When it comes to agroecological enterprise or even agro enterprise as a whole, African youth rarely feature at the frontline. That’s what makes an organisation like Association of Young Farmers of Casamance in Senegal extremely unique. Not only are they bucking the trend and embracing agriculture as an economic activity, but they are also concerned about farming organically and sustainably.

The young farmers of Casamance are using agroecological practices to cultivate popular, local staples like rice. Giving the population in the region an alternative of healthy grain grown without any harmful chemicals. They are also practicing and demonstrating market gardening, arboriculture, reforestation and establishing organic farmer markets. On a small scale, the young farmers also process and pack locally grown fruit and vegetables.

The association was founded to find ways to sustainably develop family farms in rural Senegal, specifically in Ziguinchor. It was also aimed at supporting young agricultural producers in environmentally sustainable development. The area of operation has since expanded to include young farmers in Sedhiou and Kolda.

A major challenge for farming in the fertile soils of Ziguinchor, organic or otherwise is pest control. It’s more challenging for farmers looking to avoid chemical pesticides all together. The young farmers begun by creating organic preventative treatments with locally sourced materials. They use these treatments to grow potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets and radishes. The youth have also developed organic soil treatment for the control of nematodes in their plots and a technique for manufacturing organic, fermented fertilizer.

Away from the farm, the group members are learning value addition of their now abundant organically grown produce. For example, they received trainings on vegetable broth manufacturing processing and packaging techniques, intended to inspire new ways of marketing their vegetables.

Young Farmers of Casamance is achieving a farming revolution in Kadio district. But they are not doing it alone. The association has worked and continues to work with non-governmental organisations, councils working to improve rural livelihoods, agroecology foundations and existing farmers movements.