



The International Centre for  
Underutilised Crops

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# ICUC-News #81

16 December 2008

Dear colleagues,

Season's greeting from all of us at ICUC, now Crops for the Future of course. This last issue of the year will also be the last issue of ICUC News in the current format. As of 1 December 2008, the GFU (Global Facilitation Unit for Underutilized Species) and ICUC began to operate under the common name of *Crops for the Future*, and the two organisations will now merge their respective news services. Thus, we hope that like us, you too are looking forward to a "new look" news service in the new year.

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With best wishes,  
Nick

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**1. Funding & Job opportunities**

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**1.1. EU money to help Southern scientists compete for funding**

Research institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific have three months to apply for a €33 million fund to boost their ability to compete for international research funding. The grant programme — the ACP Science and Technology Programme — is funded by the European Union (EU) and coordinated by the secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. Its call for funding was announced last week (27 November).

The money will not pay for actual research. Rather, it will fund projects that enhance the capability of under-resourced researchers to win funding. For example, it might fund projects to create collaborative research networks, train scientists in proposal-writing or promote peer review of scientific articles to bolster quality.

This programme is the first time funding has been made available for science and technology from the European Development Fund, the EU's main instrument for development initiatives, which has a budget of €22.7 billion for 2008–2013.

Such funding is sorely needed in Africa, policymakers say. "African states have failed to access the available funds because of a lack of capacity," says Hakim Elwaer, director of the African Union's science and technology department. Projects can last from one to three years, and can receive a maximum of €1 million. Applicants could be private companies, individual research institutions, nongovernmental organisations, government departments or groups of such organisations.

But researchers must act quickly to have any chance of accessing the funding, says Mario Catizzone, an envoy of the European Commission's science arm to the African Union (AU), urging interested parties to think of the deadline as tomorrow, not three months away. Catizzone warns that researchers may balk at the level of detail required by the complicated EU funding rules. However, the EU and the AU are offering help to applicants, he says. Gambo Laraba Abdullahi, director general of Nigeria's National Board for Science and Technology Incubation, says that her office will apply, adding that even if the application is not successful, the process itself will build know-how.

Linda Nordling, SciDev.Net, 4 December 2008

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**1.2. Executive director - local initiatives for biodiversity, research and development**

LI-BIRD (local initiatives for biodiversity, research and development, Pokhara, Kaski, Nepal. Closing Date: 20 December 2008.

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is a non-profit making, non-governmental organization (NGO) established in October, 1995 with its Head Office in Pokhara, Nepal. LI-BIRD is committed to capitalise on local initiatives for a sustainable management of renewable natural resources and improved livelihoods of people in Nepal and South Asia region. The Core Programmes of LI-BIRD include:

- Agricultural innovations for livelihoods security;
- Biodiversity for sustainable livelihoods;
- Ecosystem health and services;
- Policy and social research for wider and inclusive impacts;
- Knowledge management and capacity building.

LI-BIRD invites applications for the position of Executive Director based at Head Office in Pokhara. Reporting to the Executive Board, the position is responsible for providing a visionary leadership for the implementation of people-centred research and development programmes of the organisation.

Responsibilities

- Provide dynamic and strategic leadership to a team of multi-disciplinary and highly motivated human resources to achieve vision, mission and goal of the organisation;
- Responsible for overall management and administration of LI-BIRD's programmes, projects, finance and human resources;
- Ensure and strengthen a systematic and transparent system of governance, staff appraisal and reward systems and developing strategies and action plans for efficient human resource management and development;

- Ensure a systematic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and review of programmes and projects of the organisation;
- Provide strategic and professional inputs to the design and implementation of research and development strategies, programmes and projects of the organisation;
- Responsible for developing and implementing diversified fund raising strategies for the organisation.

Experience Required

- An advanced university degree, preferably PhD in agriculture or natural resource management or social science or equivalent degree in management
- A minimum of 8 years experience in managing and leading multi-disciplinary agricultural research and development programmes and teams
- Strong knowledge and skills in programme, human resource and financial management of a dynamic research and development organisation;
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in designing and implementing participatory and people-centred research and development programmes and projects
- Dynamic, energetic, and willing to take new challenges and work under difficult conditions; and
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, fluency in English and Nepali language, and computer literate.

LI-BIRD offers a competitive salary and benefit packages, including a vehicle as per its staff policy. LI-BIRD is an equal opportunity organisation. Women candidates are encouraged to apply. Application with detailed CV with two references, should reach LI-BIRD by 20 December, 2008. Application can also be sent by Email: info@libird.org. This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it ). Only short listed candidates will be invited for the interview and presentation. Please visit www.libird.org for the details about the organization. Selected candidate will be required to take the responsibility as soon as possible.

Contact: the Chairperson, executive board, LI-BIRD, PO Box 324, Pokhara, Kaski, Nepal. Email: info@libird.org or apun@libird.org

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**2. Workshops & Training Courses**  
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**2.1. International Conference on Industry Growth, Investment and Competitiveness in Africa**  
 International Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria, 8-10 June 2009. www.kfint.com/igica. An Annual Event for Accelerating Industry Growth through Partnerships, and you are invited to participate in the IGICA-NEPAD Roundtable/forum on Global Partnerships Development Initiative for Africa, a Public-Private Partnership theme within the International Conference on Industry Growth, Investment and Competitiveness in Africa (IGICA). We specifically invite you to submit presentation ideas and nominate a senior representative(s) of your organisation to take part in this all important international development forum.

The driving agenda for the roundtable/forum discussion on Global Partnerships Development Initiative for Africa are:

- To foster awareness of the theme of the 8th of the eight Millennium Development Goals which Africa as a continent must achieve in 2015.
- To promote the sharing of best practices and case histories in Africa as it relates to global partnership building and resources mobilisation in the areas of aid for trade, investment promotion and industry growth.
- To enhance benchmarking of relevant projects and policies that contribute to the GPDI.
- To facilitate networking environment and further reveal opportunities in the international system which GPDI can be utilised for Africa's advantage.

Participants are invited to submit their contributions as paper presentation, case-by-case demonstration and/or Exhibitions which could be adopted and replicated in other parts of Africa. The overall focus of the presentation and discussion should be practical case-study led - featuring actual project, programme and policy directions from leading public and private sector organisations. Therefore presentations/contributions are expected to be:

- a. Highly relevant to MDG(8) - with focused workshop on key issues such as methodology used, making change happen, adding value and making the most of the GPDI outcome.

- b. Inspiring - with key presentations led by GPDI partners and practitioners on real, practical lessons learned and impact on stakeholders,
- c. Immediately useful – provide the basis for benchmarking and covering the core topics that are relevant to meeting the Goal 8 of the MDGs in Africa in partnerships building and international resources mobilisation into Africa.
- d. Enabling information on Projects, Policies and stakeholders to be developed for all NEPAD is expecting the support and participation of public and private organisations. It is also expected that NEPAD strategic partners will be participating at this event

All initial ideas and abstract must be submitted online at [www.kfint.com/igica](http://www.kfint.com/igica)

For further information, contact:

Ms Louise Atherton, IGICA Conference Secretariat, Knowledge Factory International, London, UK.  
[louise.atherton@kfint.com](mailto:louise.atherton@kfint.com), or

Dr. Aniebo A. Roberts, Global Partnerships Development Initiative in Africa, NEPAD Nigeria.  
[anieboroberts@yahoo.com](mailto:anieboroberts@yahoo.com), [aroberts@nepad.org.ng](mailto:aroberts@nepad.org.ng)

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## 2.2. Second International e-Conference on Agricultural Biosciences

The 2<sup>nd</sup> International e-Conference on Agricultural Biosciences (leCAB 2009) is to be held on 1-15 June, 2009. This will be an INTERNET based conference with minimal cost since participants will NOT incur expenses on transportation, hotel accommodation, per diem, visa, etc. Participation and/or attendance will be from your office, home or any other place with internet access. The only single cost (per presenter) will be 150 USD to cover (i) ONLINE exhibition of presentations, e.g. abstracts, posters, power point slides, videos, etc (ii) Publication of submissions in an ONLINE Book of Proceedings., and (iii) Publication of FULL PAPERS (after peer review) in special editions of the Journal of Applied BioSciences [ISSN 1997-5902] and the Journal of Animal and Plant Sciences (ISSN 2071-7024). These open access journals are published monthly and are available for free download at <http://www.biosciences.elewa.org>. Each registered participant can enter up to a maximum of three papers. Each paper should be submitted as an abstract and additionally as Power point slides OR full colour POSTER. The conference will take place at URL address <http://www.e-conference.elewa.org/agriculture>. You may download further information and full instructions on how to participate from this site. Deadline for registration and submission of presentations is 28 February 2009. Send to [secretary@e-conference.elewa.org](mailto:secretary@e-conference.elewa.org) or [sarah@elewa.org](mailto:sarah@elewa.org) Please visit the website for the 1<sup>st</sup> Agriculture e-Conference (leCAB 2008) to view how previous presentations were exhibited, published and archived online. The web address is <http://www.elewa.org/e-conference/agriculture/index08.html>).

Scientists who may not wish to participate in the e-Conference are invited to submit manuscripts for direct publication in the journals. Please send your manuscripts to [publications@biosciences.elewa.org](mailto:publications@biosciences.elewa.org) with copy to [sarah@elewa.org](mailto:sarah@elewa.org).

For further information, contact M Mwangi, Coordinator, Biosciences Research and Communications Initiative, [secretary@e-conference.elewa.org](mailto:secretary@e-conference.elewa.org).

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## 2.3. International Conference on Quality Seed and Food Security

To be held 17-19 February 2009, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

Technical Sessions include:

1. Genetic Resource Conservation
2. Seed Biology- Dormancy, Germination, Viability and Vigor
3. Hybrid seed production
4. Seed Production of field crops, horticultural crops and forest trees
5. Seed processing and storage technology
6. Seed health management
7. Biotechnology and biochemistry
8. Preservation of recalcitrant seed
9. Quality planting material (QPM)
10. Seed testing, certification and marketing
11. Agro-forestry and Multistoried cropping system
12. Horticultural Production, Post harvest and ICM

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The conference will be inaugurated on 17 February, 2009 at 9.00am. Details of the Program will be provided during registration. However, a speaker will be given 12 minutes for presenting a paper and 5 minutes for discussion. Facilities for Multimedia Projector will be provided

Deadline for submission of Abstract and Registration form: 30 January, 2009  
Deadline for submission of full paper (S) 19 February, 2009

Please type your abstract indicating the session where you would like to present your paper. The whole text must not exceed 200 words. The letter size should be 12 point. In case of more than one author please bold the name of presenting author. Participants should note that in case the number of papers for presentations exceeds the time allocated for various sessions, it may be necessary for the organizers to request the authors (s) to present their paper (s) in the form of poster (s).

For further information, contact: Prof. Dr. M. A. Rahim, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh 2202, Bangladesh; marahim1956@yahoo.com, marahim1982@hotmail.com.

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**3. Publications & Information**

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**3.1. Millions Fed: Proven Successes in Agricultural Development: Call for Nominations**

To facilitate improved agricultural development policy and investment decisions and to learn and share lessons from past successes, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), with support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is leading the Millions Fed project to document evidence on what works in agriculture—what sorts of policies, programs, and investments in agricultural development have substantially reduced hunger and poverty. We invite nominations highlighting interventions that have had a significant impact on food security, including those that have empowered women and vulnerable groups to improve their livelihoods.

Nominations may include, for example:

- Research and extension programs that have improved on-farm yields and outputs for small-scale farmers;
  - Public investment programs that have helped food-insecure consumers meet their daily nutritional requirements and accumulate assets;
  - Community-led efforts that have conserved soil, water, forests, and biodiversity;
  - Market-based interventions that have strengthened the ability of small-scale farmers and food-insecure consumers to gain access to production inputs, rural services, and agricultural commodities.
- Nominations will be evaluated by a diverse panel of international experts. The intervention should (or have):
- Been operational in a developing country, have benefited a vulnerable group or groups, and be directly related to agriculture;
  - Addressed an important food security problem, been fully operational at a scale for at least five years, and been implemented in the past 50 years;
  - Been operational at a significant scale, defined as national, regional, or covering a substantial number of beneficiaries. Demonstration or pilot projects will not be considered;
  - Documented and rigorous evidence of a clear and measurable impact on individual or household income and/or nutrition;
  - Been financially sustainable or, in some way, cost-effective.

The Millions Fed project aims to:

- Showcase successes in global agricultural development;
- To reach those who can contribute to local and global efforts to improve food security through agricultural development - policymakers, development practitioners, donors, scholars, nongovernmental organizations, and others concerned about the future of global agriculture.

For any questions or queries, see <http://www.ifpri.org/millionsfed/pdf/NominationsFlyer.pdf> or contact Veronica O Conner, email: [v.oconnor@cgiar.org](mailto:v.oconnor@cgiar.org). Closing Date: 31 December 2008

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**3.2. International Year of Natural Fibres, 2009**

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The aim of the International Year of Natural Fibres (IYNF) 2009 is to raise awareness of natural fibres, to promote efficiency and sustainability of the natural fibres, and to foster an effective international partnership among the various natural fibres industries.

There is a diverse range of natural fibres produced by farmers throughout the world. Natural fibres may be classified as cellulosic (from plants), protein (from animals), and mineral. Plant fibres may be seed hairs, such as cotton; bast (stem) fibres, such as linen; leaf fibres, such as sisal; and husk fibres, such as coconut. A number are underutilised crops. The animal fibres are wool, hair, etc, and secretions, such as silk.

Close to 30 million tonnes of natural fibres are produced annually in the world, of which cotton is dominant with 20 million tonnes, wool and jute each around 2 to 3 million tonnes followed by a number of others. Most countries produce some natural fibres; for some developing countries natural fibres are of major economic importance, for example, cotton in some west African countries, jute in Bangladesh and sisal in Tanzania. In other cases these fibres are of less significance at the national level but are of major local importance within the country, as in the case of jute in West Bengal (India) and sisal in north-east Brazil. Proceeds from the sale and export of natural fibres often contribute significantly to the income and food security of poor farmers and processors in the least developed countries.

The uses of natural fibres range from high priced apparel to industrial applications and in most if not all of these applications they are subject to competition from synthetic substitutes. Since the widespread use of synthetic fibres developed from the 1960s, natural fibres have faced increased competition in the market, and in many cases traditional markets have been eroded or have disappeared. Natural fibres thus face the challenge of developing and maintaining markets where they can compete effectively with synthetics. In some cases this has involved defining and promoting market niches; in others, basic R&D is needed to develop new technologies to facilitate the use of natural fibres in new applications where their natural advantages allow them to compete effectively with synthetics.

See also [http://www.fao.org/es/esc/en/15/320/highlight\\_322.html](http://www.fao.org/es/esc/en/15/320/highlight_322.html) and [www.naturalfibres2009.org](http://www.naturalfibres2009.org)

For another article (in Spanish only) re use of natural fibres in building materials, see <http://www.scidev.net/es/news/emplean-fibras-org-nicas-en-construcci-n-sostenibl.html>  
Source: Natural News.com, USA, 1 December 2008

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### **3.3. From Seeds to Beads. Tales, Tips and Tools for Building a Community-Based NTFP Enterprise**

Non Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme. 2008. From Seeds to Beads. Tales, Tips and Tools for Building a Community-Based NTFP Enterprise. Yasmin Arquiza (ed). Quezon City, the Philippines, NTFP-EP.

From the Blue Mountains of India to the islands of Indonesia, the experiences of local communities that depend on non-timber resources from forests for their livelihood come alive. Part manual and part storybook, this publication aims to share insights as well as lessons learned by the partners of the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme that are engaged in NTFP enterprise development. This compilation of stories from NTFP-EP partners reflects their journey in pursuing strategies for building and maintaining sustainable livelihood enterprises. Furthermore, the most helpful and commonly used tools by NTFP-EP partners are presented. These practical methods aim to enable local partners to systematically and professionally design and implement NTFP development strategies using available resources. It is hoped that more forest-based communities across Asia will find the inspiration in this publication to embark on innovative enterprises using the resources sustainably within their locality.

To obtain a copy, email [publications@ntfp.org](mailto:publications@ntfp.org).

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### **3.4. Ecological engineering viable alternative to GM**

Ecological engineering could offer cheaper, more efficient long-term strategies for pest control than genetically modified (GM) crops, say Josef Settele and colleagues in Nature. Ecological engineering in irrigated rice — controlling insect pests through landscape management — has almost eradicated insecticide use in the field sites of the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines. The authors argue that, unlike GM rice, ecological engineering does not undermine the independence of

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farmers in developing countries by relying on big business for pest control. In such a well-studied crop as rice, ecological engineering could be implemented immediately, they say. Future research should focus on developing sustainable management schemes for other key crops.

See Settele J, Biesmeijer J and Bommarco R. 2008. Switch to ecological engineering would aid independence. <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v456/n7222/full/456570a.html>

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### 3.5. New paper on Ginkgo

Ginkgo biloba is among the most sold medicinal plants in the world. A number of secondary metabolites representing terpenoids, polyphenols, allyl phenols, organic acids, carbohydrates, fatty acids and lipids, inorganic salts and amino acids have been isolated from the plant. However, the main bioactive constituents are terpenes trilactones and flavonoid glycosides which are considered responsible for the pharmacological activities of its standardized leaf extract. Scattered information is available on the extraction and analysis of these pharmacologically important constituents which have been compiled in the present review.

Bikram Singh; Pushpinder Kaur; Gopichand; Singh, RD; Ahuja, PS. 2008. Biology and chemistry of Ginkgo biloba. *Fitoterapia* 79: 6, 401-418.

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### 3.6. Several new papers on Canarium indica nuts

Four papers on the domestication of Canarium indica nuts from Roger Leakey's team have been brought to ICUC's attention.

Bunt, C. and Leakey, R.R.B. 2008. Domestication potential and marketing of Canarium indicum nuts in the Pacific: Commercialization and market development. *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods* 18: 271-289.

Leakey, R.R.B., Fuller, S., Treloar, T., Stevenson, L., Hunter, D., Nevenimo, T., Binifa, J. and Moxon, J. 2008. Characterization of tree-to-tree variation in morphological, nutritional and chemical properties of Canarium indicum nuts. *Agroforestry Systems* 73: 77-87.

Nevenimo, T., Johnston, M., Binifa, J., Gwabu, C., Anjen, J. and Leakey, R.R.B. 2008. Domestication potential and marketing of Canarium indicum nuts in the Pacific: Producer and consumer surveys in Papua New Guinea (East New Britain). *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods* 18: 253-269.

Nevenimo, T., Moxon, J., Wemin, J., Johnston, M., Bunt, C. and Leakey, R.R.B. 2007. Domestication potential and marketing of Canarium indicum nuts in the Pacific: 1. A literature review. *Agroforestry Systems* 69: 117-134.

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### 3.7. Camu camu and its role in preventing gum disease

Camu Camu (*Myrciaria dubia*) is one of the best super foods for preventing gum disease. This amazing super food provides our bodies with endless benefits. It is the food with the highest amount of vitamin C in the world, and it also contains bioflavonoids. Studies show that a low immune system is one of the main reasons for unhealthy gums...and camu camu boosts the immune system like no other food. For full story, please see: <http://www.naturalnews.com/024972.html>

*Myrciaria dubia*, commonly known as Camu Camu, CamuCamu, Cacari, and Camocamo, is a small (approx. 3-5 m tall) bushy river side tree from the Amazon Rainforest vegetation in Peru and Brazil, which bears a red/purple cherry like fruit. Its small flowers have waxy white petals and sweet smelling aroma. It has bushy feathery foliage. The evergreen, opposite leaves are lanceolate to elliptic. Individual leaves are 3 - 20 cm in length and 1 - 2 cm wide. It is a close relative of the Jaboticaba (*Myrciaria cauliflora*) and the Guavaberry or Rumberry (*Myrciaria floribunda*).

See also Penn (2006) on the ICUC website [http://www.icuc-iwmi.org/files/News/\(08\)Penn.pdf](http://www.icuc-iwmi.org/files/News/(08)Penn.pdf)

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### 3.8. USA may approve Stevia-based sweeteners

The US Food and Drug Administration may approve zero-calorie sweeteners derived from a shrub called stevia, analysts say. Major US beverage companies -- PepsiCo Inc. and Coca-Cola Co. -- want to market stevia-sweetened products once the sweetener gets approval, the Chicago Tribune said. Agribusiness giant Cargill Inc. already has a stevia-based sweetener in grocery stores, and Chicago-based Merisant Co., maker of the popular sweetener Equal, soon will do the same, the newspaper said. But some public watchdogs, including the Center for Science in the Public Interest, are raising concerns about potential cancer-causing properties of stevia. The center is urging the FDA to do more testing before granting approval, the Tribune said. Native to South America and already used as a sweetener there, Japan developed stevia-based sweeteners several decades ago, and Australia has recently approved it. But stevia sweeteners are still banned in much of Europe. As a sweetener it developed an unpleasant licorice taste that researchers have had trouble erasing, the Tribune said.

Source: United Press International, USA, 30 November 2008. For full story, please see: [www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2008/11/30/FDA\\_may\\_approve\\_stevia-based\\_sweeteners/UPI-19251228079924/](http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2008/11/30/FDA_may_approve_stevia-based_sweeteners/UPI-19251228079924/)

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### 3.9. Vegetable ivory: 'Green' alternative ivory jewellery

Eco-friendly jewellery made from tagua nuts and pumpkin seeds have proven to be a successful artistic venture for Lina O'Connor, a Columbian woman living in California, USA. Tagua is also known as natural ivory, vegetable ivory or ivory nut, but whatever the title, it is an eco-friendly, renewable resource. The palm trees producing these nuts grow in the rainforests of Columbia, Peru, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. The nut is hard and durable; its colour resists fading and it is not allergenic. O'Connor said that the nut clusters, which can be as big as 25 pounds each, fall off and natives harvest them. She notes, "The trees don't need them anymore." Tagua has been used to make buttons and chess pieces for years, but its use as jewellery (and even in bagpipes) is a more recent development. The seeds are dyed after they're polished, so they are colour-ready when O'Connor starts designing. After the designing process, most pieces take three to four hours to create. O'Connor believes the market for this kind of green jewellery is growing.

For full story please see: [www.imperialbeachnewsca.com/articles/2008/11/28/news/news04.txt](http://www.imperialbeachnewsca.com/articles/2008/11/28/news/news04.txt)  
Source: Eagle & Times, 28 November 2008

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### 3.10. Wattle (acacia) seeds and bush tomatoes become popular in Australia

Aborigines have been called on to impart knowledge that will boost and provide direction to Australia's blooming bush tucker industry. As demand locally and globally continues to grow, the industry - estimated to be worth up to \$16 million a year - needs to assess where it is going and how it is going to get there, says Jenny Cleary, leader of Desert Knowledge CRC's Bush Products program. The industry, which includes such foods as wattle seeds and bush tomatoes, is based on traditional Aboriginal knowledge about the collection, preparation and uses of desert plants and other food.

Ms Cleary says the aim is to get greater Aboriginal participation in the industry, with culturally appropriate considerations. She says there are challenges the industry needs to resolve to achieve its potential. These include the fragmentary nature of the industry, the small scale of many producers, the lack of capital and highly variable wild harvesting. Also many fruits - such as the bush tomato - have numerous varieties while the markets demand consistency of size, colour and volume.

Because of these factors, Ms Cleary says the industry will develop two supply streams: commercial harvesting in areas where water is reliable and low-volume wild harvesting. "Wild-harvested supply could be branded in such a way to go into the high-value, lower-volume product at the premium end of the market," she says. "So far there are not many Aboriginal commercial ventures operating successfully in the area. "Our research aims to find out how to help them participate.

In a historic development known as Hands Across the Desert, Aboriginal gatherers of the Kakadu plum in Broome in Western Australia hosted bush tomato gatherers from Alice Springs. With the aim of making their product more saleable, they discussed issues such as fruit handling, storage, pest management, quality control and traceability. This was an acknowledgement that global demand was rising for bush and desert foods. "The outlook for the industry is pretty good," Ms Cleary says.

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Source: Courier Mail, Australia, 16 November 2008. For full story, please see:  
[www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24659700-3122,00.html](http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24659700-3122,00.html)

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### **3.11. Climate and Development: A New Journal from Earthscan**

Earthscan is pleased to announce the addition of Climate and Development in 2009, which was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan in December 2008. Climate and Development aims to make a complex analysis of climate and development issues accessible to a wide audience of researchers, policy makers and practitioners, and to facilitate debate between the diverse constituencies active in these fields throughout the world. Contributions from and about developing countries are particularly encouraged; however, research on developed countries is welcome provided that the link between climate and development is the central theme.

For more information on Climate and Development, Go To:  
<http://www.earthscan.co.uk/Journals/ClimateandDevelopment/tabid/29957/Default.aspx>

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### **3.12. Delay to intellectual property plan for Africa**

A blueprint for a pan-African organisation that would promote cooperation on intellectual property issues was sent back to the drawing board this week, dashing hopes that it could be signed off by presidents in January. The decision to revise the plan was made by the steering committee of the African Ministerial Council for Science and Technology (AMCOST) bureau, which met in Abuja, Nigeria, from 3–4 December.

African science ministers had agreed to establish a Pan-African Intellectual Property Organisation (PAIPO) in the run-up to an African presidential meeting in January 2007. Among other things, it is hoped that the organisation will promote the protection of traditional knowledge and genetic resources. Coming up with an appropriate design has been a difficult and time-consuming process, the Abuja meeting heard. The blueprint presented to the meeting had been drawn up in consultation with stakeholders, including existing intellectual property organisations on the continent.

But delegates in Abuja found the blueprint too top-heavy since it proposes the establishment of a new ministerial forum, the African Ministerial Council for Intellectual Property. But delegates to the meeting said such a forum would make PAIPO too bureaucratic. "This is the kind of organisation that we set up in Africa, and they don't work," says Crispus Kiamba, permanent secretary of Kenya's Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology and the chair of the AMCOST steering committee. Hakim Elwaer, director of the African Union (AU) science and technology department, agreed. "This will not work in this shape," he told the meeting.

The decision to make the revisions is not a big setback says Khalil Timamy, coordinator of the AU Science and Technology Commission in Lagos, Nigeria, who led work on the blueprint. "All that we are discussing now is governance. The rest has been agreed on," he told SciDev.Net. The AU Commission said it hoped that the final version could be passed for sign-off to an African heads of state summit taking place in six months' time. "Even if it takes another year, it will still have been a fast process to set this up," Timamy says.

Once the blueprint of PAIPO has been agreed, heads of state will determine where its secretariat should be located. PAIPO will be funded by the AU.

Linda Nordling, SciDev.Net, 4 December 2008

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### **3.13. Portugal fighting screw-cap trend to save cork forests**

It has recently emerged that falling demand for authentic cork stoppers is gradually forcing farmers to replace cork trees with alternative crops, such as eucalyptus trees. At present, according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) website, Portugal is the world's largest cork producer, followed by Spain, Algeria, Morocco, Italy, Tunisia and France.

The majority of cork harvested in Iberia is used to produce bottle stoppers, which represents an estimated 70 percent of the income from harvest. However, traditional cork stoppers are being replaced

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with synthetic closures or screw caps, which now account for around 20 per cent of the market. It is said that problems with bottles of wine becoming 'corked' (in layman terms, where the wine develops a musty smell and becomes undrinkable due to contamination with a chemical known as Trichloroanisol), have lead many wine connoisseurs to opt for bottles with synthetic cork or screw tops instead.

In a nutshell, this shift in traditional bottle stopping to using modern-day products is threatening to wipe out cork forests, along with the species that reside therein. Cork oak forests in Portugal cover an estimated 33 per cent of land mass and are home to a number of rare and endangered species, particularly in Southern Portugal. These include black storks and booted eagles, which are already disappearing in some areas, and the Iberian Lynx, which over the past few years has been the subject of extensive reporting and campaigning. A study by WWF, which was recently reported in The Telegraph newspaper, estimated that up to three quarters of the Mediterranean's cork forests could be lost within 10 years. Over the past ten years in the Algarve, cork forests have declined by 28 percent. In an attempt to boost productivity, Portuguese cork producers have introduced new sterilisation and purification methods to ensure corks are not contaminated with Trichloroanisol.

Over the years Portugal's cork industry has not been without turmoil. In August this year environment protection agency Quercus considered the felling of 1,200 cork trees in Vale da Rosa a "glaring disregard" of the law. The trees were felled to make space for a mega residential development. Legal action was instigated by Quercus to stop the felling, the Association alleging the trees are of a species protected by Portuguese law. Back in 2001 there were political moves to defend Portugal's cork oaks when delegates from the Socialist Party-run council of Montijo met with officials representing the then President Jorge Sampaio with the initiation of a national petition to be presented to Parliament. Motivated by the perceived weakening of legal protection for cork and Holm oak trees, environmental groups such as Quercus voiced their concern over the proposed changes to the law since it was first drafted in the year 2000. The felling of 66 hectares of cork forest for the controversial Alqueva Dam project, in the northern Alentejo, also highlighted threats posed by development projects to existing oak woodland.

For full story, please see: Cork: Portugal fighting screw-cap trend to save cork forests, Portugal News, Algarve, Portugal, 6 December 2008. <http://www.the-news.net/cgi-bin/google.pl?id=988-33>

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### **3.14. Brazil's Amazontech debates Amazon's self-sustainability**

Technological innovation, science in general and entrepreneurial initiatives turned to the Amazon region should be among the highlights of the Amazontech 2008, to take place in São Luís, Maranhão state, 25-29 November. The event, at its sixth edition, opens space for the generation of sustainable business, exchange of scientific and technical knowledge and diffusion of information that may guarantee self-sustainability of the region. The Access to Innovation and Technology manager at the National Sebrae, Paulo Alvim, pointed out that Amazontech is one of the opportunities for diffusion of adequate technology to the Amazon region, within the logic of sustainable development.

In this year's edition, the expectation is for the audience to reach 30,000 people from several states in the country. Other highlights are the business roundtables that already count on the presence of 100 companies from the Amazon. These companies offer herbal medication, handicraft, textile products, honey and honey products, as well as wooden products in the areas of sustainable management. Eight anchor companies, interested in the purchase of these products, are also confirmed, among them organizations from Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay and Spain. The Project Roundtables should include six institutions to finance social or entrepreneurial projects capable of creating work posts and generating income for the community in the Amazon. The expectation is that up to 50 projects be financed.

Amazontech has already contributed greatly to the debate regarding the Amazon region. The superintendent of the Sebrae in Rondônia state, Pedro Teixeira, who accompanied the previous events, pointed out that "one of the great feats was the creation of this space to bring together all institutions in the Amazon." "Since the first edition of the event, Embrapa has been presenting solutions for the region," he added. According to him, an example of solutions is the study of forestry management and of how to work on the non-wood management, which expands opportunities in sectors like pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and food. "Standing, a tree is more profitable than lying down. With a tree standing, we can add value to the product," said Teixeira.

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Another important point is that the discussions and solutions presented benefit the communities in the region and cooperates for them to work with the potentials of the area in a sustainable manner. Participation of fostering banks in the Amazontech events also plays an important part as they are responsible for financing to producers. "Due to these resources, we currently have enterprises breeding forest animals, like alligators and turtles, for consumption in the whole country and mainly in the South or Southeast. They are being bred legally and are helping avoid the extinction of these animals. The business sector has been investing in the preservation without leaving trade aside."

Pedro Teixeira also pointed out that the debate that began in previous editions of the Amazontech caused universities in the Amazon region to offer courses to those working with the local potential. Courses like Forestry Engineering, Biotechnology, Geology, Veterinary Medicine and Biology were implemented. Before that, the offer was restricted to Law, Business Administration and Accounting. "This generated awareness in youths and the search for education to provide tools to operate making use of the potential of the Amazon," he explained.

Source: Brazzil Magazine, USA, 25 November 2008. For full story, please see: [www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/10251/1/](http://www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/10251/1/)

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**4. ICUC-related information**  
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**4.1. Message from the Director**

Dear colleagues,

With the launch of Crops for the Future, underutilized crops have got an even stronger champion than before. Whilst ICUC will be in a transition for the next 4 months or so, before Crops for the Future will be firmly established at its new location in Serdang, Malaysia, we will continue our work and will be available for queries, information and advice. We will maintain the good personal and institutional ties we have developed over the past years and look forward to developing new partnerships. The next months will allow us to take stock of the services we both, ICUC and GFU, have provided to our respective stakeholder communities (in which there is considerable overlap). This will include the newsletters, databases, websites, publications, etc. We plan to reach out to you once more in January, for a brief survey to assess where changes are needed to serve you better, and I look forward to your feedback.

Information about Crops for the Future is available from its Strategic Framework which you can download from either the ICUC or GFU websites or from the brand new Crops for the Future site (<http://www.cropsforthefuture.org/>). Comments are very welcome as this is a living document.

Lastly, I would like to give a vote of thanks here to the many people who have assisted us in getting to where we are today. Many individuals over many years have assured that underutilized plants and agro-biodiversity are now firmly established on research and development agendas, and have paved the way for an organization like Crops for the Future to develop. This is formally a merger of two organizations, but in reality is it much more, the joining of hands of the many individuals and institutions keen on the understanding and development of traditional crops for the ultimate benefit of humankind.

I wish us all a fruitful, productive and happy 2009.

Hannah Jaenicke

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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](mailto: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.**

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