

Sustainability News – 11th November, 2016.

Broad-based articles on sustainability in Africa

<http://www.esri.com/news/arcnews/fall12articles/sustainability-in-africa.html>

New sustainable supermarket in Nigeria

A New Earth, a boutique organic and eco-living store based in Beirut, Lebanon, recently announced its opening in Lagos, Nigeria. The expansion is testament to the owners' belief in moving towards a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable way of living.

“We have to remember that we are hosts on this planet and that what we give to our soil, it gives back to us. We have to care for our future generations and ensure continuity, if possible, in the least damaging ways. This is something that I defend fervently and consumers are always pleased to hear that by choosing organic, they are also taking a stand towards clean agriculture,” says co-owner Layane Makarem, who started the business in 2009 with Sabine Kassouf.

Makarem explains that their goal is “to propel Nigeria into the organic market by educating, supporting and strengthening ties between local farmers”.



Traditions can drive sustainable development

Sacred forests and traditional beliefs are shaping sustainable farming practices in communities in West Africa, according to new research.

Scientists from Lancaster Environment Centre carried out a unique 18-month study in Liberia, examining the traditional agriculture of the Loma people where farmers do not use industrial farming practices or artificial

fertilisers. They found sacred forests and ancestral lands were valued more than short-term economic gain through increasing food production.

Lancaster researchers calculated that their food production method, which involves farmers planting crops in fertile human-made soil known as 'anthropogenic dark earth', has twice the energy efficiency of either 'slash and burn' rice production and hunting and gathering.

This human-made highly fertile soil, which is used for growing crops, forms in the same localised areas, building up over generations. The soil is created inevitably by everyday domestic life, from deposits of charred and fresh organic matter, including manure, bones, ash, charcoal and ceramics.

However, the expansion of the system is limited by 'sacred' forests, which form around current settlements and cover areas of fertile human-made soil which used to be towns in the past. Customary laws prohibit these forests being cleared for farming, as some trees are believed to have mystical 'medicinal' power, and also because of the presence of graves.

Dr James Fraser, who led the fieldwork, said: "From a modern Western perspective not expanding the coverage of this highly fertile soil appears to be sub-optimal, but communities manage the land in a way that is informed by their relationship to past generations, sustaining their institutions and way of life over many generations, which are more important to them than material gain."

The team used GPS mapping, conducted quantitative surveys, and recorded interviews and oral histories in order to examine the relationship between physical and social factors over a long period of time in traditional sustainable agriculture.

John 11th November, 2016