

## HOW ISLAMIC FARMING BEGAN

ARC has been working with Muslim, Christian and Hindu faith groups in sub-Saharan Africa since 2010 to help them develop long-term action plans on the environment. In September 2012, at a meeting to launch 27 of those long-term plans, our Muslim faith partners asked ARC to develop a faith-based approach to agriculture that would help their farmers care for their land while increasing crop production.

ARC commissioned Global One 2015, a Muslim-led development organisation, to work with Islamic clerics and scholars as well as agriculture experts to develop this new approach. A manual has been produced, entitled *Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Agriculture*. It was launched in Nairobi, Kenya, in March 2014 in partnership with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM).

SUPKEM clerics contributed to the development of the manual. SUPKEM is also piloting 10 demonstration and training Islamic Farming sites in Kenya in 2014-2015.

- There are between 400 and 500 million small farms in the world.
- Subsistence farmers account for approximately 85% of Africa's population.
- Africa has 60% of the world's unused arable land.

This initiative is supported by the World Bank as part of its TerrAfrica partnership, and Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



## WHAT IS ARC?

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) is a secular organisation, founded by HRH Prince Philip in 1995. It works with the world's major religions to help them develop environmental programmes based on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices. It also helps secular environment organisations to work with the faiths to protect the natural world. ARC is not funded by any faith group.

See [www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org) for more on the African Faith Commitments. You can also download ARC's book about inspiring faith initiatives – *Many Heavens, One Earth in Action*.



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# ISLAMIC FARMING: CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE FOR MUSLIM FARMERS



## THE CHALLENGE FACING AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is in crisis throughout Africa. Soil erosion is rising and crop yields are falling. Erratic rains due partly to climate change are leaving farmers confused and in despair. At the same time, Africa's population is increasing rapidly and is expected to more than double to 2.3 billion by 2050. New farming methods are needed to increase productivity, nutrition and livelihoods, while also conserving the land for future generations.

*'It is He who created for you all that is in the Earth.'* – Al Baqarah 29

## WHY WORK WITH THE FAITHS?

- The faiths are the largest element of civil society worldwide, including Africa.
- 90% of Africa's population describe themselves Christian or Muslim.
- They have unprecedented trust, outreach and influence in the continent.
- There are 248 million Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa and many are farmers.



Digging holes through mulch: Uganda agriculture workshop



Delegates at the first Islamic Farming workshop in Kenya in January 2014 learn how mulching helps soils absorb water

## WHAT IS ISLAMIC FARMING?

Islamic Farming is a faith-based approach to agriculture that integrates Qur'anic scriptures and teachings about caring for the Earth as a religious responsibility – *khalifa* – with practical teaching in sustainable farming techniques, specifically in conservation agriculture.

Conservation agriculture is a proven methodology that can increase crop yields while also protecting soil health and biodiversity. It is widely promoted by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation and other groups as a form of climate-smart agriculture.

The *Islamic Farming* manual was launched in March 2014. It is unique in that it speaks to Muslim farmers in the language of the Qur'an and Sunnah, says the manual's chief editor Dr Husna Ahmad: 'As Muslims we are stewards appointed by Allah (swt) to be guardians of the world He created. It is our duty to safeguard this blessing, not to exploit it.'

## ISLAMIC FARMING IN PRACTICE

Islamic Farming is based on six key steps:



Like conservation agriculture, *Islamic Farming* follows the following principles:

- Minimum soil disturbance – that is, little or no tillage. Dig planting holes instead.
- Apply mulch to reduce soil erosion and minimise water evaporation.
- Do not burn – crop residues are used for mulching.
- Rotate crops and plant with diversity. Change crops every year to avoid pests and allow soil to recover.
- Remove all weeds regularly.
- Increase soil fertility through adding compost.
- Prepare early, complete activities on time, and maintain a high standard of work.

*'It is He who sends down rain from the sky; from it is drink and from it is foliage in which you pasture [animals].'*

– An-Nahl 10