needs more information about suitable tree and crops species to grow in the area. They also need information about effective low tech water harvesting techniques.
- There is need of an information centre to watch film, read, watching TV etc.
- Additional value adding to products, increased water harvesting. But the will to change and learn and develop is there, which may be the most important.
- Increased exchange - both over generations and between communities - on basic agriculture techniques, suitable crops, etc.
- Also knowledge as empowerment – showing upon choices and possibilities to allow for further innovation and experimentation. Perhaps not here but more under point 2. enhanced tenure system, a longer-term right to the land are cultivating)
- A nuanced understanding of the livestock sector in the area would help to understand the broaden livelihoods. Apart from indigenous chickens, perhaps investing in this sector would address the limitations of crop production. Land tenure issues are also fuzzy, and the rental arrangements seem to be stewed against the women.

Blog responses of the visitors to the Kamburu group

1. Does this rural area come close to how your (ideal) world would look like?

- Actually, the situation comes close to the ideal one. Tea gardens for cash + organic kitchen garden for food + some cash.
- Yes, good soil
- Yes, farmers very aware of importance of ecosystem management
- Yes, parents teach farming to their school going children to
- Ideal matters:

- The variety of food cooked the traditional way, grown naturally, locally, rich in fiber, low fat, low salt.
- The bio-intensive farming of integrating trees, food crops C25 food crops in small unit of land/livestock.
- The confidence of the people on their ability to do things, despite their disabilities.
- Land owned by the farmers/tillers.
- The profound understanding of farmers on the benefits of organic diverse farming and their ability of articulate / practice such as men's involvement and the women's empowerment.

2. What needs to be different here?

- The role and keeping of livestock. While rabbits + poultry are great, I am not sure about the exotic (if already somewhat adapted) cattle, as well as goats (which we did not see, but were mentioned). The cattle does not look well, especially the heifers seem worm-ridden. The stables could be improved. There may be a problem with diseases. We need data to decide whether it makes sense (economical) to keep cows in this system.
- What will happen in the future if farm sites become shallow, due to being divided for future generations? Or is the land passed on only to one child?
- This is the first time I have seen tea produced + planted by families rather than big land owners. This tea should be marketed as coming from small producers.
- Am happy to see small farmers producing diversified food crops organically, and that women (wife) are really on the lead. The results of their work are really wonderful and inspiring. I hope/suggest PELUM/ICE could link their experience to other areas (places) so that more and more farmers are inspired and could follow their experience, and sustainable farming will expand on a wider scale.
- The formation & existence of this group is inspiring. It's giving voices of specially challenged persons and facilitates positive recognition of their special contributions to social development (of these individuals) through its group /organization. It would be better if women members of the group be given space or part in sharing their experiences and impact on their being a member of this self help group as mother, wife of sister and how they can further enhance their leadership role in the group.
- The chemical based tea plantations
- Dependence on tea as source of cash
- Sanitation
- Poor infrastructure
- Initiate community seed bank
- There's a call for continuity of what the farmers are doing by involving the young generations.
- The communal garden & nursery project of the group is a good approach to strengthen their relationship of each other of the mutual support/helping one another – being in one organization. I hope they can also inspire their children /young people to continue their work and visions for the future.
- Production was outside the scope of market

3 What will be needed in terms of knowledge to make the situation you have seen to come close to that?

- I think the nature of the group is very unique and unheard of. There is need for the group to take advantage of the current benefits that exist through the government process /departments that support physically challenged persons.
- The group needs to be sensitized more about their rights.
- More knowledge is required and awareness of production, consumption & marketing of the indigenous foods vegetables for sustainability.
- A group of disabled people (or people with disabled children + relatives) community together to be productive, getting support from the chief, and from ICE to turn the whole enterprise organic, it's a wonderful story. But it also requires a bit of outside support + inputs and it is not yet sustainable on its own. So what needs to be developed to stabilize the project?
- There is need to tap into the indigenous knowledge.
- Farmer to farmer extension is an avenue for sharing & learning.
- Community groups are now organized and visionary.
- Promote ELUM principles and practices.
- Advantages of land reform

Harvesting of ideas

All post-its are ordered in 3 different blocks: approaches, tangible topics, tools

Approaches

1. Building unified agenda towards strong farmer led conservation and management of resources/agro biodiversity
 2. Research /scientific evidence building and dissemination of farmers indigenous knowledge and practical experiences
 3. Identify, expose, limit, regulate activities of those who impose inappropriate knowledge and technologies on small scale food providers
- (And at a different level Desired changes: Africa using her biodiversity to improve livelihoods)

Tangible topics

1. Livestock diversity
 - a. Analyse value of exotic versus local livestock in small holder systems
 - b. Nutritional and therapeutic qualities of products of indigenous breeds
 - c. Document and analyse power structures working against livestock biodiversity
 - d. Document role of livestock biodiversity in food security
2. Water and soil conservation and harvesting
 - a. Knowledge on soil and water conservation
 - i. Fertility issues
 - ii. Conserving water resources
 - iii. Agro-forestry
 - iv. Institutional memory preservation
 - b. Weather indexed crop mutual insurance
 - c. Rain fed farming resource centre (India)
 - d. Water resources development in rain fed areas
 - e. Water harvesting run off for use in production of crops
3. Farming techniques
 - a. Improve on production through green houses
 - b. Mechanisms for technology assessments at local, national and regional levels
 - c. Technology assessments/observation platforms at local, national and regional level
 - d. Document link between researchers, extension staff and farmers
4. Indigenous knowledge/local knowledge
 - a. Better links between science and practice including local and traditional knowledge
 - b. Adopting indigenous territorial management: an ecosystem approach for clim.ch resilience
 - c. Document, test, nutritional and therapeutic properties of indigenous varieties of seeds
 - d. Document and organize indigenous knowledge and wisdom on weather forecast for better adaptation to climate change
 - e. Priority to defend knowledge systems of small scale food providers (farmers, livestock keepers, pastoralists, fisher folk)
 - f. Facilitate development of knowledge and skills of small scale food providers: seeds, livestock breeds, aquatic organisms, soils, waters, landscapes, coastal waters, commons
 - g. Increase recognition of knowledge of small scale food producers by others (e.g. consumers, NGO's, policy makers)
 - h. Help organisations and social movements of small scale food providers to defend and develop their knowledge and technologies in the framework of food sovereignty
 - i. Develop strategies to mitigate market impacts on local knowledge and agricultural biodiversity and ecological food provision

5. Ecosystems – human –wildlife
 - a. Build a framework to comprehend/analyze human/animal (large?) wildlife conflict – this is assuming alarming proportions
 - b. Ecosystems functions – information sharing and exchange
6. Climate change adaptation
 - a. Think tank on how we can equip farmers to adapt to continuous changes in climate
 - b. How to transition to resilient agriculture (learn, develop, discuss)
7. Markets
 - a. Linking farmers' produce directly to consumers guided by principles of soc. justice and fairness
 - b. Organize farmers to do collective marketing
 - c. Producer enterprises development
 - d. Capacity building and value addition thru organic processing and packaging
8. Finance
 - a. Microfinance for small holder agriculture
 - b. Organize farmers to start bank without walls
9. Up scaling
 - a. What kind of up scaling do we envisage and what is needed – how to tackle obstacles
 - b. Think and write and share on how to scale up agro-ecological approaches
 - c. Understand and document experiences with up scaling islands of success
 - d. Up scaling/wide dissemination of farmers' success stories, approaches in farmers empowerment and building their resilience to changing climate and environment
 - e. Policy dialogue and up scaling of knowledge best practice
10. Seeds
 - a. Reviving seeds and knowledge based on gender

Tools

- Tapping people based knowledge Processing the knowledge through co-creation
- Sharing of knowledge (formal and informal)
- Codification of knowledge
- Provide for passing on of indigenous knowledge
- Interrogations of indigenous knowledge in the context of technology advancement (internet, media, face book, twitter)
- Dialogue as a basis for passing on knowledge (concept traditional courts)
- Create an info bank accessible to various organisations for comparison and expansion
- Language used in development of knowledge programme should be as simple as possible for all users to participate and use it
- How do we translate the knowledge to be useful to farmers
- CSO/PO platform for sharing of community technology innovations
- Dissemination through network organisations
- Documenting and sharing knowledge
- Compile available indigenous knowledge and fill in gaps
- Publish in BAOBAB, JOTO Africa
- Global knowledge networks: agric-cultures, APC, GRP
- Training workshops, dialogues, meetings with elders, youth, women how they use info
- Intergenerational knowledge transfer
- Enhanced collaboration and networking
- Networking and policy action
- Information technology: community radio for agricultural extensions
- Development education
- Adapting practical knowledge to influence policy
- Social media: blogs, video clips, twitter

Public Debate at Thika Meeting

Gine sets the stage with picturing the current world debate on food.

“The debate around food security is hot. Since there are 1 billion hungry people, the answer to ‘Can the World feed it self’ should be no. Somehow something is wrong and this is being acknowledged. In this debate the question ‘what should we do?’ is the most urgent.”

People use science to support their arguments. Industrial agriculture, technology and intensification have the most dominant voice in the debate. But there is another voice. Civil society says that there is enough food, but that it is a matter of the how system of redistribution works. Solutions are not about technology, but can be found in redistribution and empowerment of the food producers. A lot of discussion is on how to organize that: high-external input (fertilizers/pesticides) or low-input (environmentally sound). The good news though is that everyone is debating the problem. The difficulty is finding the right solutions. Many are being presented as new, but they are old and many are not being recognized.”

Neth continued with an overview of the issues within food systems:

“A debate is very much needed. Who is feeding us is a key question. In 2008 the ETC group came out with a pack breaking studies about feeding the world. They provide a view on where the current profile is. It was an eye-opener.”

“We are much detached from the production of the food that we eat of which 70% is produced by small-scale farmers, fisher folk and urban gardeners.”

“Food production is another issue. Ten corporations own the commercial seed market (72%), worth 30 billion dollars. One company even has 27% of the market (Monsanto). These corporations have a large control through property rights on seeds and GMO’s. They push farmers in a technological deadlock (for instance in case of seeds for low prices). And there are more numbers about how very few companies control huge parts of the markets and are threatening 70% of the producers worldwide. Production takes place at the costs of small scale food producers. Farmers are squeezed. If this continues, the world cannot feed itself. The system is not sustainable. So we have to protect the producers who feed 70% of the world and we need to defend them against the named threats.”

Ngugi presented his view on sustainable agriculture and alternatives for food security:

“Can the world feed itself? Yes, if we get out of the rhetoric. No, if we don’t get out the rhetoric. Kenya is coming out of a food crisis, but this wouldn’t have been needed if we got out of the rhetoric earlier.”

“What about our production and conservation? How do the markets operate? What kind of policies are needed? What kind of technology is passing and what attitude do we have? We have embraced good things, but then we got stuck. We are not able, or we don’t have the courage, to get out or the rhetoric. Let us challenge ourselves! It doesn’t make sense to still use chemical fertilizers. It used to work, it can work, but it is not working! Reasoning is or economic or environmental. Let us start talking about a different model. It is not about land. What about soil fertility?”

“Kenya doesn’t have a problem with water, but we don’t give sufficient attention to how to harvest and conserve it. We have more than we realise. How come that we forget nature conservation and value addition? When did we

start to focus on production? Next to production farmers need to focus on conservation. They are now contracted for crap crops because they can generate income for the government.”

“The issue of sustainability is a big problem. Food dumping led by international agencies kills markets at the cost of food security. So, we need a new rhetoric, let us change.”

“There are many contradictions. We have good researchers. But why do we still have these problems? Every year 3000 agriculturalist leave the university. We have many farmers’ centres. At the same time we are asking for food. It is about the basics, We should learn from our experiences and start afresh. It is not about technologies. GMOs will not empower the farmer. He states that sustainable agriculture is the most sustainable form of farming. Let us start feeding ourselves and think about the food that we eat. We need brave people to work for sustainable agriculture.”

Thomas spoke about land issues and its effects to small holder farmers with the focus on the recent developments in Zimbabwe.

“Zimbabwe once was the food basket for the region, buy now it has become a basket case. The country was food secure but became food insecure. The distribution of land was originally skewed to big white farmers. A land reform was needed. This finally took place in the 90s and also included the redistribution of land. The first phase of the process resulted in positive gains in terms of poverty reduction. But the second and current phase, which started in 2002 is very problematic. There was an induction in productivity in every sector. And since agriculture is the biggest sector, this affected the economy. It had shrunk to 50% by 2008. And it also affected the food availability. Zimbabwe went from food exporter to its own subsidized population. The highest inflation rate ever was achieved.”

“Now 90% of the land is owned by small scale producers. There are positive impacts in poverty reduction. The production increased, economy was vibrant. In the first phase the small holder sector became the main producer of maize. In the second phase there was a declining of economy, export etc. The equitability of the land distribution came also under discussion. Now the maize production and Soya beans production is increasing. So the next 2-3 years there is the possibility to recover. The cotton production is going well. There is more collaboration.”

“So, policies can result in gains if managed well in terms of poverty reduction and food security. It can work well (gains first phase), but if it is not done well than we might not be able to feed itself.”