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New technology brings hope to Africa's deserts

By Jairo Jura

People living in dry lands may soon have crops growing in the arid areas if a new technology is adopted.

After 20 years of research, Prof Willem van Cotthem from University of Ghent, Belgium has successfully discovered a specialised, non-toxic, granular and powdery soil conditioner, which mixes easily with other soil particles while enriching soil-barrenness with adequate properties that make dry lands productive agriculturally.

"This technology is ideal and working. I have tested it in the Sahel region, Senegal, Niger, Togo and Cape Verde among others," says the don. He adds: "It is demeaning to lose human life through hunger and poverty in the modern world."

Farmers can now warm up to this good news. Referred to as Terracottem, the product, which was born out of an idea of how diapers-technology suspends urine when a child is wrapped in it, will change the whole concept of aridity in relation to agriculture as it will create a new 'Garden of Eden', full of lush green plants and crops, out of the deserts of Kalahari, Sahara, Sierra-Nevada, or the desiccated lands of Egypt, Middle-East and Arabian Peninsula.

With worrying world food insecurity, this technology may help combat hunger and poverty, which should be halved by 2015 as projected in the Millennium Development Goals.

According to Food and Agriculture Organisation, there is looming famine in Ethiopia that is putting more than 13 million at risk of starvation this year. Some parts of Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan are among other places facing the same calamity.

No doubt it will restore hope in Africa, which was surpassed by the Green Revolution that catapulted Asia into one of the strongest agricultural giants in the world during the second last century.†

Each year, it is not uncommon to see wretched, little skinny and hungry children strapped helplessly on the back of their starving and malnourished mothers in Africa's arid areas. This may soon be a thing of the past if the technology is to succeed.
