

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

A word from Jean-Paul

Dear reader,

On request of different stakeholders, we will from now on produce a newsletter on Better Globe Forestry activities. Indeed, companies are not static. They evolve, and goals and techniques change with time. Some are small changes; some are considerable and that is the way they grow. To allow anybody interested to keep a finger on the pulse of the company, therefore a monthly brief with information on the current or past activities. This first edition is on trees and water donations as well micro-finance. It is something that we take very seriously and that is an integral part of the Better Globe Model.

Enjoy.

## BETTER GLOBE FORESTRY'S DONATION PROGRAMMES

As part of its corporate social responsibility programme, and as an essential tool for working with farmers, BGF runs three different donation programmes: (i) tree donations, (ii) water donations, and (iii) micro-credit. The combination of the programmes is crucial in recruiting farmers to plant trees with them, in their fields, although water donations are not applicable in Uganda, as explained below.

### THE TREE DONATION PROGRAMME

BGF distributes tree seedlings in Kenya and Uganda, for free. In Kenya there have been several beneficiaries so far, like the Agricultural Show of Kenya (ASK), SKAL International and several NGOs, but the last years the donations have focused on small-holder farmers participating in BGF's tree planting programmes, and schools through the Green Initiative Challenge (GIC). Later on, trees were also donated in Uganda. Let's first talk about the schools. With our partner the KenGen Foundation, the charitable arm of the KenGen corporation, the major electricity producer of Kenya, we implement the

Green Initiative Challenge. This is a 10 years programme, of which now 7 years have passed, during which a hundred schools per year are beneficiaries. Each school receives 150 seedlings of mukau (*Melia volkensii*) to plant in the school grounds, which is a cost borne by the tree donations, inclusive additional related expenses such as monitoring & evaluation by a dedicated team. This is not small stuff, as 700 schools now have received a total of 105,000 seedlings, raised in our nursery, and every school has been selected and visited several times, and rated accordingly. This programme takes place in the Seven Forks area of Kenya's Eastern Province, which, not by coincidence, also is where our own farmers programme is located. But many more seedlings have been distributed there as donation to farmers, notably our partner-farmers that have signed a contractual agreement with us, for raising trees in their farms which at maturity will be bought by BGF. Typically, 50% of the tree seedlings planted with a partner-farmer have been donated. Seedling cost is paid for by the Tree Donation Programme, plus transport and related training and follow-up. We don't want to dish out seedlings and leave them without adequate care, therefore our training programme is quite elaborate (and doesn't come for free). The same is true for our outreach programme in Northern



Soil & Water Conservation works combined with tree planting on the land of a partner-farmer in the Seven Forks area. The trenches stop run-off from rain, stop soil erosion and favour water infiltration to the benefit of crops and trees. Photo BGF

Uganda, in Dokolo and surrounding districts, where the partner-farmer programme is currently much bigger than in Kenya. People are desperately poor in Northern Uganda, even more than in Kenyan semi-arid lands (that is saying a lot) and take the chance to improve their livelihoods with both hands. Due to a more favourable climate -it rains more- the trees (*Melia azedarach*) grow faster than in Kenya.

### THE WATER DONATION PROGRAMME

BGF also has a programme for donating water to alleviate the burden of women collecting water for their households in the drylands surrounding the company's planting sites. In areas like Eastern Ukambani, where Sosoma Ranch is situated, annual rainfall is low, around 500mm, and unreliable. On average there are two rainy seasons, the Vuli rains (October-December)





Field of partner-farmer in Dokolo district (Northern Uganda), showing cassava planted thanks to our cooperation with YICAFA. Photo BGF

and the Masiki rains (April-May). The latter are weaker than the former, and often fail completely. Climate change has a real impact on East Africa, and regarding rain, it manifests itself visibly through infrequent but heavy rainstorms. This means more erosion and destruction, as there is less infiltration in the soil and more run-off, with rivers bursting their banks. It also means longer periods of drought, and more uncertainty on when the next rains will fall.

The programme takes various forms, like donation of water tanks (capacity 3000-5000 litres), sometimes water itself, to communities in the neighbourhood of our plantations or agroforestry programmes. However, training to capture water is also paid for by the Water Donation Programme, and this type of training is highly useful. It can be for Soil & Water Conservation in farms, teaching specific and proven methods for digging retention ditches that favour water infiltration into the subsoil, thereby improving both agricultural yields, and also tree growth. It can likewise be for capturing rainwater with roof catchments, that subsequently can be used for both domestic consumption and other use.

By the simple fact that rainfall in our Kenyan areas of operation is far lower than in northern Uganda, this programme so far is not applied in Uganda.

### THE MICRO-CREDIT PROGRAMME

To meet the needs of cash-strapped farmers in areas where there are no banking facilities, Better Globe Forestry has undertaken several initiatives in the framework of its “Micro-Credit Programme”. In Kenya this has taken the form of establishment of 2 Financial Services Associations (FSAs), while in Uganda a revolving fund has been promoted with the farmer grass-roots organization Yele Ikom Can Atur Farmers Association (YICAFA). YICAFA is an initiative of Julius Odwe, a highly respected member in his community,

and a retired police officer of senior rank. Indeed, our farmers programme in Northern Uganda was successfully launched thanks to this cooperation. YICAFA identified the stimulation of cassava production as a prime mover for food security and development of the area, and approached BGF with a programme proposal. Since 2018, three times money was disbursed into the fund, which is managed by YICAFA. Thanks to the funding, YICAFA multiplied selected varieties of cassava, resistant against viruses, and distributed them to more farmers, who, in turn, produced cassava and obtained food security. Some efforts were made for value addition, like producing bread out of white cassava powder. Over 130 M UgSh (about 40,000 Euro) were disbursed to the fund, with several thousands of farmers being helped. In Kenya, the financial assistance to small-holders took a different turn, and BGF entered in a partnership with K-Rep Fedha Services Ltd (KFS), a specialist financial services provider. “Fedha” means money in Kiswahili. KFS set up the Financial Services Associations, popularly called Village Banks, and organised and trained farmers in fund management. So far, over 6,000 farmer households are benefiting from this arrangement.

