

Low-Cost Biochar Application in Tanzania Shows Astounding Increases

[Nick Brown](#) | July 18, 2017

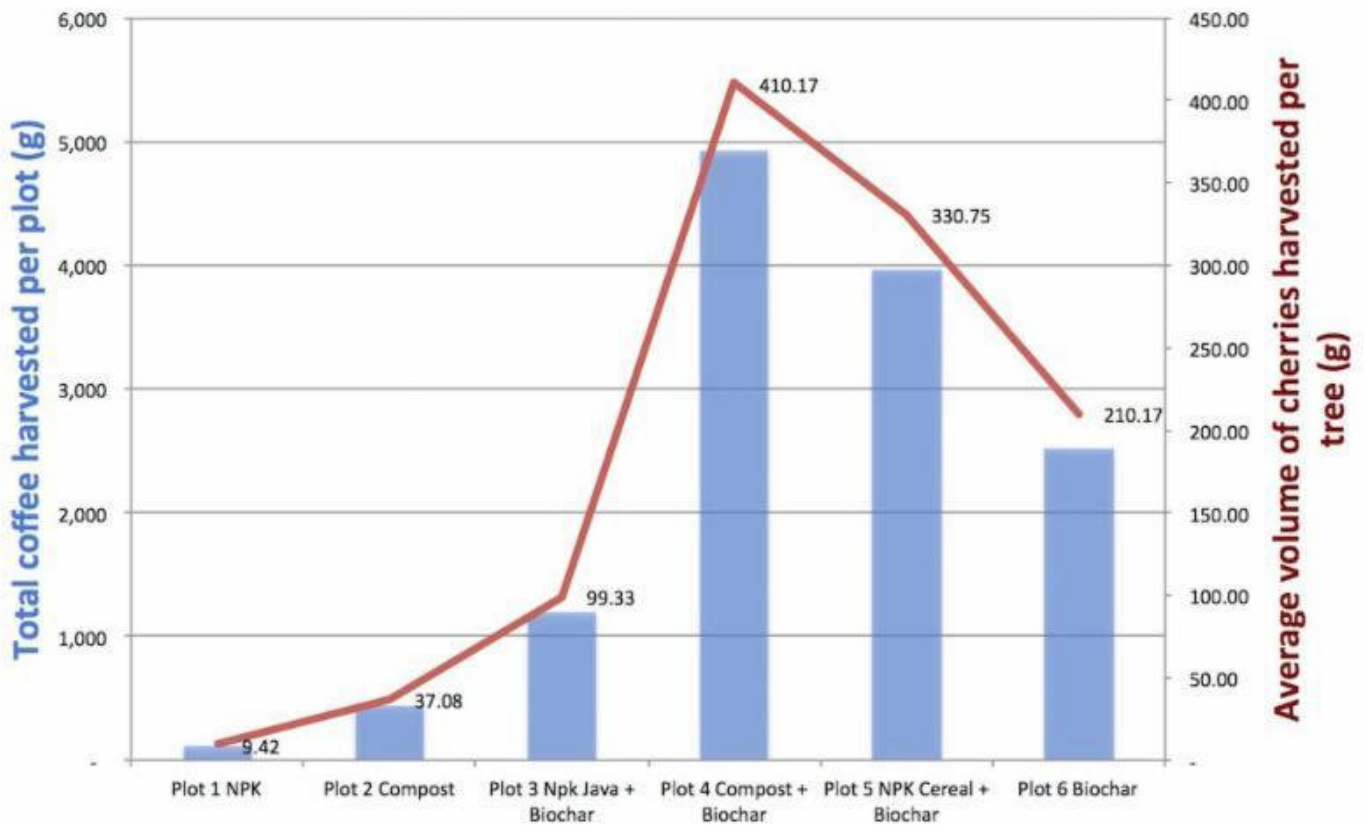


A biochar application as part of the Black Earth Project in Tanzania. All images courtesy of Radio Lifeline.

Since the nonprofit [Radio Lifeline](#) launched its Black Earth Project in 2012 — involving [the use of biochar as a soil amendment for coffee](#) — the returns have been overwhelmingly positive, showing dramatically increased yields and improved quality at test sites in Rwanda, and now Tanzania.

The first round of harvests on test plots in Tanzania — conducted in coordination with local project partners [Tembo](#) and [MIICO](#) — were recorded last month, and Radio Lifeline recently reported astounding results. Plots treated with biochar resulted in 10 to 43 times more cherry production volume than a plot treated with traditional NPK fertilizer treatments alone.

1st harvest round - June 2017



Production volumes from test sites in Tanzania. Graphic courtesy of Radio Lifeline.

Additionally, a comparison cupping completed yesterday at the Tembo Coffee lab in Mbeya resulted in higher quality scores between the treated and non-treated coffees, with those resulting from some combination of biochar and other organic matter scoring at an average of 83 on the SCA scale, and those treated with traditional NPK fertilizers scoring at 81.

“It should be noted that the Tanzania trials were carried out under less than ideal conditions,” Radio Lifeline said in a recent announcement of the results, noting that late rains, hail storms and coffee berry disease outbreaks affected the region. “These results reflect only the first round of the harvest season – we will compile more complete data once the season has ended.”

Despite potential anomalies from the natural conditions, the Tanzania results followed similarly promising results in the project’s initial test sites in Rwanda, where 33 percent volume increases were shown among those plants feeding off biochar.