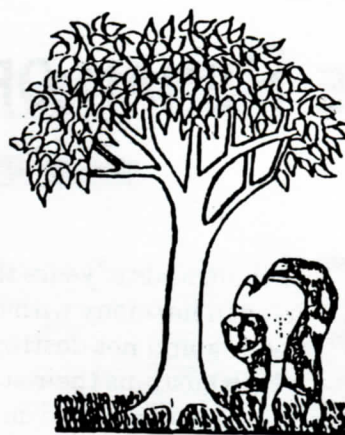


MRS NJERI'S FARM

Mrs. Tabitha Njeri cultivates coffee as the principal cash crop, and maize as the main staple. There is also a significant proportion of the farm set aside for Napier grass, bananas, and fruit trees like avocado, mango and citrus, and also a number of minor crops. Trees grow in abundance amongst the crops and on the field boundaries. Near the living quarters at the top of the slope there is a rudimentary zero-grazing unit for two cattle.

But perhaps most importantly, the farm is very well conserved with a number of soil and water conservation structures and measures. There are retention ditches and *fanya juus* that reduce the slope and erosion, and aid water retention; there are sacks, stones, trash and live plants to prevent gully erosion; there are well-maintained bench terraces for the coffee; there are infiltration pits to again slow water flow downhill; and there are many *gravillea*, *mutundu* (*Croton macro stachys*) and black wattle trees which help bind soil with their roots.

Like many other farms in her village, there is extraordinary complexity in the crop-livestock-tree interactions. The cattle eat Napier grass grown on the retention ditches and *fanya juus*, and *paspalum* grass grown on the terrace risers. Both grasses also serve to stabilize the soils. The animals also consume maize stalks and stove, banana leaves and stalks, tree leaves and during the times of shortage wild plants such as *maegoya*, plus sweet potato vines, *cas-sava* leaves and tubers.



Source: Uganda Women's Tree Planting Movement

A number of plants are used as bedding for the cattle and for adding bulk to the manure. These include *euphorbia* and *gravillea*. *Euphorbia* can also be eaten by goats. In return, manures from the cattle are essential for maintaining soil fertility and structure.

Although Mrs Njeri applies inorganic fertilizers, she favors manures. But she does not have sufficient for her requirements. The priority crops for manures are coffee, followed by maize and then Napier grass. The shortage was aptly summarized when she said, "I wish you could come with a lorry load of manure. It would make me so happy."

In addition to these finely tuned relationships many of the individual components of her *shamba* are multipurpose. The squash plants provide food and are a medicine for the control of cattle intestinal worms. The lima beans supply food and fix nitrogen in the soil.

But perhaps the most diverse are the trees. All have more than one function, acting as sources of fuel, building materials, live-fencing, fruit, fodder, bedding material and shade. The attitude to trees here are expressed by the chief of the village - "That is a beautiful area", he said, "just look at all the trees."

Source: *Women and the Environment*, Annabel Rodda 1991. Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9BU, U.K.