The International Centre for Underutilised Crops

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Dear colleagues,
A bumper issue, with thanks especially to the FAO's monthly NWFP-Digest for a good number of underutilised crops stories in the publications and information section, along with many more entries gleaned, as usual, from a variety of sources. There is a concentration of articles in this issue on wild and medicinal plants, with a report on a new foundation, a 'set' of three articles (3.5-3.7) covering problems related to harvesting of wild plants in Namibia and Brazil, and possible ways forward, and another set of three on medicinal plants (3.12-3.15) from other countries who may be wise to heed the earlier stories. This newsletter maintains the same format for now, notwithstanding results of the survey in #75. However, there is a detailed request for information and collaboration in the network section, and more of you may wish to you use this newsletter in a similar way as a platform for sharing information, asking for assistance, etc. Also, discussions continue, and so any further comments on the format and content of the ICUC website or newsletter would still be most appreciated. It'll only take a minute, let your opinion be heard, drop me a line….

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With best wishes,
Nick

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1. Funding & Job opportunities
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1.1. Recruiting Women's Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, ICRAF

The World Agroforestry Centre recognises the value of developing a diverse and strong pool of research scientists, both for strengthening its own institute and for the increasing needs of the developing world. Whilst the overall low numbers of people entering or retaining research as a career provoke concern, what is more worrying is the gender imbalance. In many countries, fewer than 20% of science positions are held by women and interview application ratios are similarly low. To help address this imbalance the World Agroforestry Centre is establishing a Women's Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Programme, with guidance from the CGIAR Gender & Diversity Programme. The launch of this new Fellowship Programme coincides with International Women's Day to demonstrate our commitment to recognise and advance gender balance and equity.

In order to provide immediate opportunities to women entering research and to retain women who have initially chosen research as a vocation, the World Agroforestry Centre is in the first instance committing US$300,000 annually from its modest core budget to launch the scheme. It is anticipated that this amount will allow 4-6 fellows to come on board in year 1 as well as leverage additional future investment and interest.

Scope of the Programme
Women postgraduates are expected to hold a Doctoral degree in a field related to agriculture, agroforestry, biodiversity, biometrics, capacity building, climate change, ecology, economics, environmental policy, forestry, genetic resources, geography, hydrology, impact assessment, institutional strengthening, land degradation, marketing, natural products, natural resource management, or sociology.

Women Fellows under the programme may propose various arrangements to be engaged with the World Agroforestry Centre including secondment from their current institutes, job-sharing, regular employment contract at our headquarters or regular contract at one of our five regional centres. The minimum term for employment is two years. We also want to contribute to development of national research institutes and so willingly support "leave without pay" arrangements, as well as topics of mutual interest between ICRAF and the NARI.

Women Fellows will be assigned a senior scientific supervisor, and be a member of one or more Global Research Project or Regional Teams at ICRAF. Women Fellows will be expected to undertake an approved research study which will include publishing of their results and presentation at international fora. The request from the programme for each Fellow should cover salary, benefits, transport, women's leadership courses, computing needs, office needs, travel and research expenses.

Whilst candidates will not be excluded on the basis of age or nationality, a preference will be given to applicants below the age of forty five years and those from developing and/or investor countries.

Process for application
Interested applicants are encouraged to apply through one of our five Regional Coordinators (RCs) or six Global Research Project Leaders (GRPLs) identified in the application form. However, applications can also be made via email: icrafhru@cgiar.org. ICRAF is seeking to support both women post-docs from previous interactions as well as new individuals who may help contribute to our new strategy. Applications will be considered throughout the year although the first round will likely be decided by applications received before 4 April 2008.

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1.2. Postdoctoral Fellowship programme

El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (The Research Institution for the South Border of Mexico) (ECOSUR) invites applications for the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program 2009. The call is for recently PhD. graduated researchers interested in collaborating with one of the research lines of the academic divisions of ECOSUR:

- Culture, health and society;
- Biodiversity conservation;

- Alternative production systems.

ECOSUR is a multidisciplinary research center that develops specific topics of research, postgraduate teaching and outreach. The programs of ECOSUR are aimed at the production of scientific knowledge, development of human resources, and the innovation of strategies and technologies that contribute to the sustainable development of the South Border of Mexico.

Arrange in advance a research plan with an ECOSUR host researcher* that fulfils requisites. Each candidate is allowed to apply with only one research host. Send to ceposdoc@ecosur.mx1.the following documents in pdf format (maximum file size is 1 MB):

- Letter of interest
- Letter from the host researcher (Form 1), to obtain visit www.ecosur.mx/posdoc.html
- Research project containing research protocol, plan and product goals.
- Curriculum Vitae and relevant backup documentation.
- Two letters of recommendation from researchers.
- PhD diploma or dissertation approval document .

Application deadline: 11 November 2008. Notification of the selection results: 19 November 2008.
For further information visit: http://www.ecosur.mx/investigacion/investigacion.html, or email: ceposdoc@ecosur.mx

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1.3. Communications and Outreach Manager, Ecoagriculture Partners

Ecoagriculture Partners (www.ecoagriculture.org) is a small but rapidly-growing international non-profit organization working to facilitate landscape management approaches that simultaneously enhance food security, support rural livelihoods and conserve the environment. EP seeks a Communications and Outreach Manager to join our committed team by January/February 2009, based in Washington DC.
The Communications & Outreach Manager will:
• Support staff in program-specific outreach activities;
• Edit EP reports, publication, and outreach materials;
• Manage content for the EP website, and manage and expand the EP listserv;
• Maintain information database and manage communications linkages with partners and donors;
• Organize outreach program events;
• Support donor relations and fund-raising efforts;
• Prepare and distribute press briefings and other media materials;
• Raise awareness of ecoagriculture potentials and EP activities among diverse agriculture, conservation, public and other sectors;
• Support staff in the use of knowledge management tools;
• Work with Senior Leadership Team to develop an outreach strategy for the organization;
• Supervise program assistant and interns.

Required:
• Excellent English writing and editing skills;
• Fluency in reading and speaking Spanish;
• At least five years of relevant experience in communications and outreach;
• Bachelor's degree with excellent record;
• Relevant experience in outreach through media or public relations
• Highly organized, with attention to detail;
• Proactive, flexible and creative;
• Legal resident of the United States.

Desirable:
• Experience in cross-cultural communications;
• Experience and competence in working in diverse teams;
• Education and experience in international affairs relevant to ecoagriculture (e.g., agriculture, conservation, economics, policy, development); MA/Msc
• Experience with software related to publishing, graphics, design, databases, electronic communications
• Fluency in other international languages.

Salary and benefits:
• $45,000-60,000/year, depending upon experience;
• Health and retirement benefits, insurance, 20 days vacation, holidays.

Please send your C.V., indicating your background and experience related to communications and public relations, two writing samples (maximum of five pages each), and names and contact information for three references in an email with subject line 'Communications and Outreach Manager' by:
21 November 2008 to Ariela Summit, asummit@ecoagriculture.org.
http://www.ecoagriculture.org/employment.php?id=158

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1.4. Communications Director, Bioversity International
Maccarese, Rome, Italy, closing Date: 14 November 2008

Bioversity International is the world's largest organization researching agricultural biodiversity and we strongly believe that agricultural biodiversity can provide key contributions to solutions for global issues related to climate change, food crisis, and environmental degradation. We undertake, encourage and support research and other activities aimed at improving the well being of present and future generations of people by enhancing conservation and the deployment of agricultural biodiversity on farms and in forests, with special emphasis on the needs of developing countries. The organization is active in over 100 countries worldwide, and has more than 300 staff working from some 20 country offices. It is one of 15 centres supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Bioversity International is now seeking a Communications Director.

This is a unique opportunity for a dynamic and creative Communications Director to be part of a vibrant organization and to play a lead role in raising the international profile of Bioversity International by providing strategic leadership in the communication and marketing activities of Bioversity, to influence the opinions and behaviour of different stakeholders, such as donors, opinion leaders, the scientific community, the environmental and poverty reduction communities, and the general public. The Communications Director's key responsibilities will cover the areas of Public Awareness, Media and Public Relations and Information Management and Marketing. The position is based at Bioversity's Headquarters near Rome, Italy. Reporting directly to the Director General and being a member of the Senior Management Team, the Communications Director will coordinate a team of approximately 20 staff and will have the following specific responsibilities:

- Take leadership in the development and implementation of a marketing and communications strategy that delivers an integrated set of messages related to Bioversity's core areas of operation to key target groups.
- Provide advice and assistance to management and staff on policies, procedures and innovative approaches concerning all aspects of communications and knowledge management.
- Closely interact with the Assistant Director General to assist with developing marketing and communication strategies for fundraising purposes.
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with relevant media to maximize opportunities for effective coverage of Bioversity's work.
- Lead and undertake initiatives for Bioversity's scientific research results to be accessible and applicable.
- Further develop an organization wide information and knowledge management systems.
- Develop and maintain collaborative and effective relationships with Bioversity staff to assist them stay abreast of latest developments and key activities that provide opportunities for effective communication.
- Contribute to enhancing internal communications within Bioversity by advising management on using innovative mechanisms and developing appropriate messaging and processes to maximize effectiveness of communication.
- Lead and motivate the communications team and manage the budget and organization of the area. This includes the units: Public Awareness, Media and Public Relations, and Information Management and Marketing – encompassing the functional areas of publications, library, information management systems, branding, website, IT and ICT.
- Contribute to the overall functioning of senior management at Bioversity.
- Experience Required
- Advanced degree in marketing, communication, journalism or related field, with excellent understanding of science communication. Alternatively, a degree in science with formal training in journalism, communications or marketing.
- At least 10 years of progressively responsible experience in marketing or communications work, including experience at senior level in international, not-for-profit organization.

- Good understanding of issues relating to agricultural research and development and how it relates to climate change, food security and environmental degradation.
- Strong strategic thinker.
- Fully conversant in the use of new technologies for communications and outreach, including the web and multimedia tools.
- Superior interpersonal and relationship management skills.
- Superior communications skills in both spoken and written forms.
- Ability to effectively interact with people at all levels in a multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary environment.
- Values the sharing of information and continuous improvement in a cooperative atmosphere of constructive evaluation and learning, and is committed to staff's development.
- Fluency in English; proficiency in other major international languages is strongly desirable.

Salary Benefits
This is an internationally recruited position for which Bioversity International offers an attractive remuneration package including a competitive salary, non-contributory retirement plan, medical insurance and leave provisions. All benefits are denominated and paid in US Dollars. The initial contract will be for a period of three years subject to a probationary period of one year.

A letter of application and curriculum vitae in English, with names and full contact details of at least three referees, including telephone, fax and email address, should be sent to the Human Resources Unit, Bioversity International, Via dei Tre Denari 472/a, 00057 Maccarese, Rome, Italy, fax +39 066118341 or preferably online at bioversityvacancy@cgiar.org by 14 November 2008. Please quote source of advertisement. For further information on Bioversity International, consult the Web page at http://www.bioversityinternational.org

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2. Workshops & Training Courses
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2.1. Project Management and Livelihood Interventions training course, India
7-9 November 2008, TARAgram, Appropriate Technology Centre, Orchha, Madhya Pradesh, India.

India needs to generate at least 10 million new livelihood opportunities a year over the next 15 years to sustain its economy. This is easier said than done. With the changes that are taking place in the external world, there has been a paradigm shift in the job/livelihood market. Poverty is no longer a rural phenomenon and increasingly we find attention being focused on urban poor who are often the migrants. One also notices an increasing shift from agriculture to manufacturing and services sector. It is expected that traditional sources such as agriculture will have limited potential to generate new livelihoods. Promoting livelihood in such a situation remains a challenge. Organizations need to develop ability to conceptualize appropriate livelihood interventions. They also need understanding of socio-political environment, markets and technical systems. Micro finance has emerged as a major tool to address the issue of access to financial resources for the poor especially women. Credit is a major bottleneck and if that is taken care of then it certainly has a positive impact on the livelihoods of the people. The challenge is are the organizations engaged in micro finance ready to face the next which is augmenting livelihoods of the poor.
This programme seeks to impart knowledge and skills on the tools and techniques used for identification, selection, preparation and appraisal of livelihood projects, their implementation and monitoring & control.
The programme objective is to enable participants to,
1. Develop an understanding about identifying a livelihood intervention project
2. Understand various project management tools

Programme Outcome: At the end of the three day programme, the participants are expected to have,
1. Learnt process and tools that can be used to identify livelihood intervention opportunities in farm and non farm sector
2. Developed ability to design a livelihood project around livelihood as thematic area, and
3. Learnt various project management tools

This module has been designed as a participatory programme that would build-upon the experiential learning of participants. The pedagogy focuses on interactive group learning and aims both at

knowledge development and skill up gradation through peer learning. Case Studies, readings and reflection are an important component of the programme.

The programme is meant for Civil Society Leaders and Project managers who are engaged in livelihood promotion initiatives. The training will be for a period of 3 days. INR 10,000 per participant for Indian Participants, INR 18,000 (450 USD) for Overseas Participants, which covers accommodation, food, course materials and the leisure trip to the famous Orchha Temples and Fort. To ensure your participation, we request you to send the nomination form (Down load the registration form by clicking on the link given below) and the course fee (non-refundable) by 5 November 2008.
http://www.devalt.org/da/isb/tsu/form.htm

If you have any queries or suggestions for the training or nominations, please contact the following:

Madhuban Pandey, Executive Training
Juhi Nigam, Training Assistant
Jhansi (UP)
Tele. No: - + 91 510 2911 368, +91 972 1754 958, +91 983 9820 689,
E-mail: tla@devalt.org

Bhavana Gadre
Manager Trainings
New Delhi
Tele. No: 011-26132718
Email Id: bgadre@devalt.org

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2.2. Distance learning course - Urban Agriculture Types
Urban agriculture is increasingly being considered as a strategy for building more resilient cities. Triggered by the current global food and economic crisis, governments and civil society organizations are promoting its development to enhance urban food security and health, alleviate poverty and strengthen urban livelihoods, support community building, contribute to urban environmental management and greening, and provide educational and recreational services.

Urban Agriculture is a dynamic concept that involves input supply, production, agro-processing and marketing of food and non-food products in and around urban areas. Successful policies and action programmes should take into account the variation in types of urban farming, each with their own characteristics and specific potentials and limitations vis-à-vis the realization of certain policy goals.

The course “Urban Agriculture Types” is the third course in a series of 4 courses developed by Ryerson University’s G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education and Centre for Studies in Food Security (www.ryerson.ca/foodsecurity) in partnership with ETC-Urban Agriculture (www.etc-urbanagriculture.org) and the international network of Resource centres on Urban Agriculture and Food security (RUAF) (www.ruaf.org). This specific course will start discussing various urban agriculture production systems -such as home-gardening, community gardening, school and institutional gardens, small-scale commercial horticulture, livestock or aquatic production, large-scale (peri)urban agriculture enterprises, urban forestry and multi-functional farms - in terms of their resource-use, location, policy and institutional frameworks, functions, technical aspects, development challenges and support needs. Moreover, it will look into urban agriculture input supply, processing and marketing systems. The course will discuss which of these urban agriculture types can best be promoted in a given situation, where in the city, and how this could best be done. It will specifically look into a methodology for farmer-centered learning, research and extension for urban agriculture development. Examples and case studies from around the world will be used for further illustration and learning.

The course fees amount to Canadian dollars (CAD) $474. This fee applies both for Canadian and international students. January-April 2009. For further information on course content and enrolment, please contact:

Reg Noble, PhD
Academic Coordinator
Certificate in Food Security
Continuing Education, Ryerson University

Email: food@ryerson.ca

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3. Publications & Information
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3.1. New Crops and Uses: Their Role in a Rapidly Changing World
Smartt J, Haq N. 2008. New Crops and Uses: Their Role in a Rapidly Changing World. Proceedings of the International Symposium, New Crops and Uses: Their role in a rapidly changing world, 3-4 September 2007, the University of Southampton, UK. Centre for Underutilised Crops, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK. 473pp.

This extensive collection of papers from last year's symposium is now available on the ICUC website, though be warned, it is a large volume, some 13MB in size and may take some time to download. http://www.icuc-iwmi.org/files/Publications/New_Crops_and_Uses_Their_Role_in_a_Rapidly_Changing_World%20-smaller.pdf

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3.2. New foundation to promote sustainable collection of wild plants
An important agreement was signed on 9 October 2008 in Barcelona, Spain, between the four founding institutions of the International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISSC-MAP) to endorse global implementation of the standard through the FairWild Foundation. ISSC-MAP is a standard that promotes appropriate management of wild plant populations used in medicines and cosmetics to ensure they are not over-exploited. Under the new agreement, the FairWild Foundation will help develop an industry labelling system so products harvested using the sustainable ISSC-MAP criteria can be readily recognised and certified. Use of the standard will be promoted throughout the herbal products industry. ISSC-MAP was developed by a partnership including the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), the IUCN SSC Medicinal Plant Specialist Group (MPSG), WWF-Germany, and TRAFFIC, plus industry associations, companies, certifiers and community-based NGOs. The announcement was made at the World Conservation Congress, Barcelona.

"This new agreement marks a significant step forward in the sustainable use of wild plants important to human health and well being. Industry adoption of the standard will ensure sustainable use and equitable sharing of the world's wild plant resources, reinforcing the healthy environments, healthy people theme running throughout the World Conservation Congress," said IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre signing the agreement on behalf of IUCN.

"A successful wild plant collection standard is essential to ensure sustainable use of medicinal plants not only for purposes of nature conservation but also in a social and economic context. Germany, as one of the major medicinal plant importers worldwide has a special responsibility of acting upon such principles," said Professor Beate Jessel, President of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation.

More than 400,000 tonnes of medicinal and aromatic plants are traded annually, with around 80% of the species harvested from the wild. Almost 3,000 species are traded, many of them over-exploited and in danger of extinction through over-collection and habitat loss. Implementation of the standard will stop more plants being over-exploited and becoming threatened with extinction under IUCN's Red List criteria.

"Worldwide, people depend on medicinal plants and profit from the unique therapeutic effects of medicine from nature's pharmacy," said Guillermo Castilleja, Executive Director of Conservation, WWF. "This new agreement is a significant step forward in ensuring the long-term sustainability and supply of these invaluable natural products."

"Over-harvesting of wild plants is a serious, yet often neglected issue. This timely agreement is a milestone on the road to seeing sustainability become the norm throughout the herbal products industry" said Steven Broad, Executive Director of TRAFFIC.

For more information, please contact: Richard Thomas, TRAFFIC International, richard.thomas@traffic.org.
http://www.traffic.org/home/2008/10/8/new-foundation-to-promote-sustainable-collection-of-wild-pla.html

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3.3. New project to improve local fruit production in Tonga
A recent scoping study (2006/7) funded by Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) in Tonga found that, given the current low levels of production and the domination of the current industry by subsistence and part-time growers, there is significant scope to increase the production of the Tongan fruit industry, and to increase household income levels. The outcomes from this study were used to formulate a follow-up project of three years' duration "Tongan Tropical Fruit Production – Improving Genetic Diversity and Production Capacity Building" funded by ACIAR. A planning workshop is being conducted at Vaini Research Station, Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Fisheries. (MAFFF) to officially launch this project, which is a collaborative effort between MAFFF and SPC Land Resources Division (Genetic Resources and Information, Communication and Extension Teams). Expert advice on tropical fruit trees will be provided by Roger Goebels, who has extensive experience in the propagation and cultural management of tropical fruit tree species. Participants at the workshop will represent the public and private sector, civil society and the relevant sectors, such as agriculture, women, health, education, youth and tourism.

The tropical fruit project aims to increase the production, productivity and technical capacity of the Tongan tropical fruits industry with an emphasis on the local market. Specifically, the project will help improve genetic diversity and build capacity of local farmers and agricultural staff in production techniques, postharvest technologies, and marketing of local fresh fruits. Marketing of local fruits will require promoting the health benefits of fruit consumption, which will in turn strengthen the agriculture, health and nutrition linkage. Increased fruit consumption will contribute to a healthier population. In the light of recent concerns about global food prices the small island countries of the Pacific have to increase and improve local food production systems, so that they become less reliant on imported foodstuffs. This project will make a significant contribution to local food production, thereby strengthening food security and self-reliance.

For more information, please contact Dr Mary Taylor at MaryT@spc.int. & Dr. Viliami Manu MAFFF Tonga (mafsoils@kalianet.to)

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3.4. Lac wax shield set for business debut - Technology to increase shelf life of fruits
Ranchi: Scientists in the state have discovered an eco-friendly and economic preservative — lac wax coating — to use for commercial purposes. "We were aware of the fact that lac wax coating on fruits could help preserve them for long, but now we are planning to use the technology for commercial purpose," said K.K. Sharma, principal scientist at the Indian Institute of Natural Resins and Gums. The annual lac production in India is around 25,000 tonnes of which the state's share is about 40 percent, Sharma added. Till now, the produce of the state was being used mainly to manufacture electrical insulators and dye-fixtures, Sharma added.

Lac is a natural polymer derived from insects and it has high adhesive strength. It has high electrical insulation, is waterproof and resistant to moisture and corrosion. It is also highly plastic. The institute has been conducting research on lac since 1930 and has earned a worldwide reputation on the subject. "We have found that shelf life of certain fruits and vegetables could be increased by three months using a thin coating of lac wax," said Sharma.

Research on fruits such as apple and orange and vegetables such as pointed gourd and capsicum have given encouraging results, the scientist said. "The lac wax coating allows the oxygen to pass but prevents water and moisture permeability to keep the fruits fresh," said Sharma, adding that a thick coating of lac wax could result in fermentation. To develop a flawless technology of wax coating, the institute has recently tied up with the Central Institute of Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology, Ludhiana. The scientists here are also going to do a collaborative research on lac with Nabard to improve its production. "Some of our scientists have undergone training in Vietnam and China in lac cultivation," Sharma said.

Calcutta Telegraph, India, 25 September 2008,
www.telegraphindia.com/1080926/jsp/jharkhand/story_9888814.jsp

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3.5. Devil's claw: San devil's claw is an international hit
Conservancies produce 95% of global trade in the plant San communities from the Nyae Nyae and Nâ‰ a-Jaqna conservancies generated more than N$400 000 during 2007 from the harvesting and sale of plant products. Similar or even better results are expected for 2008, as more than 1 000 harvesters are registered in both conservancies, researcher Dave Cole said recently.

In a paper titled 'Botanical resources increasingly contributing to income generation for conservancies and its members' issued last month, Cole indicated that to date, conservancies had collected an income of N$288 561, with several more months of harvesting to go. The Nyae Nyae Conservancy was formed in 1998, and the Nâ‰ a-Jaqna Conservancy in 2003.

The medicinal value of Devil's Claw (*Harpagophytum*) for the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis and other ailments of this type has been recognised by "Western medicine" only in the last 50 years. The first major exports from Namibia started in the early 1960s, and today the country is the largest exporter in the world, accounting for about 95 percent of the trade. Namibia currently exports on average about 400 tons of dried Devil's Claw per year, which represents a significant income for the country.

According to Cole, up until recently, Devil's Claw was harvested and traded but was characterized by unsustainable harvesting practices, exploitative prices paid to harvesters, and inferior quality. However, in the last two years, funding from the Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management Project and the US Agency for International Development, as well as the Life for Relief and Development programmes, have enabled the Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation Namibia to work with the Centre for Research Information Action in Africa, Southern Africa Development and Consulting and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to implement a sustainable harvesting programme, benefiting both the conservancies and individual harvesters.

Harvesters are now organised into groups, and receive training on sustainable harvesting and processing by using appropriate equipment and have a purchase contract with a solid buyer. Ecoso Dynamics, owned by Gero Diekmann, makes regular buying trips to both conservancies. It provides a small shopping service to harvesters who live far from any shops, and where transport is severely lacking. Organic certification allows for the product to be traced back to the area in which it was harvested, and by whom. The costs of covering the expenses related to organic certification have also been made provision for, and the conservancies will be able to cover these costs themselves in the future.

Added Cole: "Not only do harvesters benefit from cash income, but the organised harvesting and sale of Devil's Claw in these conservancies also contributes to empowering people to develop a sense of ownership and to take responsibility for the management of their resources. Clearly, however, given the extent of poverty in rural areas, the challenge is to identify additional products that can also contribute to income generation in these conservancies." Meanwhile, Maria Shikongo said on behalf of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy that many Namibians lack awareness of the San people in terms of the challenges ahead of them and ways of integrating the San into conservancies and community forests.

The Namibian (Windhoek), 10 September 2008. http://allafrica.com/stories/200809100678.html

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3.6. Hoodia – another underutilised Namibian plant in the news
Seeds of Namibia's *Hoodia gordonii* plant have been exported clandestinely to foreign countries, a Swapo MP claimed in the National Council last week. However, Willem Appollus said the seeds did not grow in those foreign countries. Speaking during debate on the third reading of the Plant Quarantine Bill in the National Council, Appollus said Namibia should protect its flora and fauna. Hoodia is a succulent plant found in parts of southern Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. The *Hoodia gordonii* species is now in high demand in the US and Europe because of its appetite-suppressing qualities.

The plant is listed on Appendix II of the United Nations Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) – a list of species that are not currently endangered but are at risk if trade in them is not controlled. Swapo's Bartholomeus Shangheta said many of the legal frameworks for exporting and importing plant products are outdated and no longer match the economic realities and challenges that Namibia is facing today. Therefore, he said, it is high time that these instruments are replaced with ones that will help Namibia address new challenges. Namibia has ratified a number of international agreements such as the International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and should abide by them, he pointed out.

The Namibian (Windhoek), 15 September 2008. http://allafrica.com/stories/200809151147.html

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3.7. Acai has gone from staple of the Amazon to global wonder-berry
Belem, Brazil. A frenzy overtakes the teeming harbor here as a wooden-hulled riverboat chugs into port. "It's here!" cries an expectant buyer, one of many shoving his way toward the craft in a sweaty mercantile crush. "The gold! The purple gold!" The cargo is acai (pronounced ah-sigh-EE), the unassuming fruit of a jungle palm that has gone from Amazonian staple to global wonder-berry: a much-hyped ingredient in smoothies, sorbets, nutrition bars and countless trendy treats from L.A. to London to Tokyo. Acai's cachet derives not only from the berry's antioxidant traits and supposed Viagra-like powers of vitality, but from its green pedigree: It has been acclaimed as a renewable resource that provides a sustainable livelihood for tens of thousands of subsistence harvesters without damaging the expanses of the Amazon. Because of acai, the jungle is more valuable standing than felled.

With acai a global sensation, however, some fear the berry's runaway success may spell trouble for the rainforest – a prospect that dismays even the Southern California brothers who are credited with launching the craze in the U.S. International conglomerates are elbowing their way into the acai trade, while traditional cultivators are intensifying production at the expense of other trees. Conservationists worry that acai could succumb to the destructive agribusiness model: clear-cut lands, sprawling plantations and liberal application of pesticides and fertilizer. There's a kind of 'green deforestation' to plant acai," says Alfredo Homma, agronomist with the Brazilian Company for Agricultural Research, a publicly funded institute. "They don't bring down all the trees and leave the area deforested. They bring down diverse forests and replace them with one single culture – acai."

In the stifling Amazon delta, acai is less a hip superfood than a poor man's staple: Downtown Belem even features an acai drive-in. Many people here eat acai every day, typically as an accompaniment to river fish or sprinkled with toasted cassava, a widely consumed tuber. Fresh acai, served at room temperature, is a tart, earthier version of the frozen, pasteurized and inevitably sweetened incarnation marketed abroad. "It makes you grow," says Vital Vieira, who owns one of the many retail storefronts where acai berries are shelled, separating the large, inedible seed from the prized pulp and purple skin.

The slender acai palm typically thrives on the margins of the forest -- along rivers and streams, where some sunlight filters through the canopy. For generations, men such as Domingos Bravo Rosa have harvested the berry in the dense forests across the river from downtown Belem, a onetime rubber boomtown that is now the capital of the Amazonian state of Para. "We don't destroy the forest," says Rosa, 44, a lifetime acai harvester like his father before him, as he maneuvers his boat to his home on nearby Combu island. Rosa knows where to find the acai; a single palm is often hidden among a score or more of other trees. He hires two harvesters, who must shimmy up and down palms sometimes 60 feet or more in height, a dangerous job.

A different model of acai harvesting is found on neighboring Murutucu island. Here, Ben-Hur Borges, a forest engineer turned acai entrepreneur, proudly displays the 1,350 acres of elegant groves that supply his firm, Amazon Fruit, a major exporter of acai to the United States and Europe. The rows of acai trees stand in sharp contrast to the occasional palms that Rosa and others seek out in the jungle. Here, small rail cars carry harvested acai on wooden tracks to Amazon Fruit's processing and freezing plant. The sprawling plantation resembles the kind of acai "mono-culture" that is anathema to conservationists. But Borges argues that his success demonstrates how more than one version of acai production can thrive, with both environmental and social benefits. He says his hard work draining and reshaping the island brought back a "degraded" forest -- the fate of much of the Amazon, which has been ravaged by loggers, developers and cattle ranchers.

Acai might not be such a global sensation today were it not for a pair of Southern California brothers, Ryan and Jeremy Black, who co-founded Sambazon, based in San Clemente. The company now boasts sales of $25 million a year in juices, powders and other acai products. But it all started with a surfing trip. This year, Black says, Sambazon plans to process 11,000 tons of acai from its Brazilian production base, making it the world's leading supplier. All of it comes from individuals such as Rosa picking the fruit from wild acai palms, according to the Black brothers, who have won praise internationally as "green" business pioneers. "The whole idea is to protect the biodiversity of the forest," Ryan Black says. "The idea is not to clear-cut everything on the land and plant acai trees." But a growing concentration of acai plantings amid rising demand has Black worried about a "dangerous cycle": transformation of bio-diverse forests into proliferating stretches of acai palms. That means removing other tree species to make way for acai. His hope is that consumer preference for certified organic acai, picked in the wild, will help preserve the forest and support harvesting families.

Los Angeles Times, USA, 21 September 2008, www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-acai21-2008sep21,0,5946602.story

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3.8. Mulberries hailed as new superfruit

All hail the new superfruit sensation to reach these shores and stand out from the crowd with the highest levels of antioxidants of any red berry fruits. The mulberry, which resembles a raspberry, boasts an impressive nutritional CV outperforming cranberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries. The mulberry's levels of antioxidants are 79% higher than blueberries and 24% more than those found in cranberries. It is packed full of vitamins and fibre and contains high levels of resveratrol, the antioxidant super hero which helps combat heart disease, cancer and helps lower cholesterol and other diseases associated with chronic inflammation.

Amazingly this antioxidant appears to fool cancer cells into believing DNA has already been damaged and so possibly help prevent the spreading of the disease. It's early days but scientists at Harvard University are excited about another insight into how cancer may be tackled. And mulberries can help to keep you fighting fit throughout the winter too - a recent report in the Journal of Infectious Diseases states that resveratrol decreased the reproduction of the influenza virus, in other words it may be useful in preventing or treating the flu.

Easier (press release), UK, 25 September 2008,
www.easier.com/view/Lifestyle/Health_and_Fitness/Diet/article-206316.html

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3.9. Overseas demand for agar oil extract is on the rise

Asia Forestry Management Co (AFM), Thailand's largest agarwood producer, plans to build its brand overseas, aiming for growth at the same blistering pace as Red Bull. AFM founder Chokechai Lavichant aims to follow in the Red Bull founder footsteps by developing a presence in the export rather than domestic market. However, his company's production will be based in Thailand along with its agarwood plantations.

Overseas demand for agar oil extract is already on the rise, especially in the Middle East, where clients will pay almost any price for this oil, considered one of the best for making perfumes and fragrances in cosmetics. Beyond the Middle East, South Asia and Japan are also prominent markets, said Mr Chokechai, who adds that agarwood extract is a luxury product because of its limited availability. Agarwood products are widely known as oud, the term used in the Middle East, where agarwood has been highly prized for centuries. The oil is also a base for fragrance production in Europe and is used in Japan's pharmaceutical industry. Agarwood residue is the main raw material for scented joss sticks. In the global market, premium agar oil extract is priced between 5,000 and 8,000 baht per tora (12cc) or 400,000 to 700,000 baht per litre.

AFM started to build its agarwood plantation four years ago after gathering financial support from private investors. It has just refined the first production of oil from the first crop of its agarwood plantation early this year. Mr Chokechai said AFM has its factory on a 500-rai agarwood plantation in Trat, which it plans to expand to double capacity to 1,000 tora a month. Commercial production of agar was prohibited in Thailand for centuries. The trees that produce the valuable oil remained on a list of protected plants until seven years ago, when the country recognised the product's economic potential.

Since then, agarwood has become an industry. However, plantations require huge capital. "We managed to raise funds from investors last year by offering two options – a return of 21.4% for two years' investment and 168% for four years' investment," said Mr Chokechai. As a result, the company gained its first capital of 20 million baht, which helped it start manufacturing last year. Next year it plans to raise an additional 50 million baht for the next stage.

Mr Chokechai said that in natural conditions, agarwood takes from 10 to 40 years to be productive, and that less than 5% of plants produce oil, depending on soil quality and humidity. But with artificial cultivation oil can be extracted within three years, making the business commercially viable. The company has an agar oil export licence from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which guarantees its production will not cause deforestation. Exim Bank's research division reported that the agarwood industry has risen to an export value of 20 billion baht for Thailand during 2006-07.

Bangkok Post, Thailand, 16 September 2008,
www.bangkokpost.com/160908_Business/16Sep2008_biz39.php

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3.10. Invest in bamboo production, Philippine farmers are told
China is running out of bamboo within five years, opening a huge opportunity for Filipino farmers nationwide to tap the US$8 billion global market for bamboo products. Edgardo Manda, general manager of Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) told regional planners, stakeholders and traders in Davao recently that the Philippines can be the world's second biggest bamboo exporter next to China which is the global top exporter of bamboo products. "Let's take advantage of this opportunity. Soon China will run out of bamboos in five years and will turn to us for help," Manda said. Manda has been going around the country since 2004, enticing hundreds of farmers and big growers to start big plantations of bamboo, noting that the country's bamboo industry has hardly made a dent in the Philippine economy.

Despite the big dollar potentials for the stagnant industry, many farmers and private firms remained cool and unimpressed to the idea of investing so much time and money growing bamboos as a business venture, said Manda who was also a former undersecretary and presidential assistant for Southern Tagalog. The Philippines has only about 52,000 hectares of land planted to bamboos today with hardly any replanting, according to the Philippine Bamboo Foundation (PBF). During the last four years, the PBF have been rallying many towns and provinces nationwide thru Rotary Club meetings in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, to put up commercial bamboo forests or big bamboo plantations.

Full government support for financing and technical help was assured by Manda, if and when organized farmers' groups and agro-industrial firms decide to invest in the commercial farm production of bamboos. Trade Undersecretary Merly Cruz said the export potentials for bamboo-based products like handicrafts, furniture and furnishings in global markets remained strong as ever in developed countries like the US and Europe whose up scale markets are more inclined to go for the exotic, Oriental-type products. Philippine bamboo handicrafts averaged about $368 million while bamboo furniture turns in about $2 million in annual export earnings.

PR-Inside.com (Pressemitteilung), Austria, 5 September 2008, www.pr-inside.com/invest-in-bamboo-production-philippine-farmers-r789844.htm

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3.11. Sri Lanka to expand cinnamon trade
The Agriculture and Agrarian Services Ministry has devised a long-term economic strategy to capture lucrative export markets for indigenous subsidiary food crops. Under the "Api Wawamu- Rata Nagamu" concept the Ministry expects to increase cinnamon exports up to 3000 MT by 2010. The Ministry has allocated Rs.7 million for Export Agriculture Department to expand cinnamon cultivation which could attract potentially more export markets, the Agriculture and Agrarian Services Ministry said.

The Agriculture and Agrarian Services Ministry Advisor A.H.L. Somathilika told *The Island* Financial Review that Sri Lankan cinnamon had been rated as the best quality cinnamon in the World Market as Sri Lanka had been able to supply 90 percent of cinnamon requirements to the World Market. In the World Market the supply of quality cinnamon was about 15 per cent and the supply of *Cassia cinnamon*

which was the substitute for cinnamon was around 85 per cent at the World Market. He said that Sri Lanka had been ahead of supplying quality cinnamon to the World Market and China, Indonesia and Vietnam had been exporting *Cassia cinnamon*. The Ministry was positive that Sri Lanka would be able to increase cinnamon exports by 5 per cent in 2010.

Somathilaka outlined that cinnamon had been cultivated in 25,413 hectares and one hectare was yielding around 500 kg of cinnamon annually. Of this amount around 5,350 MT was being exported and Sri Lanka had been earning Rs.2229.2 million from cinnamon exports annually. The future plans in cinnamon cultivation would include export of 3,000 MT by 2010, enhancement of quality, increase of revenue, increase of production, increase of profits.

The Island, Sri Lanka, 22 September 2008, www.island.lk/2008/09/22/business4.html

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3.12. Medicinal plants: How medicinal plants can promote agri business

The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) set up in the Department of AYUSH in November 2000 has been responsible for supporting initiatives for the conservation and cultivation of medicinal plants, both in-situ and ex-situ in India. During the 9th and 10th Plans, the Board provided assistance to State Forest Departments and voluntary agencies for the conservation of medicinal plants over an area of about 30,000 hectares. Financial assistance was also provided to over 5,000 farmers for cultivation of medicinal plants over 40,000 hectares. In addition, a number of R&D institutions and universities were provided assistance for development of agro-techniques, training of farmers, primary collectors, tribals and others. Organisation of awareness camps, workshops and creation of school and home herbal gardens have created a large amount of interest in all sections of society towards the conservation of medicinal plants and their role in healthcare.

A study of demand and supply of medicinal plants in India carried out by the Board during 2007-08 brought out alarming shortages of some of the plants used by the Ayurvedic industry. The Board, thereafter, launched a special drive to invite proposals for the conservation and plantation of some of the rare and endangered species in high demand from states. Of particular interest were the tree species like Sita Ashoka (*Saraca asoca*) – the main ingredient of Ahsokaristha (a key Ayurvedic formulation for gynaecological disorders), Guggal (*Commiphora wightii*) – a thorny bush which yields gum resin and is used in more than 100 Ayurvedic preparations, and the Dashmools – used in the most widely used Ayurvedic preparation – Dashmoolarishta. The estimated demand of Sita Ashoka bark is in excess of 2,000 MT, however, the availability in the wild is extremely rare. Likewise, though more than 1,000 MT of gum resin of Guggal is used by the Ayurvedic industry, more than 90% of this is imported.

The Board, therefore, sanctioned conservation/ plantation of Guggal over 4,000 hectares of forest areas in Gujarat and Rajasthan, Sita Ashoka over 800 hectares in the States of Karnataka, Orissa and Kerala, and Dashmool trees over 1,100 hectares in the States of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh. A special drive was also launched to conserve and propagate high altitude plants like Atees, Kuth, Kutki through the non-government organization working at the grass root level in the Himalayas. The Task Force on High Altitude Medicinal Plants, under the Chairmanship of Sh. Chandi Prakash Bhatt, set up by the Board has been the main driver behind the conservation efforts through mobilization of civil society in the hills.

Awareness programmes like the School and Home Herbal Gardens have been extremely popular in mobilizing civil society around medicinal plants conservation. Under the School Herbal Garden programme, more than 1,000 schools have been covered in different parts of the country creating awareness among citizens of tomorrow about the health promoting role of our biodiversity. The Board is making new strides during the 11th Plan. Against a 10th Plan expenditure of Rs. 142 crores, the outlay during the 11th Plan is Rs. 990 crores – a seven fold increase. A new initiative in the form of National Mission on Medicinal Plants has been approved by the Government which seeks to promote market driven cultivation, focus on development of selected clusters with potential for inclusive growth in agri-business through medicinal plants and thereby improve the market access of growers/farmers for more remunerative prices for their produce and better quality of raw material for the Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani industry.

Commodity Online, Kerala, India, 15 September 2008, www.commodityonline.com/news/How-medicinal-plants-can-promote-agri-business-11646-3-1.html

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3.13. Bangladesh: Utilization of medicinal and aromatic plants
In developing countries, remedies prepared by a traditional healer from plants of the local flora are available for the majority of the people. Although the bulk of synthetic preparations and chemical drugs are available as proprietary and prescription products with high price, there are millions of people in all walks of life in these countries, who have faith only in the Traditional System of Medicine and this trend is growing. They think that it is a safe and dependable system because it have evolved, developed and perfected in our own communities and areas, and has been tried over a period of thousand years with uniform results, under our own climatic and living condition. This trend has also taken its current ascent due to the toxic and adverse reactions of synthetic and chemical medicines being observed round the globe. There are available data as regards the therapeutic efficacy of modern drugs which the experts feel are not applicable to our conditions, especially to the South Asian and Pacific Regions.

In Bangladesh, there are several thousand traditional healers of whom many are practising in rural areas. They practice the traditional system of medicine, dispensing mostly herbal remedies and well over 60% of the country's population attend their clinics. A correct approach to investigation of such plants would therefore be for trained physicians and pharmacologists to cooperate with healers, first acting as observers by establishing proper diagnosis and evaluating whether the treatment given by the healer is likely to be effective. In this way a number of plants might be selected, extracts of which could then be subjected to more detailed clinical trials, provided that the preliminary observations and a reasonable extensive toxicological evaluation have shown an acceptable therapeutic ratio. Further investigation of these plants could then be performed in the laboratory.

The New Nation, Bangladesh, 14 September 2008,
http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2008/09/14/news0524.htm

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3.14. India to cut tobacco area by promoting medicinal plants
Mumbai. The Indian government will provide assistance to farmers diverting area under tobacco towards medicinal plants, a government release said on Tuesday. The government will support tobacco growers to switch to other crops and will use a 6-billion-rupee fund for promotion of medicinal plants, Anbumani Ramadoss, federal health minister, was quoted as saying in the release. However, higher tobacco prices are prompting Indian farmers to increase area under the leaf. The average price of the premier grade used for cigarette-making, flue cured virginia (FCV), has risen to 84.67 rupees per kg from 47.47 rupees a year ago. India is the second biggest producer of tobacco after China and the fourth-biggest exporter of unmanufactured tobacco.

Reuters India, India, 9 September 2008,
http://in.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idINBOM2802320080909

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3.15. Nigeria: Study unveils medicinal plants for skin problems
Medicinal plants in Nigeria were considered by several researchers to form an important component of the natural wealth of the country, considering that the tropical rainforest of which Nigeria is a reservoir of chemical substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes. Some of their ancient indigenous uses were discovered by a series of “trial and error” which then could not be proven by scientific theories though the results have been beneficial and efficient compared to conventional modern medicines.

However, these ancient indigenous uses of the plants vary from one community to another, necessitating that such plants be identified and documented according to the ailments cured, preparations and administrations of the herbs as well as local and common names for easy communication. One of such efforts was that by researchers from the University of Benin that studied medicinal plants used in treating skin diseases by healers in Ovia North- East local government area of Edo State. The study titled: “Ethno-Medicinal Uses of Plants in the Treatment of Various Skin Diseases in Ovia North-East, Edo State, Nigeria” was carried out by Dr. R.K.A. Egharevba of the Department of Crop Science and Dr. M.I. Ikhatua in the Department of Forestry and Wildlife.

This study was investigated in nine rural communities in Ovia North -East local government area council of Edo State and was published in the latest edition of the *Research Journal of Agriculture and Biological Sciences.* The investigation included names and plant parts used, ailments cured, preparations and administrations of these herbs through the use of questionnaires and interviews of old and experienced rural people as well as herbalists.

In the survey, 41 plant species from 29 families were identified. These plants include some wild and uncultivated ones *Xylopia aethopica* (Guinea pepper) *Plukenetia conophorum* (African walnut), *Monodora myristica* (African nutmeg) *Afromomium melequenta* (Alligator pepper) and some semi-wild plants such as *Dacryodis edulis*. They also include ornamental plants like *Lawsonia inermis* (Dye) and herbs. A total of 57 commonly used prescriptions for skin diseases were noted. Mixtures of plants were used in some cases. Several medicinal plant parts were used in herbal preparations such as leaves, stem and barks, fruits, seeds and roots of all these, the leaf was found to be used in about 70 to 75 per cent of the cases.

Nigerian Tribune, Nigeria, 25 September 2008, http://www.tribune.com.ng/25092008/thr/hlt2.html

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4. ICUC-related information
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No entries

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5. ICUC network
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In this section we introduce new and old subscribers to ICUC-News to encourage greater interaction and benefit from the great diversity of readers. If you haven't done so, please send a brief introduction of yourself and your interest in underutilised crops to h.jaenicke@cgiar.org. We will not publish your email or phone contacts and if anyone is interested to establish direct contact, please write an email to me.

- Douglas Woodard, from St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, with no professional affiliation but a lifelong amateur interest in crop and livestock domestication, origins, genetic resources, biodiversity, and a strong interest in low-input and organic farming smallholdings, and member of the North American Fruit Explorers, Northern Nut Growers Association, Society of Ontario Nut Growers, Canadian Chestnut Council.

- G.R. Aruna, working as field officer for BIRD-K on the ICUC-coordinated CoDI project (on underused species) in Surshettykoppa, Karnataka, India.

- Maheswar Ghimire, from Nepal, with experience with local food systems and their relationship to ecological health. I would like to have more information on under utilized food crops.

- Jay Bost, MS Student in Interdisciplinary Ecology, University of Florida, USA. Hello, I just wanted (as suggested in the newsletter) to introduce myself. I am a graduate student at the University of Florida and am currently writing up my thesis on work I have been doing (still very much in process) on *Persea schiedeana*, a relative of avocado, in Oaxaca, Mexico. With six villages, composing CORENCHI http://www.globaldiversity.org.uk/regional_programmes/mesoamerica/partners.html), we have begun a participatory domestication project. In June we collected data on fruit trees and their fruits and held fairs to select those trees that are regarded to produce the best fruit. We have found a quite high variability in most characters. We planted small nurseries in each village that will serve as root stock for grafting of the selections early in 2009. I will make a copy of my thesis available when it is complete. In the meantime, GFU has a copy of a PDF I sent them last year that is accessible via Google. Though avocado has gone global, *Persea schiedeana* remains very localized. It holds promise as a crop where avocado does not succeed because of cool/moist conditions or as an additional crop to provide food (in the case of Oaxaca, previous to avocado harvest). *Persea shiedeana* is already used as a shade species in coffee throughout SE Mexico and Mesoamerica and holds potential to be more intensively planted as grafted superior stock in coffee groves. After completing my degree (early 2009) I will be

looking for ways to continue to work in participatory fruit tree domestication (with maximum field time). Any suggestions of institutions or projects with whom to work would be appreciated. Thanks! Jay Bost, MS Student in Interdisciplinary Ecology, University of Florida, USA, lichen@ufl.edu

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Championing underutilised plant species for food, nutrition and sustainable development