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AFRICA/ZAMBIA - Agricultural Training Centre in Kasisi helps farmers to improve their living conditions

Lusaka (Agenzia Fides) - Located about 300 km northeast of the capital, Lusaka, the Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC), run by the Society of Jesus, has been concerned for decades to improving the living conditions of farmers through research, training and development of local strategies for an organic and sustainable agriculture. Born in 1974, it began offering a two-year course on conventional farming techniques, then in 1990 started teaching organic and sustainable agricultural techniques. According to information sent to Agenzia Fides by the General Curia of the Jesuits, today there are many KATC courses: three, five day courses to two weeks, residential courses, in companies and study seminars. Farming techniques are taught that do not require the use of fertilizers and pesticides, which require a low intake of water. The benefits are obvious: not only harmful fertilizers and pesticides are expensive, a simple farmer cannot easily afford them. In addition, the tanks with water reserves are drying up.
After 35 years of "attempts and mistakes", KATC members have become pioneers in the knowledge of sustainable agriculture and simple development tools, inexpensive but effective for small-scale farming. Not only local farmers attend these courses but also farmers in neighboring countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe. The language used is English and the local language, but since seven main languages are spoken in Zambia, courses are also a vehicle for integration. The center, which assists some 1,200 small farmers through a staff of 20 specialists in different fields, is run thanks to donations but unfortunately become increasingly scarce. For this reason it has developed units of production and started to breed animals selling the milk obtained by a dairy farm, while 80 acres of farmland that we hope to bring to 160 next year is undergoing irrigation. (SL) (Agenzia Fides 24/11/2011)

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