

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

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Scholar Program 25

A VISIT TO MSU ORGANIC FARM: A THOUGHT OF BRINGING FOOD SAFETY HOME

I have received lectures on the need and importance of organic farming at my school in Nigeria. I have read research articles on the practice by individual farmers sponsored by organizations in Nigeria. While at MSU, I visited a profit oriented organic farm. Students participate in operating the farm and income is generated from the sale of spices and vegetables. I found this really interesting and I refer to it as “bringing food safety home”.



FARM MANAGER EXPLAINS ORGANIC FARMING TECHNIQUES

Farmers in Nigeria rely heavily on inorganic fertilizers and chemicals (many times using more than the recommended dose on their production systems). As an undergraduate student, I participated in my school’s agricultural 4th year programme. Inorganic fertilizers and chemicals (pesticides) were solely used in the systems. The excessive use and dependence on these synthetic chemicals on farms inflict damage to the environment (soil, underground water, etc.). Along with the damage to the environment, the safety of the food, in terms of chemical residues, is also compromised.

One of the questions I asked the farm manager as we went round the farm was “*what makes the farm an organic farm?*” According to her, the farm uses and relies on organic inputs and resources for its production. She added that organic farming enhances food safety because it produces virtually no pesticide residue and makes little or no use of chemical fertilizers. She took us to the main farm plots and the nurseries, showing us the farm implements, the different shelter structures, and the irrigation systems.



ORGANIC GREENHOUSE

One of my thoughts during the visit was that organic farming systems can actually be introduced to Nigerian institutions (alongside with the practice of the conventional farming systems) with the 4th year agricultural students participating in the running of the farms. My reasons are: there is growing awareness about food safety, the organic resources are available (if sourced for), there is a growing market for organic foods, in addition, agricultural students would get practical knowledge of organic farm management and practices.



TOOLS USED ON THE ORGANIC FARMS

Although researchers have raised questions about the relative productivity of organic and conventional farming (a discussion for another day), I strongly believe this quote that *the desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise* – Tacitus.

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