

Introduction

According to FAO 815 million people were suffering from hunger and poverty in 2016. More than 80 % of the world's poor live in rural areas. Family farmers and small-scale food producers are not only providing the main part of food worldwide, but they also are of vital importance for the socio-economic environment and the ecological landscape of their regions. Nevertheless small farmers suffer from industrialization of agriculture, exploitation of their natural resources and indigenous knowledge as well as the consequences of global climate change. Lack of education, information and infrastructure prevent them from having access to regional and international markets. Supporting sustainable agricultural growth in low-income countries is the most effective way to reduce poverty, achieve food security and contribute to the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Growth.

Summary

The Farmers Association of Schwäbisch Hall (BESH), Germany, has successfully implemented rural development projects with small scale farmers and rural societies in developing countries in the southern hemisphere within the last 16 years under the project scheme "SEEDS OF HOPE". Project areas are in Kerala/India, Zanzibar/Tanzania, Serbia and Romania. The project approach is to enable the local small scale farmers to gain a fair and sustainable income through their own hands and their own local resources by getting their products into value and provide them fair market access along the value chain to local and international markets.

SEEDS means the spices grown by the local small scale farmers as cash crops along with their subsistence farming. HOPE means the sustainable fair share and income out of their own valuable products, which provides hope for a better future free from starvation and under improved living conditions. The goal is to enable the farmers groups and rural societies to share development and prosperity out of their own natural and human resources instead of receiving donations and charity produce from the industrialized world.

Background of BESH / Ecoland as SEEDS OF HOPE implementing agency
www.BESH.de ; www.ECOLAND.de

The BESH is a regional farmers association of small- and medium sized farmers in the region of Hohenlohe/ Southern Germany. Initiated with 8 farmers in 1988, it consists today of 1480 member farmers. It is the farmers enterprise for the implementation of rural development projects within the area of Hohenlohe with the following measures and activities:

1. Promotion and implementing organic, sustainable and social farming practices
2. Promotion and implementing rural development projects
3. Implementing biodiversity projects for the rescue of autochthone breeds and seeds
4. Development of animal welfare schemes
5. Own processing facilities along the value chain as Slaughterhouse, Meatprocessing Factory, Cheese Dairy, Farmers Markets
6. Development of markets for farmers products and promotion of direct marketing
7. Achievement of fair prices for the farmers organic products
8. Promotion of sound farm structures with sufficient income
9. Endorsement for farmers by providing information, support for their interests, cooperation with consumer-organizations and environmental groups

Solidary business is one of the core values of the BESH, i.e. all member farmers have the same rights and duties and they receive the same fair prices for their products with a yearly turnover of more than 150 Mio. €. The prices guaranteed by the BESH are nearly twice as high as the general market prices. This can be achieved due to well-planned marketing measures and the organization of the production process completely in farmers' hands - "from field to fork".

Ecoland is the partner organization to BESH for the promotion of organic agricultural schemes and implementation of organic farming projects in Hohenlohe and elsewhere. It acts also as project carrier for the international SEEDS OF HOPE projects.

Due to this example of sustainable production, successful marketing of high-quality agricultural products and fair distribution of profits along with protection of biodiversity, social and cultural support of farmers, BESH became an important advocate for the interests of small-scale farmers in its region and beyond. To provide further support for farmers in Hohenlohe, BESH established the foundation "Haus der Bauern – House of Farmers" (HdB). The foundation promotes social fairness, cultural self-determination and the rights of rural populations worldwide. www.Global-Peasants-Rights.com

The HdB-foundation maintains the “Academy for Organic Farming and Nutrition” offering seminars, congresses and cultural events, organized with a network of partners like Ecoland, Demeter and other organizations promoting organic farming as well as several European universities.

Together with LVC, FIAN, Brot für die Welt and numerous international organizations and stakeholders HdB organized an international congress on “Peasants Rights” in March 2017, attended by app. 400 farmers and NGOs from all parts of the world. The goal of the congress was twofold: to increase awareness of the situation and the requirements of global small farming and to support the UNHRC-working group for the “Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas”. The HdB contributes to coordinated actions together with LVC and FIAN in order to promote this project in the UNHRC. The Declaration will provide the framework to protect indigenous farmers and small-scale food producers from land-, knowledge and genetic grabbing and will build the base for a long-term secured development and social justice for the rural societies. BESH serves also as a member of ECOSOC / UN with a consulting status.

SEEDS OF HOPE projects for a sustainable better future of the poor

Experience and knowledge of BESH, ECOLAND and HdB are serving since 16 years as model for the establishment of cooperation with indigenous farmer groups in low-income countries like India, Tanzania, and Serbia. The project “SEEDS OF HOPE” introduces and supports the organic cultivation of indigenous herbs and spices and their fair trade directly to BESH / Germany. Local farmers are getting up to double price for their herbs and spices.

These as cash crops in addition to the traditional subsistence farming products, aiming in a sustainable fair income achieved with their own hands work and out of their own local resources.

The “SEEDS OF HOPE” projects provides the indigenous farmers knowledge and assistance for implementing organic practices, quality management and market access. Spices have always been the cash crops of smallholders. “SEEDS OF HOPE” is based on the autochthonous herbs and spices as well as the local and traditional farming methods, which meet the principles of bio-dynamic agriculture to a large extend.

“SEEDS OF HOPE” supports the establishment of local structures for production and marketing, promotes the sustainable cultivation of high-quality products that can be exported and helps smallholders to increase productivity. It assists partners to develop brandings and marketing strategies for local and

export markets and to create value chains that ensure a fair share for the small-scale producers.

Rural communities in the project are enabled to participate actively and with an equal status in global economics and social developments with the measures of:

- Project management and establishment of solidaric business in the legal status of farmers cooperatives and farmers associations
- Qualification and training of farmers leaders for operating cooperatives and associations
- Introducing organic and bio-dynamic farming methods
- Knowledge transfer North-South and South-South
- Establishment of QM-systems and international food standards
- Qualification and training of farmers and multipliers in organic and biodynamic practices
- Establishment of local certification organizations in organic farming and food processing
- Support by the registration of Geographical Indications in order to save the local products as common assets of the local producers
- Establishment of facilities for sourcing and processing the harvest for local markets and export markets
- Establishment of value chains under fair conditions, direct participation of the producers in sharing the value of the final product
- Establishing monitoring and evaluation processes through BESH

Video about the SEEDS OF HOPE projects: <https://vimeo.com/193183322>

Furthermore the smallholder groups are enabled and supported in the fields of education, farm management, organization management, empowerment of woman farmers and the application and preservation of indigenous knowledge. Furthermore the protection of biodiversity as f.e. “The Ark Of Pepper” in Kerala to secure and preserve the autochthonous varieties of pepper along with a indigenous knowledge-center of the traditional local „Vrikshayurveda“ agricultural practices.

An important principle of “SEEDS OF HOPE” is the fact that the products, i.e. spices are cultivated in the climatic regions of their origin: Pepper, Cardamon, Piment and Muscat in India; Cloves, Vanilla and Cinnamon in Zanzibar; Red and Green Pepper, Fennel, Brown Mustard and Soja in Serbia.

The supra-regional approach of the project brings the particular projects together, promotes peer-learning and creates synergies in North-South and South-South cooperation. With “SEEDS OF HOPE” the BESH/ECOLAND Organization has established stable and sustainable partnerships with more than 12 000 farmers in several developing countries. The projects are subsidized with 50 % of its costs by the German Aid and its results and achievements are proved to be a successful model in the struggle against poverty and starvation. The SEED OF HOPE project scheme is also being proofed for successful transfer and adaptation to other regions of the globe.