



The International Centre for
Underutilised Crops

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ICUC-News #42

2 May 2007

Dear colleagues,

Apologies for the delay in this issue due to the May Day – and in Sri Lanka, Vesak – Holiday. The next weeks may also be a bit irregular as I will be attending a variety of workshops: Hanoi, Vietnam 6-11 May to attend the ACIAR-Vietnamese Women's Union scoping study on "Enhancing the safe production, promotion and utilisation of indigenous vegetables by women in Vietnam"; Tashkent, Uzbekistan 24-26 May to attend the ICARDA-led project development workshop on "Enhancing the productivity of salt-prone land and water resources to ensure sustainability of smallholder crop-livestock farmers in West and Central Asia" and in June a series of workshops towards the development of a proposal for a Challenge Programme on High Value Fruits and Vegetables in Nairobi (6-7), the FARA Africa week in Johannesburg (10-16) and the Awareness Raising Conference on Horticulture for Development in Brussels (25).

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With best wishes,
Hannah

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1. Funding & Job opportunities
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1.1 Assistant Director - ICRA

ICRA is a capacity building organisation. It stimulates innovation by strengthening the competencies of people and organisations in the rural sector, research and education to collaborate as equal partners and learn from each other. These competencies make partners more effective, as a group, in achieving innovation in technology, markets, policies and social organisation to reduce poverty, enhance competitiveness of product chains and small-scale enterprises and ensure sustainable use of natural resources.

ICRA is working in partnership with organisations in South and North to strengthen national capacity in the South to build these competencies and to institute organisational collaboration and mutual learning in rural innovation. It stimulates the creation of national innovation partnerships or platforms, composed of policy makers representing farmer and private sector organisations, development organisations,

NGOs, research organisations and universities. The centre supports these platforms in strategy development and organisational change to create an enabling environment for collaboration in innovation. ICRA also strengthens the capacity of “national capacity strengthening teams” (NCSTs) that can facilitate learning between partners in rural innovation and bring about educational changes so that students become more effective future professionals. With members of the NCSTs, ICRA staff are involved in co-designing and co-facilitating national learning programmes in rural innovation for local multi-stakeholder teams and for university students. ICRA operates from small offices in Wageningen and Montpellier and through regional representatives in Southern Africa and Latin America. ICRA invites applications for the position of Assistant Director. Preference is given to applicants from developing countries and from ICRA’s European core donors (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, UK).

Job description

The successful applicant will assist the Director in all his tasks and responsibilities including:

- Supporting ICRA’s Board of Trustees in strategy and vision development
- Developing ICRA’s marketing strategy, conducting market research and communicating with users of ICRA’s services
- Publicising achievements and impact, raising visibility of ICRA and guiding development of public relations materials
- Fund raising and revenue creation through project acquisition, tenders and service contracts; entertaining dialogue with core donors
- Promoting learning from experience, both within ICRA and between ICRA and partners, and use of lessons learnt to improve practices
- Providing guidance to staff responsible for the ICRA role in the national innovation partnerships in the South and for other ICRA activities
- Coordinating and guiding formulation of medium term plans and annual work plans and budgets for the national partnerships and other ICRA activities
- Monitoring progress of all national partnerships, proposing adjustments of ICRA’s involvement in these and ensuring timely and adequate progress reporting and accounting by staff responsible for this ICRA involvement, both internally and to donors/ clients.
- Preparing the annual report, partnership progress reports and other documents to be submitted to the annual meeting of the Board of Trustees
- Managing ICRA’s institutional affairs and preparing contracts.

In addition, the Assistant Director will be directly responsible for the implementation of ICRA’s support to one or more national innovation partnerships/projects in the South. He/she will also act in place of the Director when needed.

Profile

- Academic degree (preferably combined with an MBA)
- Strategic thinker
- Experience in rural research, development and/or education/training in the South
- Proven skills in market development for complex service products and market communication
- Good managerial, communication and business skills
- Experience with the project cycle and administration of donor-funded projects
- Team player, open to learning
- Proven skills in fund raising and revenue creation, preferably with network in the relevant donor community
- Excellent writing and editing skills
- Fluent in both English and French (this is an absolute requirement); Spanish an advantage.
- Willingness to travel frequently

Employment conditions: 3-year contract, posting in Wageningen, salary and secondary benefits equivalent to public service standards in the Netherlands (max. € 65 000/year gross), no housing/schooling allowances, contract through employment agency (ICRA is a non-employing organisation).

Application: a letter with C.V. (1-page summary, details in annexes) and contact details of 5 independent referees should be sent to: The Director of ICRA, P.O. Box 88, 6700 AB Wageningen, the Netherlands. Deadline for applications: *15 June 2007*.

Further information: Dr Jon Daane, Director, or Ms Ans Brom / Ms Saskia Vleer, ICRA secretariat (Secretariat.ICRA@wur.nl; tel. +31 317 42 29 38; fax. +31 317 42 70 46) or ICRA's website (www.icra-edu.org).

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2. Workshops & Training Courses

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2.1 Second Announcement: International Conference “The Role of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in Poverty Alleviation and Biodiversity Conservation” (see ICUC News #38)

Date and venue: June 11-15, Sofitel Plaza Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam

Background:

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) play an important role in the livelihoods of the rural poor, as a source of food, medicine, construction materials, and income. It has been estimated that there are more than 60 million highly forest-dependent people in Latin America, West Africa, and South East Asia, with an additional 400 million to 500 million people directly dependent on these natural products.

The Conference:

The Conference will be hosted by the NTFP Sub-Sector Support Project, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), The Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), The German Technical Cooperation (gtz), CARE International, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), The Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) and The Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO). It will bring together practitioners, entrepreneurs and researchers who are involved in NTFP initiatives that provide opportunities to address poverty reduction while maintaining biodiversity. Participants will share methodologies, approaches, product and market information and other lessons learned from NTFP development and conservation initiatives. The trade fair on the fourth day of the conference will provide an opportunity for NTFP producers to display their products and meet potential buyers.

Programme:

June 11: Sessions on “Critical Elements for Successful NTFP Initiatives”
June 12: Sessions on “Critical Elements for Successful NTFP Initiatives” (continued)
June 13: Sessions on “The Business of NTFPs”
June 14: NTFP Trade Fair
June 15: NTFP Field Site Visit

Presentations:

Papers: If you are interested in presenting a paper at the conference, please contact the Conference Contact Persons immediately for further information.

Posters: There will be display areas for posters and documents. Please let us know by Monday, May 21st if you would like to have a space for a display.

Trade Fair: If you are interested in displaying your products at the trade fair please contact the Conference Contact Persons for registration forms and materials by Monday, May 21st. There is no fee to participate in the trade fair.

Registration:

A registration fee of \$150 will be charged to International Participants (\$50 for students). The fee will cover access to all conference events, documents, trade fair, coffee/tea breaks, lunches, a reception on the first day, and the field site visit. To register for the conference please complete the Registration Form and send it to the Conference Contact Persons by Monday, May 28th.

Conference Contact Persons:

Sarah Webster
The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
Villa 44/4 Van Bao Street
Ba Dinh, Hanoi
Tel: (84) 4 7261575/6 Ext. 133
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3. Publications & Information

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3.1 The First International Breadfruit Symposium on Research and Development

(from Mary Taylor)

This symposium took place in Nadi between 16-19 April. Participants came from far and wide, with representation from the African continent (Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania) The Seychelles, the Caribbean region (Trinidad and Jamaica), Sri Lanka and of course the Pacific (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Pohnpei, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Hawaii, and Australia. The Symposium covered a wide range of themes from Breadfruit in Society to Product Development and marketing. It was interesting to see that although breadfruit is considered an under-utilized crop, a significant amount of work has been carried out on breadfruit and there is a lot of information to be shared. This is what the meeting was about - sharing experiences and information in breadfruit, and looking at ways in which the future of breadfruit both as a food security crop and as a marketable commodity (domestic and export) could be strengthened.

The Symposium consisted of 1.5 days of plenary where papers were presented by the majority of the participants. The Symposium was opened by Aleki Sisifa, who gave an excellent overview of breadfruit in the Pacific, and how it has developed into an important export commodity for some countries, such as Fiji and Samoa, yet at the same time remains an important food security crop especially for the atoll countries. The keynote address was given by Dr Diane Ragone, Director of the Breadfruit Institute, National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG) whose enthusiasm for, and commitment to breadfruit is apparent to all who meet her. Her efforts have ensured that more than 120 varieties from the Pacific are conserved in the world's largest collection of breadfruit (over 200 accessions) at the NTBG in Hawaii. On Tuesday afternoon the participants were treated to a very interesting and exciting field trip which was wonderfully organized by Sant Kumar, General Manager, Nature's Way (Cooperative) Fiji Ltd. The non-Pacific participants were very impressed by what they saw and the enthusiasm of Mr Kumar. They were also very impressed by the food that was on offer - nine different dishes, and all made of breadfruit!

The remainder of the week was devoted to Working Groups and a focus session on the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The Working Groups focused on the issues which were generated from the presentations and also the discussions that followed the presentations. All groups were asked to prioritize some recommendations and these were presented on the Thursday morning. Following this presentation there was a focus session on developing a global strategy for the conservation and utilization of breadfruit, and discussing the sharing of breadfruit germplasm using the multilateral system on which the International Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) is based. This strategy and the recommendations from the Working Groups will be available in a brief Symposium report shortly. The proceedings for this Symposium will be published by the International Society for Horticultural Science as part of the standing series of Acta Horticulturae.

This Symposium is the result of collaboration between international organizations including the Technical Centre for Rural and Agricultural Cooperation (CTA), the Breadfruit Institute, NTBG, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), International Centre for Underutilised Crops, Global Facilitation Unit for Under-Utilized species, the Global Crop Diversity Trust and SPC Land Resources Division.

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3.2 African Journal for Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development (AJFAND) Volume 7(2) now available online

Foreword

I am happy to announce the release of issue 13 of AJFAND, and to assure our readership that we are trying to get back to a schedule of publishing an issue per quarter. Our last issue came out in January and this is April. I wish to compliment my team at the secretariat for their tireless effort that aim to produce a high quality publication. Let me remind new authors the following: all correspondence is now handled online, there is nothing wrong with checking with us if you wish to confirm whether your manuscript or other form of correspondence was received, the abstract should be anywhere between 300-400 words, key words should be only 5, and we no longer carry French abstracts due to financial constraints.

The articles in this issue are as follows:

Supply and Utilizations of Food Crops in Ghana, 1960-2000. Samuel Nii Ardey Codjoe

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Codjoe-1815.pdf>

The Role of Irrigation on Improvement of Young Children in Central Kenya. Kirogo Veronichah, Wambui Kogi-Makau and Nelson M. Muroki

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Kirogo-1840.pdf>

Sustainability of Agricultural Production in Communal Areas of Zimbabwe: Case of Chionekano Communal Lands. Christopher T. Gadzirayi, S.I Whande and E. Mutandwa

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Gadzirayi-1915.pdf>

Amino Acids and Minerals in a Tropical Nut, Hyphaene coriacea (The Turkana Doum Palm). Michael N.I. Lokuruka

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Lokuruka-2005.pdf>

Processing Properties of Grains from some Maize Varieties Introduced On-farm in the Sudano Sahelian Zone of Cameroon. Kameni, Kouebou C. and A.K. Aboubakar Dandjouma

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Kameni-.pdf>

Nutritional Status of Maize Fermented Meal By Fortification With Bambara-Nut. Theodore I. Mbata, M.J. Ikenebomeh and I. Ahonkhai

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Mbata-2115.pdf>

Activation of the Lactoperoxidase System as a Method of Preserving Raw Milk in Areas Without Cooling Facilities. Ndambi Oghaiki Asaah, Florence Fontech, Pamela Kamga, Stephen Mendi, and Helena Imele

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Ndambi-2155.pdf>

Provision of Vitamin A Through Utilization of Local Food Materials in Rural Parts of Western Kenya. K.M. Shiundu, Oiyee S., Kumbe M. and R. Oniang'o

<http://www.ajfand.net/Issue13/PDFs/Shiundu-2510.pdf>

My team and I wish you joyful reading. Do not hesitate to write communicate on any issue/article, and likewise you can point out any errors in our work. We thank our supporters for their support.

With best wishes

Ruth Oniang'o

Editor-in-Chief

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3.3 Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT)

(from Tevita Kete)

The Secretariat of the Pacific Communities' (SPC) Regional Germplasm Centre, which has been serving the region since 1998, is now expanding its services to Trees and so has changed its name to reflect this change - it is now known as the Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees (CePaCT). We are turning our attention to forest trees because of their importance in the region both for food security and income generation. CePaCT will initially focus on micropropagation of forest tree species and research

has already started with sandalwood. The future will see CePaCT developing expertise in seed storage as well, and to this end we are in discussions with USP to have a Masters student working in the area of recalcitrant seeds. Funding for these activities is being provided by Australia through the SPC LRD Forest and Trees Programme

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3.4 Satisfying Your Ancestral Appetite

Tevita Kete mailed this interesting article from: [Catherine Zandonella, M.P.H National Geogrpahic - The Green Guide](#)

My daughter inherited the luminous blue eyes and ash-blond hair of her Slavic father. Like her northern Italian-Scottish mother, spicy foods make her tummy hurt. Our genes shape not only how we look but also how we respond to foods.

Researchers are taking an active interest in how genes and diet influence our susceptibility to obesity and diseases like diabetes and cancer. Eating a diet that is right for an individual's genetic heritage can be healthier, they are finding. For example, about one-fifth of people of European descent have a genetic modification that puts them at increased risk of cardiovascular disease if they don't consume enough dietary folate.

A return to a traditional diet rich in plant foods and low in added sodium, sugars and saturated fats may also help us maintain a healthy weight and stave off heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions. And a genetically appropriate diet possesses advantages beyond maintaining your health: It can help ensure the survival of indigenous food plants and preserve traditional farming practices.

For millennia, people ate only plants or animals from their surroundings. As a result, we carry differences in our genes that permit us to digest and obtain nutrients from foods. For a simple example, look no further than milk. With the exception of people of European and African descent, most people cannot digest milk beyond infancy because the body stops producing lactase, an enzyme that breaks down the milk sugar, lactose. Europeans, however, acquired the ability to produce this enzyme into adulthood after they began keeping cattle about 7,500 years ago. Those that could digest milk survived lean times. African cattle herders separately developed and passed this trait to subsequent generations.

"We have dozens of diet experts offering us a quick fix as if all of us have the same nutritional and health needs," says Gary Paul Nabhan, Ph.D., ethnobotanist and author of *Why Some Like It Hot: Food, Genes and Cultural Diversity* (Island Press, 2004, \$24) and a co-founder of the indigenous-seed conservation organization Native Seeds/SEARCH. In reality, says Nabhan, "We all have different nutritional needs, and our ancestries are one of the factors that shapes that."

Native Diets

The devastating health effects of drastically changed eating habits within native populations demonstrate just how important ancestral diets are. Among the Pima Indians of Arizona, half of adults suffer from type 2 diabetes, the highest rate found in any population worldwide. Nabhan thinks that something in the genetic makeup of southwestern Native Americans makes them more susceptible to developing diabetes.

This susceptibility is linked not only to what desert-dwelling native populations are eating, Nabhan suspects, but to what they are no longer eating. Their traditional diet was rich in fibrous, drought-resistant plants, such as prickly pear cactus, that resulted in a very slow increase in blood sugar. Perhaps, Nabhan suggests, those indigenous peoples, who were genetically adapted to metabolize slow-release foods, are less able than people of European descent to handle the rapid elevation of blood sugar caused by today's processed foods.

Just as drought-resistant plants are right for desert dwellers, a meat-based diet appears to sit well with peoples who evolved in cold climates. Evenki reindeer herders in Russia derive almost half their calories from meat, more than twice the amount consumed by the average American. Yet Evenki men are leaner and have cholesterol levels that are 30 percent lower than the levels of American men, found William Leonard, Ph.D., professor of anthropology at Northwestern University. It turns out that the meat from reindeer and other free-ranging animals is less fatty, and lower in saturated fats, than meat from cattle and other feedlot animals. What's more, these herders appear to have a naturally higher metabolic rate, in which genes play a role, than American males, Leonard says.

More evidence for the gene-nutrient influence on disease comes from studies on the benefits of traditional diet and lifestyle among Native Hawaiians, who suffer some of the highest mortality rates from diabetes, stroke, cancer and heart disease in the U.S. Native Hawaiians who returned to eating a diet rich in their ancestral foods, including sweet potatoes, seaweed and their staple crop taro—a root vegetable loaded with fiber, vitamins and slow-release sugars—reduced their cholesterol and incidence of heart disease.

The loss of traditional foodstuffs, however, is making it harder for native peoples to keep to their time-honored diets. In Hawaii, streams that once watered the taro fields were diverted to irrigate sugarcane and pineapple. Fortunately, in some locations, efforts are being made to encourage the preservation of traditional agricultural practices and the planting of native crops. For example, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, a grassroots effort has volunteers rerouting irrigation streams to the taro fields and planting the nutritious crop. In the Southwest, Nabhan and others are banking and distributing seeds of indigenous crops through Native Seeds/SEARCH. Worldwide, the Global Crop Diversity Trust is building a seed bunker on a remote Norwegian island, a sort of "Noah's Ark" for the world's indigenous seeds.

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4. ICUC-related information

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No entry

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Championing underutilised plant species for food, nutrition and sustainable development