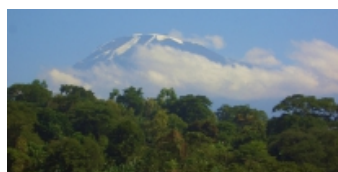


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Farmers gain skills to preserve and benefit from the Kihamba agroforestry system on Mount Kilimanjaro



21/04/2017 Shimbwe Juu, a small Chagga community village on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro follows a traditional agroforestry system called “Kihamba” but the system was facing serious threats before receiving support through the [Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems \(GIAHS\)](#) programme in 2013.

“The GIAHS project came to us at a right time. It has given us 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.” explained Candida Tesha to forty delegates visiting her village, in February 2017.

Threats include land scarcity, population growth, and the migration of the younger generation leading to a disruption of the traditional transmission from one generation to the next, changes in dietary habits and land use change and fragmentation.

Through the GIAHS programme, FAO worked with the Government of Tanzania and the local community to make their agroforestry system more sustainable.

Agroforestry is a term used to describe an ecologically based, natural resource management system that integrates trees among crops and/or livestock on farms and in the landscape, diversifying and sustaining production. Agroforestry can be considered as “climate-smart” because it combines improved livelihoods with the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.

The “Kihamba” agroforestry system covers 120 000 hectares of Mount Kilimanjaro’s southern slopes. The 800 year-old system stands out among agroforestry systems as one of the most sustainable forms of upland farming. Without undermining sustainability, it has been able to support one of the highest rural population densities in Africa, providing livelihoods for an estimated one million people.

In the XIX century, coffee production was introduced to the area bringing big changes to local agriculture. While the community enjoyed economic benefits, they also witnessed several threats. Cropping was not in line with agro ecologic methods but relied largely on pesticides, chemical fertilizers and monoculture.

The Tanzanian government and the local community have been supporting the GIAHS programme activities to formulate a sustainable solution to the village’s disappearing culture, forest and economic opportunities. Several actions have been achieved in the last four years:

1. The Shimbwe Juu community have been trained in crop improvement and in the management of organic coffee farming through Integrated Pest Management.
2. Farmers received over 12 000 coffee seedlings replacing old coffee trees. Today the coffee production is collected from these new planted trees.
3. The Shimbwe Juu community became certified and are registered as organic coffee farmers. They have been linked to the Organic coffee market.
4. The Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union (KNCU) established a coffee buying point in the village, which helped increase their incomes.
5. The “Kihamba” has been promoted through the village and has replaced monocrops in Shimbwe Juu village.
6. Sixty farmers received vanilla plant cuttings and have been trained to grow them.

“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,” said Tesha. Farmers have started using natural manure, they stopped cutting down the trees and learnt how to sow. As a result they have been able to harvest more.

Candida Tesha is also a chairperson of the women’s empowerment group ‘Mapendo’ that gives 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” she said.

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