EXPERT’S INSIGHT - TANZANIA

BioRe Tanzania was established in 1994 and produces organic cotton in compliance with NOP and EU 834/2007 standards, mainly for our partners Remei AG in Switzerland. We are situated in Meatu District, one of the 8 districts of Shinyanga Region in Tanzania. Shinyanga is located in Western Cotton Growing Area in the North Lake zone area.

BioRe works with smallholders on contract basis to promote organic agriculture with a focus on organic cotton. In farming season 2009-10 we have 1747 registered farmers under contract and approximately 6000 family producers. In addition to contract farming BioRe Tanzania also promotes & works with a farmers group of 605 farmers in the neighboring Maswa District.

BioRe provides extension services to all of these farmers spread around in 15 villages in Meatu District. Within the context of extension service we provide training, advisory service and monitoring of all the activities all round the season. To bring ourselves closer to the farmers, we have established offices in each of these villages where our permanent extension staff reside and can be easily approached by the farmers.

We believe that a farmer is not just a producer of organic cotton for us, but he is our partner in creating ecological, economic and sustainable agriculture.

We ensure timely supply of inputs such as seeds, botanical pesticides and farm implements. We make farm implements available to our farmers in each of these villages such as an ox weeder, ripper and ridger. We provide interest free loans to our farmers to enable them carry out their agricultural activities without hindrance. This year we allocated US $20,000.00 for this purpose.

We give five years guarantee to our farmers to purchase 80 percent of their harvest. We make the payment on the spot at the purchase centre for the average purchase price of the day and an additional 15 percent premium for each and every kilo purchased. In addition to that we also give him a credit of 5 percent “Input Premium” to enable him to purchase inputs for the next season.

Unfortunately, this season has not been so favourable to us. We had 1747 registered farmers against a target of 1983, and they produced 3,666 mt of seed cotton against a target of 8,642 mt. This resulted in 1,286 mt of cotton lint compared to our target of 2,384 mt.

There were a number of reasons for failing to meet our targets: Low or zero cotton production in other cotton growing areas attracted other conventional cotton buyers to concentrate in our area creating competition; we also suffered from side selling - mainly by family producers - who were misguided and sometimes cheated by unscrupulous cotton agents and traders. Finally, we had quality problems resulting from the late harvest and the rains which hit the harvest.

We are committed to quality organic cotton production and look forward to a better 2011.

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