



Growing organic cotton and food crops in Senegal: the role of Yakaar Niani Wulli Federation and Enda Pronat

History and objectives



The **Yakaar Niani Wulli Federation** brings together farmers from Koussanar district of Tambacounda region in eastern Senegal. The name derives from Niani and Wulli- two ancient Manding kingdoms united and 'yakaar' means together. Participating farmers join together to fight poverty and to support an agro-ecological vision of the development of their lands. Since its foundation in 1997 the YNW Federation's mission is to establish food security and ensure different sources of income for rural families. Starting with around a hundred organic cotton farmers, the YNW Federation gained an official statute of association in March 2005. Today the Federation unites almost 2,000 organic farmers in more than 80 villages. These are constituted in 12 farmers' unions which are represented in the Federation's management committee.

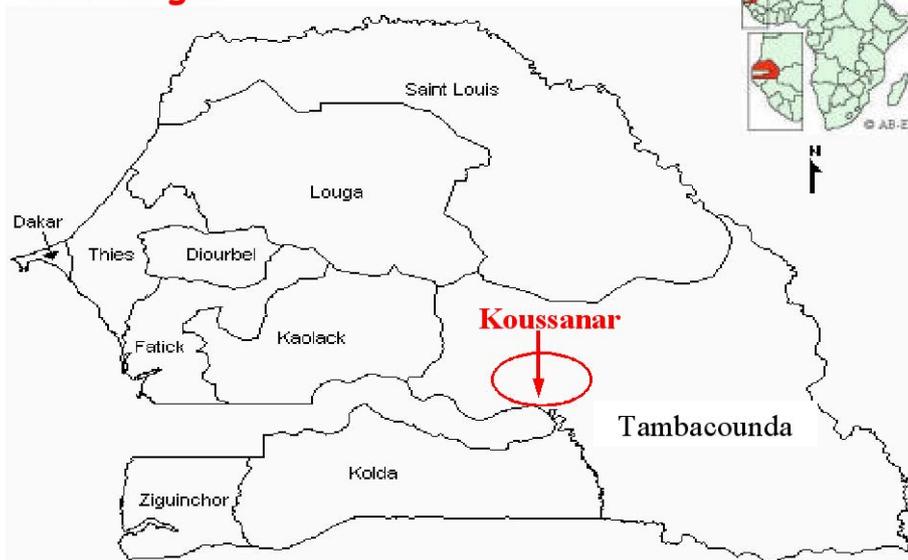
been most intensively using agrochemicals including Koussanar. It has collaborated with the YNW Federation for over 15 years, providing technical advice and capacity-building. Enda Pronat works with a participatory approach, with a strong focus on empowering women and young people.

Organic cotton and food crops

Enda Pronat started the introduction of organic cotton production in Senegal via field trials with two farmers in 1994. The reason for exploring the feasibility of organic production methods were twofold:

- (i) serious negative effects of pesticide use, from acute poisoning to long-term health effects, and
- (ii) the high risk of farm family indebtedness due to the cost of expensive pesticide inputs.

Le Sénégal



Echelle de la Carte: 1 cm = 50 km
Source: Project AP3A - Centre Régional AGRHYMET

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After three years, the organic cotton pilot had borne fruit and Enda Pronat succeeded in obtaining official organic certification of 100 farmers in 1997.

Since then the Federation and Enda Pronat have enlarged and diversified their activities, both for new crops, as well as for value adding for rural communities by further processing agricultural raw materials. The two organizations have introduced cultivation of sesame, and indigo since 2004, hibiscus in 2006, while promoting processing of fonio cereal, as well as promoting local spinning, dyeing and weaving of organic cotton fibre. Organic cotton yields have risen steadily from 300kg in the pilot phase to over 600kg per hectare. In 2008, YNW marketed 13 tonnes each of sesame and fonio, 2 tonnes hibiscus and

Enda Pronat (Protection of Nature) is part of the international non-governmental organisation ENDA Third World. It was set up in 1982 with the objective of fighting the massive over-use of synthetic agrochemicals. Its aim is to develop sustainable African systems of agriculture adapted to local resources and constraints. Enda Pronat now dedicates itself to developing alternative farming systems with smallscale family farmers in the three zones of Senegal which had

100kg of indigo. Since 2007 the Federation has encouraged fonio and sesame production in certain areas or by those farmer groups obtaining good yields of these crops, to help rationalize costs and improve efficiency for the organization as a whole.



Training and info services for farmers

Enda Pronat has conducted training on organic methods for cotton, cereal crops and vegetables using discovery-learning methodologies. It has supported the Federation farmers with technical guidance in order to achieve compliance with international organic and fair trade standards. Obtaining certification for organic agriculture and fair trade is difficult to achieve considering the tough requirements in documentation, as most YNW farmers are illiterate. At the start, Enda Pronat organised the documentation required for certification but due to the increasing number of farmers involved and the Federation's aim to become more autonomous, the system was changed in 2007. Federation staff now run the internal compliance monitoring, composed of a supervision team headed by an internal auditor and 4 leaders. These then work with the 13 leaders of farmer unions and over 70 village leaders. Successful certification was due to careful guidance and capacity-building by Enda Pronat, paying specific attention to the training and active participation of women and young people.

Since 2009, the Federation has been responsible for organising crop production, quality control and monitoring, while Enda Pronat staff visit five to six times a year to support processing and marketing.

Processing and marketing support

Difficulties experienced in marketing organic cotton at international level in the early years of the programme and in processing the organic cotton within Senegal prompted YNW Federation and Enda Pronat to put more emphasis on processing and marketing food crops. YNW purchased a small processing unit for fonio grain with donor support, enabling them to process 5 tons for sale in Dakar markets, in labelled 1kg retail packs to build the YNW Federation 'brand' with Senegalese consumers.

However, the two organizations did not give up on export opportunities for premium markets in Europe and decided to increase these by achieving Fairtrade standards. Since 2006, YNW cotton is also certified fair trade by FLO Cert. Experience gained with one French organic/fair trade company provided useful training in processing techniques for fonio to generate a high quality product for the French market in taste and nutritional terms. However, the added value generated was not shared equitably with the farmers and the Federation has concentrated on national markets. Despite a number of difficulties linked to both organic and Fairtrade certification schemes, the partners recognise some benefits, mainly in terms of improved social organisation.



Sesame field inspection by FLO Cert, Sept. 2009. Credit: Enda Pronat

Currently one Enda Pronat marketing officer supports the Federation with prospective clients, packaging and relationships with customers and provides training in business planning and commercial protocols. YNW and Enda Pronat participate in national and international trade fairs, including Biofach organic fair in Germany. In 2009 YNW launched its on-line website for selling handbags, caps and home furnishings made from organic and fair-trade cotton, using traditional indigo dyes grown and processed by its members (<http://ynw.jarinio.sn>).

Field research on organic methods

Early research in the organic cotton programme concentrated on non-chemical alternatives to pest management and crop nutrition. Field trials were later conducted on appropriate seed varieties and production methods for sesame, bissap and indigo, which led to the development of agronomic protocols for the organic production of these crops.

More recently, Enda Pronat has been exploring with Federation farmers the agronomic and economic results of different crop rotation systems, assessing crops best suited to different areas and soil types.

Staff capacity

YNW Federation has 5 staff running the organization and monitoring of cotton and food crops production. The Federation supervisory team and farmer union officials have gathered over 15 years' experience in organic farming techniques and organisational capacity for monitoring and good compliance with organic standards and fair trade. Enda Pronat has 4 staff members involved in technical advice, coordination and marketing, with training qualifications in food safety and international food hygiene regulations.

Collaboration

YNW is member of the Senegalese Association of Rural Seed Producers (ASPSP); the National Federation of Organic Producers (FENAB) and the National Network of Rural Women (RNFR). Funders and project partners include World Federation of the Deaf (German NGO); Solidaridad (Dutch NGO); Le Monde Selon les Femmes, (Belgian NGO); Kokopelli Association (seeds for life, France); Papili French company producing soft toys from organic cotton; Evolix entreprise (IT support) and collaboration with Liz Cooper, a British designer, on their range of cotton products.



Mrs Thiore Ba harvesting her cotton, Paniath village. Credit: Enda Pronat

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YNW members in a training session on managing millet grinding mills at the Federation's new HQ.

Credit: Enda Pronat

Fibre, Food & Beauty for Poverty Reduction is a joint project of PAN Germany, PAN UK, OBEPAB from Benin and Enda Pronat from Senegal. It aims to raise awareness about the many different food crops grown by organic cotton farmers in Africa and help them to find better marketing options for these, in local or export markets.

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<http://www.pan-uk/foodAfrica>

<http://www.pan-germany.org>