



Organic - part of the solution!

## FOOD SECURITY: sustaining productivity and livelihoods

The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation estimates that 1.02 billion people were undernourished worldwide in 2009. This is despite production of adequate calories to satisfy world needs. Apart from natural disasters, the main problems are political and economic: inequitable distribution, distorted markets, household- and national-level poverty. Organic farming can help address these problems by enhancing rural livelihoods, increasing production in vulnerable areas, and providing environmental services.

### Organic farming offers a way around political and economic obstacles

- Organic farming is **accessible to vulnerable groups**: it is less capital-intensive, utilizing farm-based nutrient cycles, local knowledge and labour instead of agricultural chemicals. Locally-adopted guarantee systems like the Participatory Guarantee System or Group Certification do not increase farmers' costs, but instead employ social and human capital. Crucially, then, organic farming can foster local-level food production even in impoverished regions, an important structural remedy for hunger.
- Organic farming redistributes **income into rural areas** by employing more labour per farm. Labour replaces costly off-farm inputs like fertilizers, so that farmers are shielded from price volatility in international markets. Organic production frequently incorporates on-farm processing, so as a system it tends to promote adding value at farm level.
- Well-managed organic farms produce **yields comparable to or in excess of** those on conventional farms. Yields are expected to improve with further research; currently, less than 2% of agricultural research funds go to research in organic methods and improvement of organic crop systems.
- Organic practices secure the **long-term productivity** of natural resources. Careful management keeps the farm ecosystem replenished and active; diversity of both cultivated and wild species boosts the adaptability of the agricultural sector in the face of climate change.

### Organic agriculture should have an important role in EU food security policy

The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** must establish conditions for sustainable food security. Export subsidies that threaten local production and markets elsewhere must stop. Support should be given for transitioning of agricultural production to systems less oil-dependent, less environmentally destructive and less exploitative of animals. Organic farming is a reference model for economically viable, socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable farming systems.