

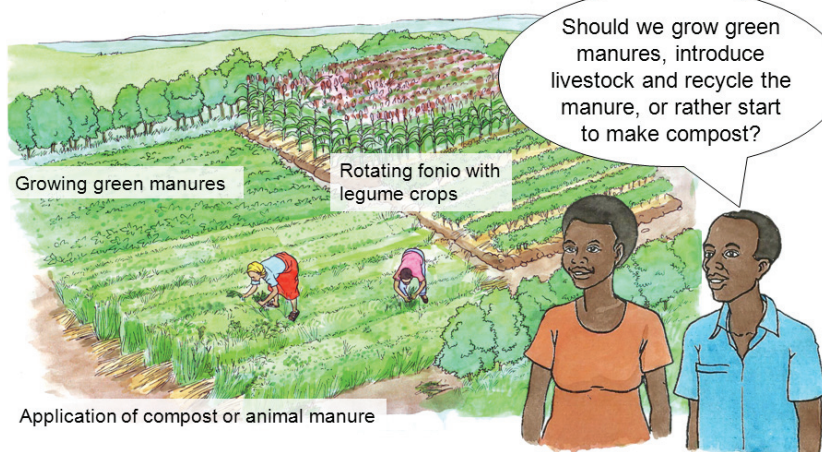
# GROWING FONIO THE ORGANIC WAY



Fonio provides high-value food in arid climates. With improved crop management and mechanical processing fonio produces reasonable yields and gives access to new markets.

According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM, 2008) organic agriculture is «a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved.»

## Conserve soil fertility and soil moisture



- › Avoid burning of fallow land and crop residues
- › Keep the soil as far as possible covered with dry plant material
- › Rip the soil in rows instead of ploughing the entire soil surface (minimizing tillage)
- › Sow early in the season
- › Regularly grow green manures, apply compost or well-rotten manure to the soil to increase its organic matter content and improve its water holding capacity

## Ensure good establishment of the crop



- › Sow seeds into a superficially loosened soil and cover them lightly
- › Instead of broadcasting the seeds investigate possibilities of sowing fonio in rows, as this requires less seeds and results in more uniform stands
- › If sown in rows of 15 to 20 cm apart fonio can be weeded mechanically

## Ensure proper weed management



1 Reduce weed pressure before fonio growing a suppressive crop. Sanitize Striga infested fields.



2 Sow immediately after land preparation.



3 Remove weeds 4 to 7 weeks after sowing.



4 Avoid dispersal of weed seeds during harvest of fonio.

- › Sow weed free fonio seeds
- › Avoid fields with high weed pressure and Striga infestation; control these before sowing
- › In case of elevated weed pressure before growing fonio, grow a crop which suppresses weeds well
- › Weed a first time 4 to 7 weeks after sowing, and a second time at flowering, if necessary
- › The use of herbicides is not permitted in certified organic agriculture

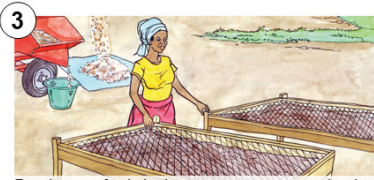
## Optimise harvest and post-harvest handling



1 After harvest allow the fonio sheaves to dry for one or two weeks on well-aerated heaps.



2 If possible, thresh, sift and wash the grains mechanically to reduce work.



3 Dry the raw fonio in the sun on canvas or plastic sheets for 4 or 5 days before storing. Avoid pollution from dust or animals.



4 Store in bulk or in bags in a dry place.

- › Ensure timely harvest to minimize losses due to shattering and birds, and reduction in quality due to moulds
- › Investigate the possibility of mechanical harvesting to reduce labour costs
- › Ensure proper pre-drying of the sheaves before threshing
- › Look for a possibility for mechanical threshing, hulling and whitening
- › Sift the grains after threshing to remove impurities
- › Dry the threshed grains and store them in clean bags

## Properly plan marketing of the product



- › Cooperate with other (organic) farmers to produce commercial volumes
- › Ensure separate or preferential treatment in processing to avoid contamination of the grains
- › Ensure clean grains, ideal milling degree and light colour for best product prices
- › Investigate marketing options for precooked fonio in West African countries and overseas