

GROWING BANANAS THE ORGANIC WAY



Managing banana gardens organically contributes to a sustainable production and can lead to higher yields.

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.»

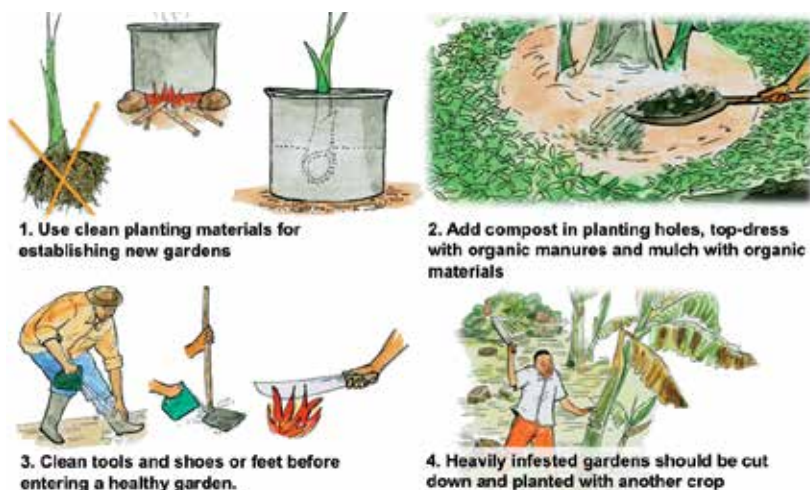
Routine management of a banana garden



Proper management strengthens the plants and minimises the spread of pests and diseases.

- > Maintain 3 to 4 suckers per stool.
- > Remove old leaves as they host infections.
- > Leave 8 to 10 leaves at flowering and 4 at harvest.
- > Use removed leaves as mulch.
- > Remove male buds to reduce the spread of disease.

Disease and pest management



Organic practices emphasize prevention of infections and restrict spreading of pests and diseases.

- > Use resistant varieties.
- > Use clean planting materials only.
- > Ensure field hygiene.
- > Keep the area around stools free.
- > Increase soil fertility.
- > Destroy heavily infested gardens and do not plant bananas for 1 to 2 years.

Improving soil fertility



Add compost to the planting hole



Regularly apply compost and grow cover crops



Apply mulch or grow a cover crop

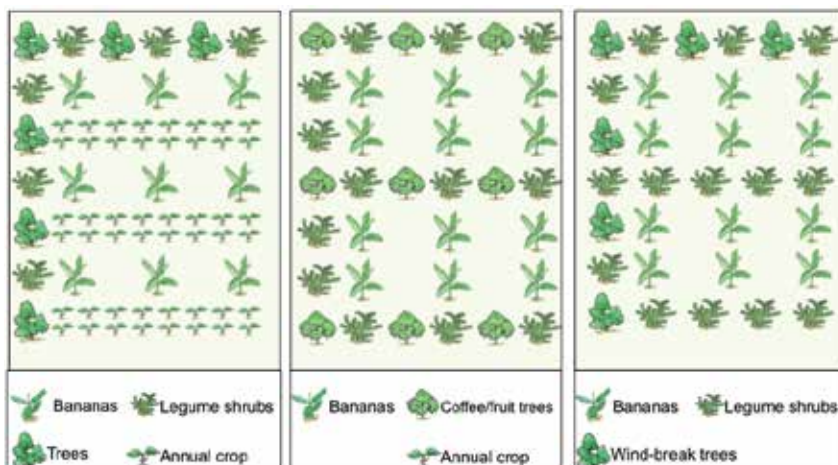
Soil and water conservation

- › Build soil bunds and plant cover crops to prevent water loss and erosion.
- › Use shade trees and mulching to conserve soil moisture.

Organic manure and compost

- › Apply compost in planting holes of seedlings.
- › Add manure as top-dressing and just before flowering.

Intercropping banana and managing weeds



The multistorey system

Upper storey

- › Use shade trees to protect against wind and to produce timber.

Middle storey

- › Plant fruit trees, cocoa and coffee to complement banana production.

Understorey

- › Plant annual crops and leguminous cover crops.
- › Timely weeding limits competition and disease.

Proper handling after harvest and access of market



Take care that the bunches do not fall to the ground

Handle harvested bananas with care



Harvested bunches should be kept under the shade and should not be heaped together

- › Proper postharvest handling prevents loss in quality.
- › Organic products of high quality are in demand on export markets.
- › Organize with other farmers to reduce certification costs.