

2024 CIRCULAR BIONUTRIENT ECONOMY NETWORK (CBEN) CONFERENCE

REPORT

Hosted by network members including Cornell University, Poverty and Integrated Health Solutions

Dates: 5pm January 15th- 6pm January 17th, 2024

Location: Kisumu Hotel, Kisumu, Kenya

Summary

The Circular Bionutrient Economy Network (CBEN) hosted its 3rd event as a community of practitioners investigating how to produce biofertilizers from human waste. The annual conference was organized by the CBEN Conference Organizational Committee and aimed to facilitate learning from individuals and organizations across governance, academia, nonprofit, and for-profit industries. By sharing and co-exploring barriers to implementation in each part of the agri-value chain, CBEN furthered its goal of *cementing* a the well-knit “community of practice” in the circular economy industry. The conference was attended by 70 individuals from over 50 organizations representing 14 countries, the majority in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Objectives

- Investigate the agri-value chain of waste collection to processing to fertilizer production, marketing, and sale.
- Bring together ministries, NGOs, for-profit sanitation and fertilizer companies, and research/teaching institutions (universities and research institutions).
 - Demystifying ourselves and our work to each other to work together more easily throughout the waste management and biofertilizer agri-value chain.
 - Learn about key barriers to implementation for each sector.
- Create a social, creative, innovation-spawning environment to act as a foundation for future collaborations.

Traditional Outcomes

- Wider-spread knowledge on carbon markets including carbon-dioxide removal (CDR) market integration, credit pricing, and biochar certification for CDR credits.
- Field visits to Circularity Empowerment Centre (CEC), SaniWise Ltd., Kisumu sewage treatment plant (KIWASCO), and Fresh Life production facility
- Keynote presentations from key economists, scientists, and policy-players
- Player mapping of the Circular Bionutrient Economy in East Africa
- Industry product exhibitions
- Initial working group formation for the following themes: Carbon market integration; Regional biochar market expansion; Regional laboratory services for biofertilizer products; International CBE standards; CBEN pathways in Ethiopia

Non-traditional Outcomes

While the conference had many traditional outcomes, some of the most-noteworthy results included non-traditional social practices and key moments of connection. CBEN strives to be a foundation for collaboration, innovation, and biological r(evolution) in the sanitation and agricultural industries. To meet these goals, the network aims to meet current needs of its members with less focus on preset deliverables. Long-standing comfortable connection is a key characteristic the network uses to uphold these values and often requires further programming than solely keynotes and conference seminars.

This year, CBEN organized their conference as an 8-person organizational committee that invited members to group into 5 host session groups to formulate each session under the vision by members who were likely to engage the most from in topic. The team-solidification in the months leading up to the conference allowed for deeper connections in-person.

Artist and movement teacher, James Mweu, taught yoga classes each morning as well as trust-oriented movement activities that brought colleagues and friendly industry competitors together in-between session and the second evening. James was joined by a handful of other artist in attendance, diversifying the knowledge set in workshoping activities, field visits, and discussions about shifting social norms, policy, standardization, and more.



Inés and Samuel, CEOs of Kenya's two largest biochar companies paired up in an evening trust and professional intimacy exercise.



The Carbon Markets Session Role-Play Activity to demystify the Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) Market in the Global South, from small to large-scale production. See website for full video.



Wednesday morning yoga crew (6am!)