



Young Professionals for Agricultural Development

Youth-led Innovation for Climate-Resilient Agrifood Systems

Lessons from the Research for Agroecology Network of Southern Africa (RAENS)

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Getting into the **RAENS**

What is **RAENS**?

Research for Agroecology Network of Southern Africa (RAENS) is a five-year regional initiative working across **Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe** to strengthen agroecology research, learning, knowledge sharing and policy engagement.

RAENS brings together

- Research institutions
- Universities
- Farmers
- Young professionals
- Civil society
- Government
- Development partners

Vision:

A dynamic, inclusive and transdisciplinary agroecology network driving sustainable agricultural transformation in Southern Africa.



The RAENS Approach

RAENS promotes agroecology through collaboration among research institutions, farmers, young professionals and communities.



Youth at the Heart of **RAENS**



Young professionals contribute throughout the research cycle:

- Research planning
- Field studies
- Data collection
- Stakeholder engagement
- Documentation
- Knowledge mobilisation
- Science communication
- Policy dialogue

Youth are contributors- not just beneficiaries.

Growing Agroecology Through Schools

The Tanzania RAENS Café demonstrated how schools can become centres for agroecology learning.

Highlights:

- School demonstration gardens
- Practical agroecology training
- Youth leadership
- Teacher engagement
- Community participation

Key Lesson:

Schools can become hubs for community-based agroecology innovation.



Youth Bringing Agroecology to Life

RAENS activities in Zambia created spaces for young people to engage with researchers, farmers and practitioners.

Activities included

- Agroecology debates
- Networking events
- Enterprise discussions
- Practical demonstrations
- Knowledge exchange

Key Lesson:

Innovation grows when young people connect research with practice.



Agroecology, Markets and Indigenous Foods

RAENS strengthened youth participation in market studies and stakeholder engagement.

Areas of focus

- Participatory market development
- Indigenous foods
- Nutrition
- Stakeholder collaboration
- Knowledge documentation

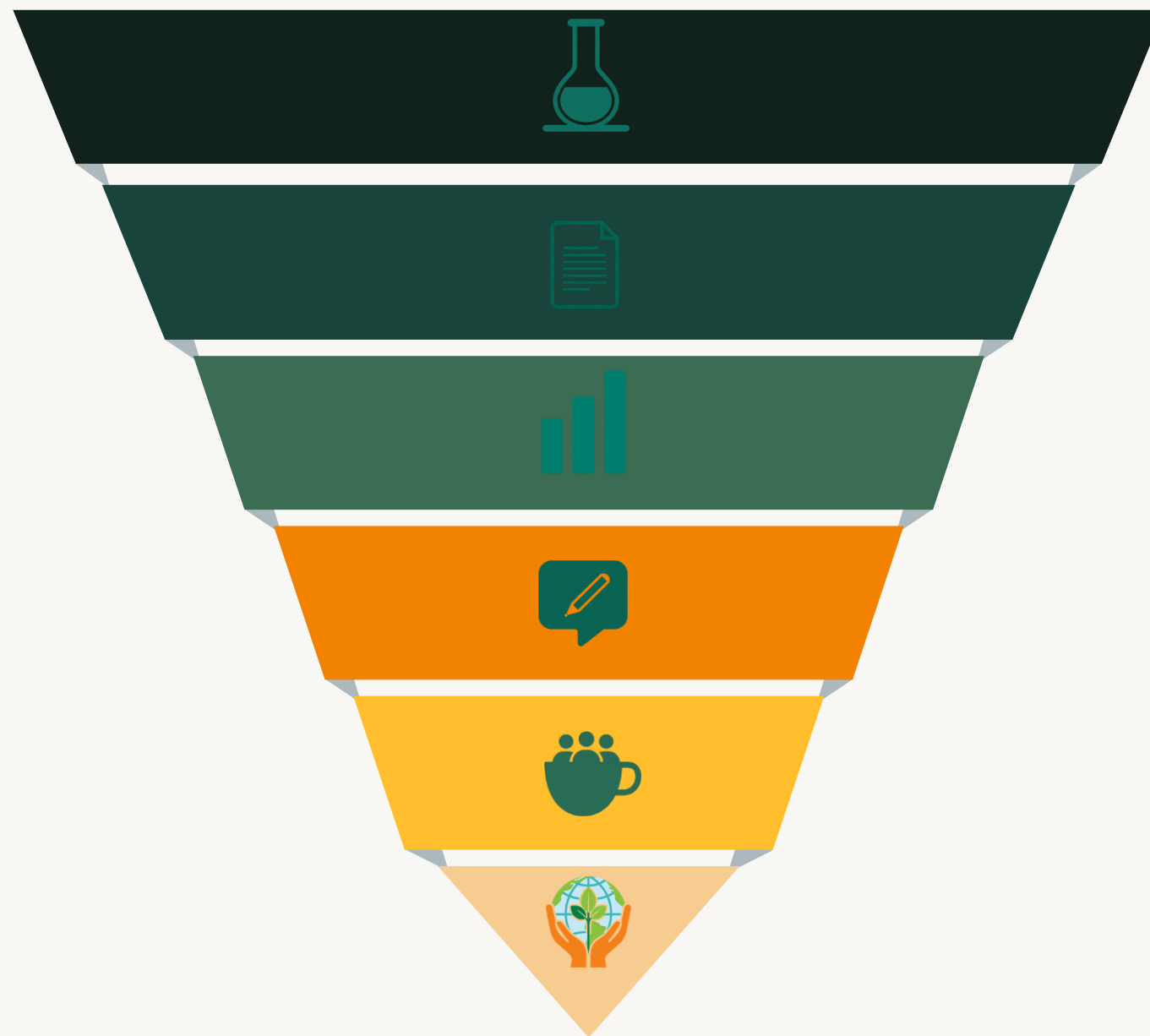
Key Lesson:

Strong markets are essential for successful agroecological transitions.



From Research to Action

RAENS transforms research findings into practical knowledge for communities.



01

Research

Scientific findings and field studies form the foundation of evidence-based knowledge.

02

Knowledge Briefs

Research is distilled into concise, accessible briefs for practitioners and policymakers.

03

Infographics & Blogs

Visual summaries and blog posts communicate findings to wider audiences clearly.

04

RAENS Cafés

Interactive community dialogues and café sessions spark local knowledge exchange.

05

Knowledge Products

Toolkits, guides and resources are packaged for practical field application.

06

Real-world Impact

Communities apply knowledge to drive climate resilience and sustainable agriculture.

Knowledge Products

Examples developed through RAENS:

- Youth Knowledge and Perspectives on Agroecology in Zambia
- Documenting Youth Voices in Agroecology
- Youth-led Agroecology Pathways
- Agroecology Training at Salichi Farms
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Reviving Indigenous Foods
- Agroecology Infographics
- RAENS Café Blogs

Key Lesson:

Knowledge becomes more valuable when it is accessible.

Protecting and nourishing communities and nature through Agroecology and Organic Agriculture

A Summary of Cultivating Change with Agroecology and Organic Agriculture in the Tropics | FIBL 2024



World 2025 | Agroecology in Southern Africa
Organic Momentum
World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Trends
SADC region (Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania)
The organic sector grew faster than any other sector, increasing by 24.4% to reach over 3.4 million hectares in 2023. Organic agriculture accounts for only 0.3% of the continent's total agricultural land.
More than 3.4 million hectares of farmland are now organic in Africa in 2023.

Management of Fall Armyworm in Southern Africa

Challenge
Most fall armyworm control efforts fail because they rely on toxic pesticides that harm people, the environment, and natural pest enemies.

SOLUTION Adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM)!

1. Shift from Chemicals to Ecology

2. Protect Human & Environment Health

3. Adopt the IPM Pyramid

4. Empower and Educate Farmers

Integrated Pest Management for Fall Armyworm
Prevent - Monitor - Act wisely
Reference: Policy Brief No. 53
Design and Layout
This infographic has been developed as part of the IPM training materials for farmers and extension workers.

ORGANICAFRICA

Your go-to resource hub for Organic Agriculture in Africa

Comprehensive & Farmer-oriented

Communities of Practice

RAENS is establishing Youth Communities of Practice across the five participating countries.

Objectives

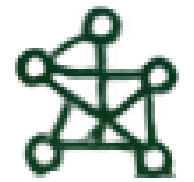
- Peer learning
- Mentorship
- Knowledge exchange
- Regional collaboration
- Innovation sharing
- Long-term sustainability

Key Lesson:

Communities of Practice ensure that learning continues beyond individual project activities.



Looking Ahead: The Future of **RAENS**



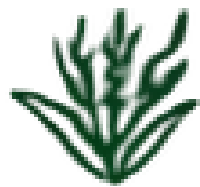
Strengthen Regional
Collaboration



Expand Youth
Communities of
Practice



Develop Knowledge
Products



Scale Farmer-led
Research



Foster Innovation
Ecosystems



Strengthen Science-
Policy-Practice Linkages



Resilient Agrifood
Systems

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Research is most effective when translated into practical action.
- ✓ Young professionals strengthen research, innovation and knowledge sharing.
- ✓ Multi-stakeholder collaboration accelerates agroecological transitions.
- ✓ Regional networks create opportunities for scaling successful practices.
- ✓ Knowledge products help bridge science and practice.

Implementers and Partners of the RAENS



Collaborators: NGOs, farmer organizations,
extension agencies, market
actors

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; **working together is success.**"
- Henry Ford

Thank you for joining us!
www.agroecologysouthernafrica.net

