

Growing Organic Cotton under Groundwater Stress: Lessons from projects in India, Mali, Tanzania and other countries

A project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA)

Project Partners:

FiBL Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, Switzerland

IWMI International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Anand, India

bioRe Maikaal bioRe, Madhya Pradesh, India

Is organic cotton a sustainable alternative for rural development?

The experience of "Maikaal", India, suggests that cotton production can be done in a socially, ecologically and economically sustainable way. An increasing number of farmers of the region are getting engaged in organic farming methods, and many are adapting the promoted low cost drip irrigation systems. At the same time, a number of questions arise which are to be answered before the Maikaal approach can be promoted as a model for replication.



Soil cultivation eliminates weeds and helps to keep the precious moisture in the soil.



Flowers and forming pods at an organic cotton plant.

Aims of the Project

The research project has the following aims:

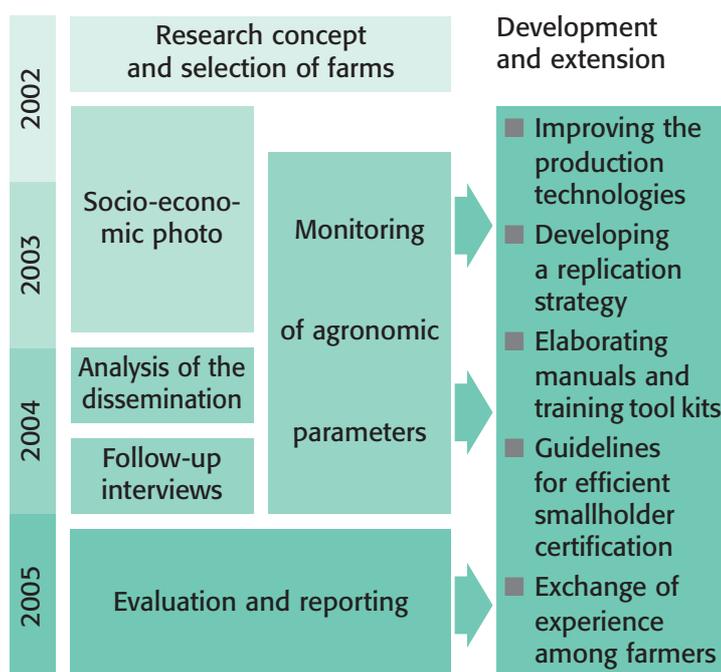
1. To assess and analyse the social, economic and ecological impact of organic production methods and low cost drip irrigation in cotton production
2. To gain insight in the mechanisms of the dissemination of these approaches
3. To improve the production system and to develop tools for facilitating extension work

Project Activities

1. **A "socio-economic photo" of the farms in the Maikaal area:** Through structured interviews of selected farmers, the socio-economic and cultural development induced by the Maikaal project will be analyzed.
2. **Monitoring and analysis of agronomic parameters:** The monitoring will collect input, output and soil data on selected farms over a period of two cropping seasons. This allows to analyse the economic and ecologic viability of the innovations and provides an insight view into conversion obstacles and success factors.
3. **Analysis of the dissemination process:** How did the Maikaal bioRe project manage to grow to its present size? What are the mechanisms that the drip irrigation technology has spread like a "wild fire" in the Maikaal region? What is a suitable dissemination strategy for similar projects elsewhere?
4. **Improving the technologies and developing extension tools:** Based on the lessons learnt from the analysis parts of the project, the applied methods and technologies shall be further improved and made available to extension professionals within and outside the Maikaal project.

Overview on Project Activities

Analysis of the Maikaal experience



Further information on the research project is available from admin@fiBL.ch.