



Agriculture & Food Systems
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Agroecological practices for leafy vegetables and sweet potatoes in Kenya

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Amaranth Seeds — © Photo: NICE Kenya

AFS Newsletter - Member Article by



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This is part of wider efforts of the NICE project to promote agroecology and safe nutritious food among the farmers and the community. Among the elements of agroecology being implemented by the group, the focus is on efficiency, resilience, and co-creation. Tapping into indigenous knowledge, the group can control economic pests through integrated pest management (IPM) avenues such as cultural, biological and physical control with chemical control as the last resort. By using a mixture of locally available stinging nettle, tithonia, neem tree, Mexican marigold, cow dung, blackjack plant, and beans, the group organically controls vegetable pests such as aphids, white flies, thrips, red spider mites, scales, mealybugs, and sweet potato weevils. One of the key ingredients in the organic pesticide is the Mexican Marigold plant. It is popular among farmers in Busia for its pesticidal qualities when mixed with other ingredients. It has a pungent smell which repels pests of leafy vegetables like aphids and nematodes.

On the bulking of seeds of Indigenous vegetables e.g., spider plant (*Sagaa*), the group members are involved directly with the production of leafy vegetables until seed maturity for harvesting, storage, and sale to other vegetable farmers. Similarly, the group also multiplies vines of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes and sells them to other producers for profit. The diversity of seeds produced and traded by the group members guarantees almost a year-round income through seed bulking. Further, it guarantees self- and local dependence on locally adapted seeds for uninterrupted seed supply chain and farming. The promotion of agroecology and its adoption by some farmers in Busia is gaining popularity. However, more efforts are needed to ensure that more farmers become familiar with the various agroecological practices and able to communicate clearly about their benefits.