



The International Centre for
Underutilised Crops

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ICUC-News #43

15 May 2007

Dear colleagues,

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With best wishes,
Hannah

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1. Funding & Job opportunities

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1.1 Scientist (Village Level Studies), ICRISAT

ICRISAT seeks applications for Scientist (Village Level Studies), to be based at Patancheru, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Village-Level Studies (VLS) were initiated by ICRISAT's Economics Program in India in 1975, and later extended to Africa. The studies have provided important insights about changing household and village livelihoods and helped scientists identify and understand socioeconomic, agro-biological, and institutional constraints to agricultural development in the Semi-Arid Tropics (SAT). In recognition of the profound economic and social changes that have affected the SAT over the past decade, the Social Science research team at ICRISAT, in partnership with national research programs and leading institutes worldwide, resumed its VLS in Asia.

For more information on the job, and how to apply go to
[http://www.icrisat.org/careers/Scientist\(VLS\).htm](http://www.icrisat.org/careers/Scientist(VLS).htm)

Applications should be sent by 30 May 2007.

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2. Workshops & Training Courses

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2.1 II International Symposium on Human Health Effects of Fruits and Vegetables

Second Announcement

For updated information on the 2nd International Symposium on Human Health Effects of Fruits and Vegetables (Houston, Texas, USA - October 9-13, 2007) visit the web site

<http://favhealth2007.tamu.edu>

Program/Sessions:

The proposed program include sessions focused on certain diseases such as obesity, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, brain health, eye health, bioavailability, osteoporosis, skin health, antioxidants and health.

The symposium organizers plan to cover different fruits, vegetables and nuts and how pre- & post harvest factors, organic cultivation, and isolation & characterization of bioactive compounds can provide protective effects on the diseases mentioned above. Session on food and drug interaction and how fruits and vegetables play role in the drug interaction will be organized. In order to provide an opportunity for all interested participants to demonstrate their research to about 40 country scientists, students and industry.

The symposium will include poster sessions and poster competitions for students. Key note speaker plenary speakers for each session and invited speakers will be updated to the web site soon.

Round table discussion:

To discuss about the funding opportunities through NIH and USDA on health aspects of fruits and vegetables. We are expecting to have key officials from WHO, FAO, NIH and CDC, USDA to participate in the discussion. We are expecting several key industry representatives from different commodity groups and processing industry to attend the conference. The United States Produce Marketing Association annual conference will be coinciding with our banquet so several industry can attend round table discussion and you can meet with industry representatives.

Abstracts:

Deadline for abstract submission is extended until May 25, 2007.

Symposium Convener:

Bhimu Patil, Ph.D.

Director, Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center Associate Professor Department of Horticultural Sciences Texas A&M University

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2.2 SPIRIT 2007 conference

The conference titled "Sustainable & Participative Initiative for Rural Infrastructure Technologies" (SPIRIT) has been conducted successively over the past two years during which various issues concerning needs of rural India were addressed by eminent speakers.

SPIRIT2005 presented views on the subject with a focus on areas such as equitable participation and sharing of resource for needs of construction, water, and energy. SPIRIT2006 went further by presenting such technologies that could make a difference with a model to encourage access to the poor.

SPIRIT2007 is to be held at the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce Auditorium, New Delhi on 24th & 25th May, 2007 and will take a panel discussion approach to focus on infrastructure from two important aspects of rural development, viz.:

Promotion of sustainable rural livelihood Enabling effective government program delivery The conference will bring together stakeholders with experience in the subject of rural infrastructure to establish an approach that will help policymakers fine tune delivery to meet changing needs. Other than representatives from government, those who will constitute the panel of experts will be members of civil society, technology professionals, academicians and private sector professionals. The range of issues to be covered may be browsed at our web site www.spiritindia.org .

SPIRIT is an initiative of Society for Strategy Technology & Delivery for Development, New Delhi that has very many well meaning professionals keen to address the cause of sustainable development within an equitable framework. The conference has been made possible due to collaborative efforts of Tangent Group and financial support from Max Mueller Bhavan.

To improve the quality of deliberations we have taken a decision not to charge for participation that will be done on an invitation basis. To indicate your keenness to participate, we request you to fill the registration form at the earliest and mail back to us. The forms can be downloaded from the web site address mentioned below and we look forward to hearing from you on 011-26496962 should you have a problem accessing the form. We are constrained to limiting participation to a total of 75 professionals.

Electronic form – www.spiritindia.org/electronic.doc
Paper Form – www.spiritindia.org/paper.doc

You may view further details about the event at the web site www.spiritindia.org and we look forward to having you with us at SPIRIT2007. We would much appreciate if you could forward this mail to any professional who you feel is committed to the subject of rural development and can contribute to bring richness to the proceedings.

For more information, contact Sanjeev Vasudev, Conference Organiser - SPIRIT2007
SPIRIT2007 Secretariat, A-6 DDA, Shahpur Jat, Next to Asiad Village, New Delhi 110049. Email: info@spiritindia.org. Web: www.spiritindia.org

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2.3 Regional Workshop on forest genetic resources conservation and management in the Pacific 25-29 June 2007, Nadi, Fiji.

Background

The conservation and management of forest genetic resources has been a major concern in the Pacific region. The significant loss of biodiversity due to destructive human activities associated with mining, agricultural clearing and commercial logging, particularly within the larger Melanesian countries, has featured in many international forums where issues like extreme poverty, climatic changes and environmental degradation are now the main focus of concern. It has become a major economic and environmental issue as to whether these countries can justify the present rate of exploitation of their forest resources. Several commercial timber species have become rare due to indiscriminate logging while many culturally valuable species are threatened by heavy harvesting for traditional uses such as wood carving, firewood and medicine.

The Pacific forests and trees are increasingly threatened in many ways including over-utilization, land-use change and climate change.

In 1999, a workshop was jointly organized and supported by the South Pacific Regional Initiative on Forest Genetic Resources (SPRIG), AusAID, FAO, the Pacific Islands Forests and Trees Support Programme of SPC, SPREP and the Forestry Division of Samoa which developed the "Pacific Sub-Regional Action Plan for Conservation, Management and Sustainable Use of Forest and Tree Resources." The Action Plan is organized into four themes, as follows:

- Tree Species Priorities for Genetic Resources Operations and Activities
- Conservation, Sustainable Use and Management of Forests and Trees
- Germplasm Collection, Exchange and Access
- Institutional Strengthening, Training Needs and Regional Collaboration

The Workshop to be held in June 2007 will aim to update the Action Plan developed in Apia in 1999 after assessing progress in its implementation over eight years. The revised plan will provide an agreed

framework which suits the needs and priorities of each PCITs in relation to forest genetic resources conservation and management. FGR priorities for each country will be strongly linked to its wider development priorities. Although there has been a notable increase of interest among PICTs in developing research and action plan on FGR, there have been modest achievements due to management and governance issues, limited national budgets and shortages of trained personnel to implement approved FGR programs.

The FAO Panel of Experts on FGR on its 14th Session held early this year in Rome, Italy, has recommended a stronger action to support the management of forest genetic resources to achieve sustainable forest development and the current updating of the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources should further clarify the contribution of forest genetic resources to the achievement of MDG 1 (to reduce extreme poverty and hunger) and MDG 7 (to ensure environmental sustainability).

Enhance regional cooperation offers an effective solution towards a successful program on forest genetic resource conservation and management in the Pacific. Given the small size and limited resources of many Pacific countries, it is vital that a regional approach is adopted, such that information and genetic resources can be readily exchanged among SPC member countries and territories.

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- Develop a Pacific Island Regional Research and Development Agenda and an Action Plan for improved governance in the conservation, management and sustainable utilization of forest genetic resources, including a plan of follow-up activities after the Workshop.
- Strengthen and explore opportunities for collaboration amongst PICTs, other international and regional organisations and donor agencies with emphasis on forest genetic resources conservation and management and its application to poverty alleviation, rural development and climate change, within a community forestry framework.

Programme

The first two days of the workshop will be set aside for presentations of country reports, agency reports, technical presentations and discussions

The third day of the workshop shall be set aside for the preparation of the Action Plan for improved governance in research and development on the conservation and sustainable use of forest genetic resources within a community forestry framework. This will incorporate recommendations on future strategies, and possible regional projects for implementation and will include a discussion on the proposed establishment of a regional forest tree seed bank.

The fourth day will be set aside for discussions on relevant issues to Pacific Forestry such as impact of climate change, logging code of practice, forest certification, biofuels and carbon offsets, invasive species and maximizing role of Pacific forests and trees to the well-being of the Pacific Islanders.

The fifth day will be a field visit to Fiji Pine plantation areas and the Fiji Forestry Department Sandalwood seed stand planting near Lololo.

Participants

Participants will be from the 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories. Invitations will be extended to international and regional governmental organizations, non-government organizations, civic, youth and gender-based organizations and academic institutions.

Main target group will be technical officers of the respective forestry agencies who are currently involved in forest genetic resources conservation and management, research and development, and extension works in their countries and territories.

Sponsors/Organizers

The workshop will be organized by the Forests and Trees Programme, Land Resources Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in partnership with ENSIS (formerly CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products) and with co-funding support from the Australian Government (AusAID through its Pacific Governance Support Program).

For more information please contact the following:

Cenon Padolina, Regional Forest Genetic Resources Officer
or Sairusi Bulai, Forests and Trees Adviser

or Bale Wilikabau, Programme Assistant
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Land Resources Division,
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
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2.4 Special Side Event at FARA General Assembly: Revitalizing Africa's hidden wealth of diversity for development

A Call for Establishment of an Agricultural Biodiversity Initiative for Africa (ABIA)
11 June 2007, (Time 9am - 11am; Venue: Sandton Convention Center)
Sandton City, Johannesburg, South Africa

Purpose: To seek views from stakeholders and discuss possible elements of a strategic and coordinated action on agricultural biodiversity resources management in Africa.

Background: Africa's agricultural biodiversity resources could play a central role in efforts to meet development challenges and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on poverty, hunger, malnutrition, health and environmental health. Indeed, agricultural biodiversity remains central to the livelihood and survival strategies and well-being of the rural poor. It also remains the basis for the genetic enhancement of agricultural plant and animal species.

Currently, strategic and coordinated action on agricultural biodiversity and genetic resources management in the continent is generally weak. The focus of agricultural research is on just a few crops and commodities, ignoring the larger pool of agricultural biodiversity resources. Research and development activities to enhance understanding and deployment of this rich resource have consequently been declining. As a result, even though Africa is rich in agricultural biodiversity resources the continent is yet to optimize benefits from them. Even more alarming is the increasing threat of extinction of these biodiversity resources, both in fields and farms, as well as in gene banks. The above analysis shows the need for a strategic and coordinated plan to change mind sets in relation to agricultural biodiversity, to increase awareness of its potential for development, galvanize policy support and action towards its conservation and use, and promote regional collaboration in its conservation and management. To address the above-mentioned issues, FARA has initiated discussions towards development of an agricultural biodiversity initiative for Africa (ABIA), and held preliminary discussions with Bioversity International to outline the idea. This side event at the FARA AGM was recommended to deliberate further on this issue and seek wider stakeholder input and consensus in its development.

Participants at side-event: Participation is open to all, particularly representatives of Sub-regional organizations (SROs), Regional Economic Groupings (RECs), NARS including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Universities, ARIs, CG Centres, and donor agencies.

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3. Publications & Information

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3.1 Call for Contributions Urban Agriculture Magazine # 19

Deadline for Contributions: 1 SEPTEMBER 2007

The UA-Magazine facilitates sharing of information on the impacts of urban agriculture, promotes the analysis and debate on critical issues for the development of the sector, and the publication of "best" or "good" practices in urban agriculture. It is published two times a year on the RUAF-website (www.ruaf.org) and in hardcopy version. This English version is translated in Spanish, French, Arabic, Chinese, and Portuguese.

The UA-Magazine is produced under the RUAF programme Cities Farming for the Future, funded by DGIS (the Netherlands) and IDRC (Canada).

The main aim of the RUAF-CFF programme is to contribute to urban poverty reduction, urban food security, improved urban environmental management, empowerment of urban farmers and participatory city governance via capacity development of local stakeholders in urban agriculture and facilitating participatory and multi-stakeholder policy formulation and action planning on urban agriculture, including safe reuse of urban organic wastes and wastewater.

The UA-Magazine welcomes contributions on new initiatives at individual, neighbourhood, city and national levels. Attention is given to the technical socio-economic, institutional and policy aspects of sustainable urban food production, marketing, processing and distribution systems. Although articles on any related issue is welcome, and is considered for publication, each UA-Magazine focuses on a selected them (for previous issues visit: www.ruaf.org).

We are currently asking for your contribution to the following issue:

SUPPORTING INNOVATIVENESS IN URBAN FARMING SYSTEMS

Urban farming systems are in constant development. Innovation is continuously taking place. Urban farming systems need to be improved for several reasons:

Specific urban conditions such as confined space, closeness to urban consumers, special health considerations due to closeness to people, and use of urban organic wastes and wastewater, among others, require specific adaptations; urban farmers who recently migrated to the city bring their rural farming knowledge that may not always apply in the specific urban setting in which they find themselves; urban poor or entrepreneurs who are without a farming tradition but have taken up farming lack relevant knowledge.

Urban farmers need technical support to upgrade their knowledge and improve their farming practices. Because urban agriculture often falls outside the mandate of the conventional agriculture research institutes, little research has been done into the development of urban farming systems. Also agricultural extension organizations give little attention to the urban areas. The degree of farmer organization is low in the city and urban NGOs often lack agricultural expertise.

However, attention to urban agriculture and to research with urban farmers is increasing. Participatory methods for promoting innovation in rural agriculture are also being applied in urban settings, but need adaptation to the different conditions (multiple livelihood strategies, less community cohesion, less possibilities for integrated farming, less indigenous knowledge available, urban markets requiring quicker responses and other types of products, etc).

This issue of the UA Magazine will be a first effort to take stock of a broad range of experiences involving:

Participatory methodologies for promoting innovation in urban farming systems, such as joint experimentation, farmer field schools, identifying farmer innovators, exchange visits, using ICT (participatory radio, etc.)

New technologies in urban farming that were developed by farmers or together with farmers in response to the specific urban conditions mentioned above.

We are particularly interested in experiences showing the process of adapting methodologies and technologies to the urban setting and indicating how innovation of urban farming systems can be stimulated and supported most effectively.

This issue is a collaborative effort of RUAF (www.ruaf.org); PROLINNOVA, an international learning and advocacy network on promoting local innovation in ecologically-oriented agriculture and natural resource management (www.prolinnova.net); and Urban Harvest, a CGIAR system-wide initiative to direct and coordinate the collective knowledge and technologies of the Future Harvest Centers towards strengthening urban and peri-urban agriculture (<http://www.cipotato.org/urbanharvest/home.htm>).

Please share the following aspects of your experience (as applicable) in your article:

- a short narrative on your experience (main goal, where, who implements, target group, activities)
- the methods applied (how, why this method, why does it work well, with whom – links with NGOs, farmer organisations, municipalities, etc.)
- the impacts achieved (in which areas, extent, unexpected impacts?)
- problems/challenges faced and solutions found

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- major lessons learned
 - the way forward (future plans, new partners, support required from whom, etc.).

Articles on urban agriculture should consist of approximately 2300 words (three pages), 1600 words (two pages), or 700 words (one page), preferably accompanied by an abstract, references (maximum of 5), figures and digital images or photographs of good quality. The articles should be written in a manner that is readily understood by a wide variety of stakeholders all over the world. We also invite you to submit information on recent publications, journals, videos, photographs, cartoons, letters, technology descriptions and assessments, workshops, training courses, conferences, networks, web-links, etc, especially those relating to this theme.

Please send your contribution to
The Editor *UA Magazine*
RUAFA, ETC Foundation
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3.2 Medicinal and Aromatic Plants: the way out of poverty?

Press release from ICIMOD

Four-year, US\$1.68M project in three countries of the greater Himalayan region will aim to realise this.

About 20,000 tons of medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP) worth US\$18-20 million are traded every year in Nepal alone, and about 90% are harvested in uncontrolled fashion, landless, resource-poor mountain farmers for whom the harvest and trade in medicinal plants constitutes their only form of cash income. The situation is similar in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and other countries of South Asia, and 90% of the plants from Nepal are exported to India in raw form.

The greater Himalayan region, in fact, holds the comparative advantage of being home to many medicinal and aromatic plants found only in the region. The region also has various well-developed practices in traditional medicines (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, among others) based on indigenous knowledge of these plants' medicinal and healing properties. Considering the global trade in medicinal and aromatic plants – now a US\$60 billion industry and still growing, especially with the increasing demand worldwide for herbal medicines – the potential of MAPs to provide relief from poverty in South Asia, where 40% of the world's poor reside, is tremendous, if it can be tapped.

However, issues of sustainable harvesting – the need to balance the push-and-pull factors of commercial demand on the one hand and conservation of these valuable plants and their contribution to biodiversity on the other – the need for greater value addition at the community level and for stronger farmer-industry collaboration to realise this, the need for commercial cultivation of important species, as well as for more research about the plants and more information including market information and market strategies and a more supportive policy in the region need to be addressed.

Considering the increasing value of medicinal and aromatic plants, both in terms of primary health care and as a critical source of livelihoods and income for the rural poor in the region, ICIMOD with support from the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), The Netherlands is implementing a four-year, US\$1.68 million 'Medicinal Plants and Herbs: Developing Sustainable Supply Chain and Enhancing Rural Livelihoods in the Eastern Himalayas' Project in three countries, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, with India providing technical expertise. ICIMOD's Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Programme in Asia (MAPPA) is the project's implementing agency, with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s Intergovernmental Sub-Group on Tropical Fruits providing a supervisory role.

The project's overall objective is to conserve natural resources, reduce poverty, and improve livelihoods for mountain communities of the Himalayan region through the sustainable development and utilisation of high-value, low-volume medicinal and aromatic plants. A recently concluded three-day inception workshop in April launched the project with implementing partners in the three countries. Participants included representatives from nodal agencies (focal point organisations for the project in each country),

research and academic institutes, NGOs, and the private sector. The project will take consideration of each country's priorities and special characteristics.

The inception workshop in April allowed each country to present its priorities and perspective, existing projects in the sector, and discussion about common and crosscutting issues. ICIMOD and experts from India shared latest trends and organic practices in MAPs cultivation and processing as well as emerging value supply chains practices here and in other countries. Through the workshop, each country's nodes and partners sat down and consulted with MAP experts on their individual country plans. The country plans are now being refined after the consultations.

Institutional implementing mechanisms

Partners in each country, with a nodal agency in each, are implementing the Project. In Bangladesh the nodal agency is the Ministry of Commerce, with the Bangladesh Neem Foundation and the Development of Biotechnology and Environmental Conservation Centre as implementing partners. In Bhutan the project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, while the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal, is the nodal agency in Nepal, with the Herbs and Non-Timber Forest Products Coordination Committee, Nepal working with partners to implement the project in Western Nepal.

For more information, please contact:

RBS Rawat, Regional Programme Coordinator

Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Programme in Asia (MAPPA), ARID/ICIMOD

E-mail: rrawat@icimod.org

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3.3 Call for contributions LEISA Issue 23.3: Linking health and sustainable agriculture

Karen Hampson has specifically asked for contributions from the underutilised crops community:

Sustainable agriculture aims to address the needs of individuals and communities at the same time as it maintains or enhances the health and functioning of the natural environment. It should have positive effects on the health of the individual farmer and consumer, on the plants, animals and the soil and it should contribute to maintaining the functions of the ecosystem as a whole. The development of sustainable agricultural systems cannot be separated from the development of the people involved. In the same way, the health, or viability and robustness of the agricultural system cannot be separated from the health of the farmer and their family and community. In short, healthy soils produce healthy crops which contribute to the health of the consumer.

Traditional subsistence agriculture has in most cases provided adequate nutrition for the people depending on it. But the increasing industrialisation of agriculture and modernisation of the whole food system has meant that the food most of us now eat is primarily produced to attract buyers, is often processed, has been stored or treated, and its nutritional content is at best a secondary concern. One result of this is that producers focus on growing cash crops, and produce (and eat) fewer traditional and minor crops, which have always contributed to a more nutritionally balanced diet. The growing use of chemical inputs such as pesticides in the production process has also meant increased health risks for farmers and their families.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the link between food, food production and health and there is now a greater demand for healthy food products. This can include organically or locally produced food, which is perceived to be not only better for our health, but also to taste better. This development provides an opportunity for many producers to move towards a more sustainable production system, for example by producing organic food for niche markets. This can also contribute to their own families' health through improved nutrition.

In this issue we want to present examples of how the linkages between health issues and agriculture have been addressed in practical ways, how awareness about nutrition and health is raised in relation to food production, and how low external input and sustainable agriculture can contribute to the alleviation of nutritional problems, disease and health related issues. We are particularly looking for examples where a shift towards sustainable agriculture has been chosen as a response to health concerns.

Please send us your stories! We would be looking for short articles (800-2400 words) with an emphasis on practical cases rather than research results. We can provide full editorial support (for example by adapting an existing paper for our audience) and a fee of 75 euro is available to authors.

Deadline for submission of articles: 1 June 2007.
Karen Hampson, Editor/Researcher
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3.4 Case studies on natural products

Luigi Guarino has sent a link to a series of case studies on natural products:

Ecuador: sustainable tourism: http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=14976_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Guatemala: Xate palm: http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=12802_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Madagascar: medicinal and aromatic plants:
http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=14980_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Nepal: essential oils (Jatamansi and Wintergreen oils):
http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=12804_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Philippines: rattan: http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=12806_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Senegal: Laalo Mbep Gum (gum karaya):
http://www.frameweb.org/ev_en.php?ID=12800_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

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3.5 Up for discussion...

Bioversity International has launched a new initiative to raising awareness about biodiversity and nutrition and the Convention on Biological Diversity's cross-cutting initiative with an interactive section called 'Up for Discussion':

http://www.biodiversityinternational.org/Up_for_Discussion/Biodiversity_and_Nutrition/index.aspx

On the 'Up for Discussion' page, we have solicited statements from representatives from international organizations that have been asked by the Convention on Biological Diversity to participate in the cross-cutting initiative. The page allows users to read the views expressed by these experts and to submit their own comments.

The Up for Discussion web page is intended to:

- help raise awareness about the issue of biodiversity and nutrition,
- give the many organization working in the area an opportunity to express their views on the subject and
- strengthen connections between these groups.

We have just set up and begun to promote the page, so only a few comments have been posted. We are now inviting as many people as possible to join the discussion.

As stakeholders in the cross-cutting initiative, we hope that you will help us generate a lively on-line discussion on the issues relating to biodiversity and nutrition by submitting a comment. We would also greatly appreciate it if you could inform your network of contacts about the page and encourage them to participate in the discussion.

We hope this page can be a mutually supportive way of advancing the work being done by all our respective organizations.

Other pages on the Bioversity web site dedicated to biodiversity and nutrition can be found at the following addresses:

Nutrition

<http://www.bioversityinternational.org/Themes/Nutrition/index.asp>

Cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food, nutrition and health

http://www.bioversityinternational.org/Themes/Nutrition/Cross-cutting_Initiative/index.asp

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4. ICUC-related information

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4.1 ICUC in the News

On Sunday 6 May the Sri Lankan Sunday Observer run a full page story about ICUC and our processing and enterprise development activities in Sri Lanka. The article can be found here:

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2007/05/06/spe03.asp>

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Championing underutilised plant species for food, nutrition and sustainable development