

ORGANIC NEWS

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As we hit the midway mark of the year, fresh energy and ideas are blooming across our organic community. In this edition, you'll find inspiring stories and bold moves that are shaping a healthier, more sustainable food system.

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WWF – SAOSO FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIP IN COLLABORATION WITH PROJECT BIOME:

Catalysing a just and regenerative food system



The partnership between the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa and the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) Foundation is emerging as a catalytic force in the transformation of South Africa's food and farming systems. Anchored in a shared vision for a

more ecological, equitable, and climate-resilient future, the collaboration is advancing innovation across both food system transformation and ecosystem restoration.

"We are very excited about this partnership with the SAOSO Foundation and are looking

forward to collaborating on this important initiative," says WWF Senior Technical Specialist: Agriculture, Luyanda Njanjala. "While we have been actively training farmers in agroecology, this project offers a valuable opportunity to deepen that work through the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) model that SAOSO champions. Strengthening PGS in the region is crucial for WWF as it aligns closely with our 2030 strategy to halt biodiversity loss and regenerate nature."



At the heart of this partnership is the Heal the Planet programme – a flagship initiative led by SAOSO Foundation in collaboration with Project Biome, which brings a systems-thinking approach to agroecology, smallholder resilience, and landscape regeneration. With initial focus regions in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, the programme is piloting scalable models that integrate household food sovereignty, youth capacity building, and bioregional planning.

WWF's collaboration strengthens the programme's reach and depth particularly through:

- Co-creating market access pathways for PGS-certified producers
- Supporting PGS as a vehicle for smallholder inclusion
- Innovating with digital platforms for traceability, carbon tracking and landscape governance

- Engaging in living lab environments to explore real-world applications of agroecological principles and food system reform

Project Biome enhances this framework through the implementation of Design Sprints and Regional Accelerator Co-Labs, which are fostering radical collaboration, co-creation, and long-term strategies for regeneration, rewilding and restoration. These convenings are also incubating Landscape Partnerships – territorial platforms where farmers, communities and stakeholders align around shared ecological and economic goals.

“The partnership between Project Biome and the SAOSO Foundation is a moment of key collaboration that holds a regenerative global vision gradually unfolding first in Mpumalanga and internationally online, as we gather our collective to begin the process

of Radical Collaboration,” says Project Biome Executive Director, Stella Horgan. “Project Biome is honoured to be partnered with SAOSO, with their decades long track record, expertise, tremendous knowledge base and extensive networks. Together we aspire to transform food security, to bring substance and momentum to regenerative practices, rewilding work and reconnection of humans to nature.”

Together, WWF, SAOSO Foundation, and Project Biome are building a resilient foundation for place-based transformation – bridging grassroots action with policy innovation and long-term systems change,” says SAOSO & PGS SA Head of Joint Operations, Matt Purkis. “The SAOSO Foundation looks forward to a long and fruitful relationship with WWF, rooted in shared values and a collective commitment to healing people and planet.”

AGROECOLOGY COALITION SPOTLIGHTS THE HEAL THE PLANET PROGRAMME



The Agroecology Coalition highlighted the SAOSO Foundation's Heal the Planet Programme in their latest newsletter.

“Heal the Planet is a cross-cutting, systems-based programme catalyzing the transformation of food systems through agroecology while simultaneously addressing the interlinked water, waste, and energy nexus. Deeply rooted in the Agroecology Principles and aligned with “Organic 3.0”, the programme takes an

integrated approach to food sovereignty, ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and regenerative economics. Utilizing living systems design and biomimicry where possible, Heal the Planet is driven by the Rights of Mother Earth, local economic development, and contributing meaningfully to the SDGs.”

Read more here: <https://agroecology-coalition.org/heal-the-planet-programme-saoso/>



PIONEERING THE PGS AGGREGATION MODEL

The iGoli PGS group is leading the way with a groundbreaking aggregation model that helps to connect smallholder PGS farmers to markets. Farmers supply raw or unpackaged produce to the aggregation hub and the organic produce is then rebranded and distributed to eight retailers across Gauteng including Jackson's Real Food Market and VULA Food Shack. In essence, a PGS aggregation model offers a valuable approach for smallholder farmers to participate in the organic market,



Both farmers and retailers contribute via monthly membership fees to the PGS group and this has enabled the aggregators to finance a person at the packhouse, package and label produce, monitor logistics, quality, volume and cashflow. The aggregators take a small percentage to cover the management of the operations.

Future plans include expanding to box schemes where the PGS group can better educate consumers on the benefits of organics, and using their preschool food nutrition programme to guide future

planting. "As soon as we have larger demand, we can determine plot planting which further support our farmers," says Njozela.

"We are excited about this new venture and by aggregating small new farms with unique produce or rarely found produce is a win for everyone," says [Jackson's Real Food Market](#) owner, Gary Jackson. "Small farmers truly need help with aggregation. This is logistics for the last mile to the retailers back door. Your support would mean a lot as it's a start up and something new in the organic space. It's not meant to lengthen the supply chain just facilitate between the farmer and the retailer. We wish them good luck."

Jackson's.
REAL FOOD MARKET AND EATERY

build strong local food systems and ensure fair prices make their way back to the farmers, whilst ensuring the sustainability of the PGS group and administrative functions are covered through the trade of the PGS group. This enables a more distributed and fair membership fee structure, allowing new entrants into the PGS group to be supported while gaining traction at market.

"This model helps to level the playing field for our farmers," says iGoli PGS's pollinator Siviwe Njozela, "ensuring that every farmer from the smallest to the most established can get their produce to market."



IFOAM AGROECOLOGY PROMOTIONS PROGRAMME

SAOSO was identified by IFOAM – Organics International as a partner in the newly established Agroecology Promotion Project (APP). The APP is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). It aims to transform food systems by promoting sustainable, resilient, and dynamic agricultural practices, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. The project is spearheaded by IFOAM – Organics International and includes regional partners like Biovision Africa Trust (BvAT) and the Agroecology Learning Alliance in Southeast Asia (ALISEA).

Through partnerships with governments, NGOs, the private sector, and diverse stakeholders, APP is building more resilient agricultural systems. This effort aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development



Goals (SDGs), reinforcing global commitments to sustainability.

The [Academy](#) of IFOAM – Organics International plays a pivotal role in delivering Agroecology and Organic Leadership Courses, and SAOSO is proud to be hosting this for the first time. The Leadership Programme is a nine-month programme that incorporates both face-to-face and online sessions.

Watch this space for an announcement on the launch and opportunities for enrollment.

ALOE DALE PGS FARM VISIT

Aloe Dale Farm, nestled in the heart of Glen Austin, Midrand, recently hosted its annual PGS farm visit as part of the iGoli PGS network. Covering less than 1 hectare, Aloe Dale has been farmed organically since 2009, producing a variety of produce that includes culinary herbs, assorted leafy greens, edible flowers, turmeric and globe artichokes. Owned and run by Merryn Scott-Tluczek, the

farm has been a committed member of the iGoli PGS since 2015, was first certified organic in 2018 and is a vibrant example of agroecological and organic farming in action.

The farm is also home to horses, whose manure is transformed through vermicomposting taking place in old baths and turning the waste into nutrient-rich compost. Thomas and Patson use this compost to grow Aloe Dale's seedlings, which thrive in the greenhouse that keeps warm in winter and with a lift of the plastic, keeps cool and well-ventilated in summer.

Merryn practices polyculture with mixed vegetable beds growing harmoniously together. She has citrus trees as well which are occasionally pruned by the horses themselves who, oddly enough, seem unfazed by the thorns.



The visit was attended by several fellow iGoli PGS farmers such as Françoise Harrison, Ruben Lawrenz, Nompumelelo Palfreyman, Jamie de Jong and Tanya Spangenberg who also wore the admin hat for the day. Merryn is also a PGS aggregator and showed everyone her well-organised pack house where produce from four local organic farmers is sorted and stored by Mariah and Fidelia. A cold room is used to store the produce between picking, sorting, packing



and delivery. Impressively, 90% of the produce she distributes comes from PGS-certified farmers, with the remaining few carefully labelled as “naturally grown” to maintain full transparency. PGS-certified produce receives the PGS sticker, while other items are clearly separated and

labelled accordingly.

With years of PGS experience under her belt, Merryn understands both the standards and the realities of organic production, ensuring quality control and reliability for retailers and consumers alike.



FARMER TIP: TWO FARMS, ONE FIELD: HOW YOUR SOIL IS FARMING BENEATH YOU

By *Rabecca Mwila, ISAN Staff writer*



When most farmers look over a field, their thoughts land on what is easy to see—lit green leaves, sturdy stalks, and the heft of the harvest hanging from the plants. Yet just a hand-tremor below that rows another unseen farm. It has no shiny tractors or polished tools, but it does employ billions upon billions of tiny workers.

Under a healthy field, earthworms, fungi, bacteria, mites, nematodes and creatures that we hardly notice join forces in a second, living farm. They never clock out, never complain, and in their quiet, tireless way, they prepare the ground, feed the growing plants, and fend off trouble.

Meet the hidden farmers

These soil dwellers are partners you hire every season, and they may be your most dependable crew.

Earthworms: The plow team

Think of earthworms as the old-fashioned plow that pulls itself. By boring through soil, they drag oxygen and rain deep where the roots can reach. Their castings, rich in nutrients, drop out like



nature's slow-release fertiliser, gently boosting fertility for weeks.

Fungi: The resource transporters

Mycorrhizal fungi weave vast underground webs that rival highways. By latching onto plant roots, they stretch farther than any root ever could, trading hard-to-get water and phosphorus for the sugary snacks plants make in sunlight.

Bacteria: The soil chemists

Though they are too small to see, bacteria handle jobs most farm chemists envy. They fix nitrogen from the air, break down leftover crops and manure, and release the fresh nutrients that keep seedlings strong. Some even help shield plant roots from disease.

Mites and springtails: The debris crew

These tiny critters shred decaying leaves and stalks into bite-sized bits, giving bacteria and fungi an easy meal. Picture them as the first gardeners in a backyard compost heap—nature's own recycling team.

Millipedes and slaters: The breakdown brigade

A bit bigger, these soft-bodied scavengers munch on whole piles of dead leaves and stems, and every mouthful jolts nutrients

back into the soil. By converting farm waste this way, they secretly stock the future fertility of fields.

Nematodes: The soil managers

Some species act like tiny assassins, boring into roots; plenty of others hunt pest larvae and help steady all the microscopic populations around them. The trick is keeping that underground balance from tipping.

What happens if this farm dies?

Take away these tireless workers and soil packs down, losing air, life and the power to hold water or feed plants. Chemical fertilisers will still green the crop for a while but can never rebuild living structure. Once the soil crew collapses, bringing productivity back can take years of careful work – sometimes decades.

How to keep your underground farm thriving

Treat soil like a bustling city, not a lifeless container, and it will reward you with healthy plants. Here are five simple rules that act like pay

raises for your hidden workforce:

1. **Feed them well:** Add compost, mulch, manure or chopped crop residues on a regular schedule, so there is always fresh food waiting.
2. **Don't overtill:** Limit plowing and harrowing; even the lightest pass destroys tunnels and homes that took months to build. Practice low- or no-till farming to protect soil structure.
3. **Skip the toxic chemicals:** Common pesticides and synthetic fertilisers wipe out many beneficial soil creatures. Whenever you can, reach for organic or naturally derived options.
4. **Rotate your crops:** Just as workers thrive on varied tasks, soil perks up when different plants take turns. Crop rotation also invites greater diversity into the underground community.
5. **Keep it covered:** Exposed soil bakes in sun and washes away in heavy rain. A blanket of cover crops or fresh mulch locks in moisture and steadies



the temperature, creating a perfect home for soil life.

The future of farming is underground

The next time you walk into a field, remember you stand on two farms. One is above, where you plant and harvest. The other is below, where tiny workers cycle nutrients and keep crops strong.

They never ask for a paycheck. They don't clock out for the weekend. They basically want a little attention, some plant scraps, and a safe, quiet place to live. Look after your soil community, and in return it will feed you and your crops.

UNPOISON OUR CITY – URBAN PESTICIDE USE, EXPOSURE, IMPACTS, AND REDUCTION

[Unpoison](#) hosted a webinar that exposed a jaw dropping stream of hard hitting facts and figures about our every day exposure to toxic chemicals and pesticides

in the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape – not only via agriculture, but in our cities and the urban environments in which we live, work and play.

See the University of Cape Town research [here](#).

Watch the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/qcljjcGwESE>

SAOSO AGM COMING UP IN NOVEMBER 2025

The South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) will be holding its Annual General Meeting in November 2025 – date and time to be confirmed soon.

We invite nominations for key leadership roles: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. More details on how to nominate and participate will follow shortly.



RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Arrangements are well underway for the second African Organic Research Conference (AFROREC) to be held 24–26 November 2025 in Cairo jointly hosted by NOARA (Network for Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa) with SEKEM, the Egyptian Biodynamic Farming Association, and Heliopolis University. A call for submission of papers has been sent out to practitioners, researchers, extension workers and policy makers.

The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions is developing a position paper on Agroecology, and NOARA Chair and TIPI President, Prof Raymond Auerbach delivered a keynote address on transitioning towards Agroecological Food Systems to the South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) in Kempton Park.

“Farmers and their unions are increasingly aware that they have to shift towards agroecology; this is heartening, as, after enduring much negative sentiment over the last five decades, the Ecological Organic Agriculture sector is at last being recognised as essential for adapting to climate change and for producing wholesome food,” says Auerbach.

NEWS FLASH

New, groundbreaking research linking Glyphosate to cancer is forcing governments to review their support for the world’s most popular weedkiller. This webinar is an exclusive opportunity to hear about the most comprehensive, global study ever conducted on Glyphosate from its only UK-based contributor, Professor Michael Antoniou (Professor of Molecular Genetics and Toxicology at Kings College London).

Published on the 10th June in the prestigious Environmental Health journal, the study confirms that Glyphosate and Glyphosate-based herbicides cause multiple types of cancer, even at exposure levels deemed to be “safe” by the EU. It was coordinated by the Ramazzini Institute in Italy and involved scientists from across the US, South America and Europe.

The study can be found [here](#)

NEWS

ISAN magazine July – Sept 2025

This issue of ISAN dives deep into climate-tolerant farming with climate-resilient crops, and looks at agroecological movements and the power of grassroots food systems across the continent. From water harvesting in Zambia to market innovation in Malawi, this edition is packed with real-world solutions and powerful voices from the field.

In this issue:

- Climate-resilient crops and food

security in Zambia

- Weekly rural markets: how they keep Malawi fed
- The South African People’s Tribunal on AgroToxins
- Soil wisdom from farmers: structure, composting and yields
- Youth, culture and agroecology in action at the Machikichori Festival
- Chef’s Corner: The superpowers of pumpkin

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The Good Life Show was in Cape Town!

The [Good Life Show](#) took place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC) from

30 May to 1 June. As Africa’s leading event for food, drink and conscious living, it showcased the best in plant-based, organic and sustainable products.

“The Cape Town leg of the 2025 Good Life Show was a remarkable success, confirming once again its place as Southern

Africa's leading platform for sustainable, future-forward living," says Good Life Show Producer, Heidi Warricker. "With a vibrant atmosphere, packed programme and overall positive feedback, we saw incredible engagement from both the trade and the public. We are especially proud to partner with SAOSO in championing organic products, sustainable living and healthier lifestyle choices. Together, we aim to drive

positive change and contribute to a more sustainable and health-conscious food system in South Africa. We are now looking forward to bringing this powerful and engaging show to Johannesburg in August."

The Good Life Show will be in Johannesburg from 1 – 3 August in Kyalami.



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Fuel to Fork Report

[IPES-Food](https://ipes-food.org) launched a new report on how to get fossil fuels out of our food systems. Food systems now consume 40% of all petrochemicals and 15% of fossil fuels globally – primarily through

synthetic fertilisers, plastic packaging and ultra-processed foods.

<https://ipes-food.org/report-summary/fuel-to-fork/>

AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES THAT ENHANCE SOIL FERTILITY AND ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR SYNTHETIC FERTILIZERS AND PESTICIDES



An Aspirational Approach to Planetary Futures

A conceptual foundation for a proposed new metric to track and promote mutually beneficial relationships between humans and the rest of the living world. The proposed Nature-Relationship Index (NRI) seeks to move beyond tracking environmental harm alone. It

aims instead to assess human-nature relationships as a core dimension of development, capturing progress toward more positive and mutually beneficial relationships between people and the planet.

[Click here](#) for more information.



Organic & Natural Expo Africa, 18 – 20 September, Johannesburg

This premier event dedicated to organic, natural and sustainable products brings together innovators, entrepreneurs and conscious consumers at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg.

Visitors to the event will be a mix of trade and consumers. Companies interested in exhibiting can apply [here](#).

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Here's how!

You have the power to make a difference! Start by asking your local retailers where their food comes from—and encourage them to stock certified organic products.

Get to know your local PGS group: visit farms, connect with the farmers, learn about their practices, and see where their produce ends up. Use the [PGS Pollinator Map](#) to find a group near you.

Want to support SAOSO? Become a member or make a donation to help grow the organic movement in South Africa. Every action matters!!



Become a member!



Donate today!



Future Newsletters: We'd love to hear from you! Got news to share or a topic you'd like us to cover in the newsletter? Send us an email at info@saoso.org.

**The Principle
Of Health.**

**The Principle
Of Ecology.**

**The Principle
Of Fairness.**

**The Principle
Of Care.**