


Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

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Promoting GIAHS and enhancing the identification of GIAHS sites in Africa - African Regional Workshop - 27 February - 3 March 2017

14 March 2017

"GIAHS project came to us at a right time. It has given us the knowledge on how to take good care of our coffee. We no longer use strong industrial pesticides or fertiliser and instead we've opted for cow urine and dung for the purpose."

So says Candida Tesha to 40 delegates who visited her village in Tanzania to witness the positive changes that happened since the village was recognised as [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems \(GIAHS\)](#) site.

In 2002, FAO started an initiative to identify and conserve GIAHS in order safeguard and support the world's agricultural heritage systems.

GIAHS is valuable in achieving FAO's [SO2](#), which aims to make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.

In East Africa, GIAHS focuses on two different indigenous agricultural systems: **Pastoralism by the Maasai people of Tanzania and Kenya and Upland Agro-forestry Systems in Tanzania.**

GIAHS and [FAO South-South Cooperation](#) teams organised on 27 February 2017 a five-day regional workshop in Tanzania to help identify and promote GIAHS sites in the African region. The event brought together over 40 participants (government officials, FAO-RAF, FAO-Tanzania, academia and representative of NGOs) from 20 countries, including Malawi, Mali, Ghana, Republic of Uganda, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Zimbabwe, Chad, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Senegal, Kenya, Tanzania, China, Japan and Bangladesh. Five GIAHS holding countries were invited to **share their knowledge, experiences and lessons learnt on the identification and dynamic conservation of the sites.** Through the workshop, capacity development of prospective GIAHS national focal points was enhanced and additional guidance was provided on the future steps to follow.

Tanzania's Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, William Ole Nasha, commended FAO for coming up with such an initiative saying it will help **addressing the effects of climate change** on agriculture "Agriculture is faced by many challenges that hamper production of enough food and animal feed. GIAHS has come at an opportune time when the world grapples with climatic changes."

After 3 days in Arusha, the participants went to the GIAHS sites (Shimbwe Juu Agroforestry Heritage site and Massai Pastoralist Heritage Area) to **meet and learn from the local farmers, pastoralists and communities.**

They met with Candida Tesha who told the participants that "previously we did not know how to space the coffee trees in lines with defined distance. Since the project started, the yield has increased and we got **better prices** since our products are purely organic". Farmers have started using natural manure and they stopped from cutting down the trees and learnt how to sow, and they have been able to harvest more.

Ms Tesha is also a chairperson of a **women's empowerment** group named Mapendo, which give access to financial services. "Previously, coffee farming was only done by men but now even women own coffee plots. I too have my own. Through the group we empower each other with microfinance services," Ms Tesha points out.

Participants also visited the Engarasero village where they had a chance to see how the **Maasai traditional pastoral system** works. Among the unique features, they saw cattle and wild animals such as zebras, wildebeests and giraffes grazing in the same area together. "Maasai have lived alongside the wild animals from time immemorial. We never kill or harm them. They're part of us and we always guard them against poachers," says Ole Skorei.

Since its designation as GIAHS, the community has promoted **tourism activities** and has preserved the **indigenous knowledge** of the Maasai community. One of the tour guide declared he is not interested in leaving the village thanks to the booming of tourism in the region and his strong attachment to his community.

Images of the workshop and the field visits can be found [here](#).

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