



The International Centre for
Underutilised Crops

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ICUC-News #64

18 March 2008

Dear colleagues,

Apologies for my tardiness in sending out this issue of ICUC-News. The reason as you might imagine was the International Symposium on Underutilized Plants which kept me busy throughout the past weeks. Now that it is over and the over 200 delegates from 55 countries have safely reached home, we can take a deep breath, look at the recommendations and prepare to move them forward...

The symposium was a resounding approval of the need for a working group on underutilized plant species to provide a voice to those who are working on these plants. The delegates endorsed the International Society for Horticultural Sciences' working group on underutilized plants, which is co-chaired by Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon of the Global Facilitation Unit for Underutilized Species and myself, and filled it with life and suggestions for future collaboration on research and development projects. A report will be published and circulated to you in the near future.

A series of recommendations to foster collaboration amongst the participants was developed around four pertinent issues asking the questions:

"What can we do...

1. ...to address the opportunity of using underutilized plant species as risk buffers in times of climate change?
2. ...to address the opportunity of using underutilized plant species for better nutrition?
3. ...to meet the challenge of enhanced and sustained market access for underutilized plant products?
4. ...to address the challenges regarding using underutilized species without undermining agrobiodiversity?"

On the opportunity of using underutilized plant species as risk buffers in times of climate change:

1. Build a database on climatic adaptability of underutilized species
2. Identify underutilized species that tolerate various stress situations
3. Involve communities in the conservation, information gathering, knowledge sharing and dissemination

On the opportunity of using underutilized plant species for better nutrition:

1. Establish a database of existing information of nutritive values of underutilized species
2. Develop a local/regional based priority list of top ten underutilized species
3. Create awareness of the importance of diets with nutritional underutilized species
4. Build capacity at all levels throughout the value chain
5. Policy support should be sought from Government agencies (Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health) to mainstream underutilized species in school and hospital feeding programs

On the challenge of enhanced and sustained market access for underutilized plant products:

1. Share and disseminate successful case studies on market access (reasons for success and failure)
2. Develop and implement an advocacy and lobbying strategy
3. Promote partnerships between value actors
4. Carry out and document economic and market studies of different aspects of value chains

On the challenges regarding using underutilized species without undermining agrobiodiversity:

1. Strengthen research on benefits of diverse farming and eco-systems
2. Carry out risk analyses of invasiveness of new species and pressure on biodiversity through promotion of particular species / varieties
3. Develop guidelines and good practices for sustainable use of underutilized species
4. Create awareness at school and community level on importance of biodiversity for their environment, farming systems and eco-systems
5. Set up working groups at national and international level involving researchers, policy advocates and farmer organizations

These recommendations are now being taken forward by the Working Group chairs and thematic sub-groups will be set up to enhance communication and specific collaboration. Further details will be available in the forthcoming report.

I wish to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this event, in particular the members of the Organizing Committee!

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With best wishes for a Happy Easter,
Hannah

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1. Funding & Job opportunities

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1.1 Coordinator for CGIAR's Amazon Initiative Ecoregional Program

CIAT, on behalf of the Amazon Initiative Consortium for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, is looking for a Coordinator for a Collaborative Research Program in the Amazon.

The AI is committed to the reduction of poverty and social vulnerability, food security and the sustainability of ecosystems in the region. The thematic and conceptual agenda of the Consortium is focused on sustainable land use systems for the prevention, reduction and reversal of environmental degradation and livelihood improvement of vulnerable Amazonian populations.

This vacancy announcement in English, Spanish and Portuguese is available from Amazon Initiative website www.iamazonica.org.br and CIAT <http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/jobs/jobs.htm>. Please distribute widely.

Coordinador del Programa Ecoregional Iniciativa Amazónica
El Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), representando al Consorcio Iniciativa Amazónica (IA) para la Conservación y Uso Sostenible de Recursos Naturales, busca un Coordinador para el Programa Ecoregional Iniciativa Amazónica.

La IA está comprometida con la reducción de la pobreza y vulnerabilidad social, con la seguridad alimentaria y con la sostenibilidad de los ecosistemas en la región. La agenda temática y conceptual del Consorcio se focaliza en los sistemas de uso de la tierra para la prevención, reducción y reversión de la degradación ambiental y el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida en la Amazonía.

Los anuncios en español, portugués e inglés están en la web de la Iniciativa Amazónica www.iamazonica.org.br y CIAT <http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/es/empleos/vacantes.htm> , por favor distribuir ampliamente este anuncio.

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1.2 IUCN: Regional Coordinator, Drylands

Position: REGIONAL COORDINATOR, DRYLANDS (RC-DRYLANDS/NRB/08)

Location: IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), Nairobi, Kenya, with frequent travel

Reporting to: IUCN Regional Programme Coordinator for Eastern and Southern Africa with a functional reporting line to the Head, Ecosystem Management Programme (HQ)

Deadline: 31 March 2008

The IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Programme operates in twenty-one countries in the Horn of Africa, East Africa, southern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. The Regional Coordinator for Drylands oversees all aspects of the IUCN drylands projects and programmatic activities in Eastern and Southern Africa. S/he will inherit a portfolio of project activities for which s/he will be responsible for supporting implementation, monitoring performance, and ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and quality outputs. S/he will further build the Drylands Component Programme through the development of additional project interventions and the mobilization of resources. S/he will contribute to various regional and, through the IUCN Ecosystem Management Programme, international networks related to the management of dryland resources. The regional Drylands Component Programme is implemented in collaboration with IUCN members, partners, global thematic programmes and Commissions.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

Drylands programme implementation and management

Inheriting a portfolio of project activities, the Regional Coordinator is responsible for supporting implementation, monitoring performance, and ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and quality outputs.

- Oversee and manage the timely implementation of funded projects in the Drylands portfolio in accordance with the project documents, supporting agreements (e.g. contracts, MOUs, PAIAs etc), annual workplans and the procedures of IUCN;
- With the Drylands Team members, develop and administer annual work plans, budgets, internal agreements, contracts and progress reports as required by collaborating partners, steering committee and donors;
- With the Drylands Team, and with prudence and probity, be accountable for portfolio-related expenditures in accordance with IUCN procurement procedures;
- With relevant IUCN officers and collaborating partners, select and appoint consultants following acceptable procurement practices, to carry out specific tasks and oversee delivery of quality products;
- Provide technical support to project interventions and take the lead in ensuring quality outputs that meet the satisfaction of project partners;
- Ensure the collection, collation, reporting, organization, and archiving of all project data and documents;
- Oversee and ensure due diligence in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of project activities;
- In collaboration with the Regional Programme Coordinator and project partners, investigate additional fund-raising possibilities to ensure the sustainability of project activities;
- Ensure that Drylands Team costs are recovered from the portfolio of project interventions as appropriate;
- Assist in building capacity for sustainably managing Dryland Resources in Eastern and Southern Africa and among the IUCN members, partners and constituency at large;
- Ensure the integration of dryland concerns in the priority areas of ESARO.

Drylands Portfolio Development

All of the Drylands projects combined constitute the Drylands Portfolio which also contributes to the global Drylands Programme of IUCN. Some of the projects in the portfolio will be funded project interventions under implementation, others will be early concepts, others developed concepts that are being negotiated with donors. The Portfolio should be managed in a way that will ensure the sustainability of the Team and contribute to the overall Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Programme.

- Working closely with IUCN members and/or partners, and the Regional Programme Coordinator, lead the Drylands Team in developing innovative proposals that address members and/or partners needs;
- In collaboration with IUCN members and/or partners, the Regional Programme Coordinator and others as appropriate, negotiate project funding with potential donors in terms that facilitate IUCN cost recovery;
- In collaboration with the Regional Program Coordinator, use the ABC list as a portfolio development pipeline and a planning tool to manage the Drylands portfolio and ensure portfolio sustainability;
- Manage the income and expenditure of the Drylands Portfolio in line with the current needs (ensuring adequate staffing to address programmatic needs and observing that expenditure does not exceed income) and future direction.
- Participate in appropriate local, national, regional and global fora and meetings on matters related to drylands, briefing the Head of the Global Ecosystem Management Program responsible for Drylands and the Regional Programme Coordinator as appropriate.
- Assist IUCN colleagues to develop global, regional and national networks and task forces on dryland resources in ways that assist the implementation of the IUCN global program responsible for drylands and the production of tools and associated services.

Oversight of Drylands Team

In addition to the Regional Coordinator, the Drylands Team includes the services of a Programme Officer, a Finance Officer, an Administrative Assistant, and any project staff (note: depending on the size of the portfolio, the other Team positions may or may not be full-time). The Regional Coordinator manages the performance of Drylands Project Staff and co-manages the performance of programme, finance and administrative staff in collaboration with their Heads of Department. The Regional Coordinator is expected to manage the performance of other team members to ensure that the team meets its goals in developing and implementing the Drylands portfolio of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Programme, ensuring that these staff:

- Develop individual work plans that reflect timely delivery of project outputs;
- Implement work plans within the relevant budgets;
- Deliver quality outputs to the satisfaction of IUCN and project partners;
- Receive regular feedback on their performance and mentoring through consultation and appraisals.

Participation in broader institutional support for the IUCN Eastern & Southern Africa Regional Programme

- Participate in ESARP Technical Programme Group meetings, and other organizational fora as appropriate and contribute to the development of the Eastern Africa Regional Programme as a cohesive organizational unit with an integrated approach to programme development and delivery;
- Develop close working relationships with, provide and receive technical assistance and support to and from the other ESARP Component Programmes and Country Offices for the development and strengthening of the Drylands portfolio and vice versa;
- Assist in overseeing and developing the relationship between IUCN and its implementing partners, ensuring that they are appraised of and satisfied with project progress;
- Assist in overseeing and developing the relationships between IUCN and project donors, ensuring that they are appraised of and satisfied with project progress;
- Serve as the regional focal point for relevant multilateral policy mechanisms, including the UNCCD and the UNFCCC providing technical support to the Convention Secretariats and to regional contracting parties as appropriate;
- Ensure that programme activities are published and publicized through relevant forums (webstories, press releases, abstracts, conferences, publications etc), working closely with the Regional Communications Coordinator, the Regional Programme Coordinator, and where appropriate Commissions and other technical networks.
- With prior approval from the Regional Programme Coordinator, represent IUCN:
 - At internal and external meetings at local, basin, national, regional and international levels
 - As a technical expert on advisory bodies
- Carry out any other relevant tasks as required by, and mutually agreed with, the Regional Programme Coordinator.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- A strong background in programme and project development and management with at least 7+ years' experience (including practical field experience) in an international environment, including in several countries in the ESARO region.

- Working experience within IUCN (in the Secretariat or Commissions) is an asset.
- Post-graduate experience in a relevant field
- Proven high level of knowledge about international and political issues in the region related to drylands biodiversity and nature conservation and sustainable development.
- Extensive experience in project design and implementation.
- Demonstrated ability to work as part of a team and communicate in a cross-cultural environment.
- Fully computer literate and familiar with Microsoft Office and major software packages.
- Proven skills in networking, negotiation, and conflict management.
- Proven analytical and leadership skills.
- Proven fund-raising success and experience in donor relationship management.
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Excellent command of English. Working knowledge of additional regional languages (especially Arabic, French, Kiswahili or Portuguese) would be an asset.
- Willing to travel frequently (up to 40% of time) within the region and internationally.

APPLICATIONS

Applicants are asked to submit their CV in English and a supporting letter of motivation along with the names and contact details of three referees, one of whom should be a recent employer. Qualified internal candidates will be given preference.

Applications should be submitted by e-mail before 31 March 2008 to:
 Human Resources Management Group
 IUCN Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
 P.O. Box 68200 – 00200, Nairobi, Kenya
 Tel: ++254 (020) 890605/12; Fax: ++254 (020) 890615
 Email: earohr@iucn.org

Applicants selected for interviews will be contacted within one month of the closing date.

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1.3 Fellowships at the World Forest Institute in Portland, Oregon

International Fellowships Available at the World Forest Institute, Portland, Oregon, USA

The World Forest Institute Fellowship Program brings forestry and natural resources professionals from around the world to work at the World Forest Institute for 6 to 12 months. Fellows conduct an independent research project developed in conjunction with his/her sponsor. Projects are typically either policy or marketing studies, and may be environmental, social or economic in focus. Activities involve information gathering through interviews, meeting with forestry organizations, and taking organized field trips. Fellows typically summarize their projects in a report and poster published by the WFI. A large component of the program involves traveling and visiting with professionals in the Pacific Northwest forest sector. Fellows visit forestlands, research sites, manufacturing facilities, and NGOs. Additionally, Fellows gain valuable cultural experience and English language skills. Project proposals are now being accepted, and a matching grant is available to cover up to half of the Fellowship fee. WFI is located in beautiful Portland, Oregon, a short drive to forests, mountains, beach, and desert. Oregon is the largest producer of forest products among the 50 US states.

For more information contact
 Angie DiSalvo
 International Fellowship Program Manager
 World Forest Institute, a program of the World Forestry Center
 4033 SW Canyon Road, Portland, OR 97221 USA
 (503) 488-2137
<http://wfi.worldforestry.org>

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2. Workshops & Training Courses

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2.1 Tropentag 2008 in Hohenheim, Germany

Organised by the Center of Agriculture in the Tropics and Subtropics of the University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart October 7-9, 2008 in Hohenheim

'Competition for Resources in a Changing World: New Drive for Rural Development'

We have the pleasure to inform you about the upcoming conference, which will take place in Hohenheim, Germany, from the 7th to 9th of October 2008. The call for papers and the first conference informations are now published on

<http://www.tropentag.de>
http://www.tropentag.de/conference/call_tt2008.pdf

The deadline for submission of abstract(s) is April 30th, 2008. For the submission of your abstracts, we kindly request you to use the online form available at:

<http://submission.tropentag.de>

A panel of referees will decide upon the acceptance of the contributions based on the abstract. The decision for a contribution to be accepted as poster or as oral presentation is at the discretion of this panel of referees. A programme committee will allocate the accepted oral contributions to 20 interdisciplinary sessions. Contributions of an interdisciplinary nature will be preferentially selected as oral presentation.

Poster contributions will be grouped into thematic clusters and will be addressed in guided poster sessions.

Authors of papers will have to submit a four page version of their paper by October 31th, 2008.

We especially encourage young scientists to submit their contributions.

For more detailed information please see the call text at <http://www.tropentag.de>

We are looking forward to your contribution and to welcoming you in Hohenheim next October.

More information available from:

Prof. Dr. Georg Cadisch

Dr. Ludwig Kammesheidt

Centre for Agriculture in the Tropics and Subtropics University of Hohenheim Garbenstraße 13
D-70593 Stuttgart

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3. Publications & Information

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3.1 Apart From Used Chip Fat, There Is No Such Thing as a Sustainable Biofuel

Even capitalists now admit the oil crisis is real. But their solutions border on lunacy as they avoid the obvious answer

by George Monbiot (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/feb/12/biofuels.energy>)

Now they might start sitting up. They wouldn't listen to the environmentalists or even the geologists. Can governments ignore the capitalists? A report published last week by Citibank, and so far unremarked on by the media, proposes "genuine difficulties" in increasing the production of crude oil, "particularly after 2012". Though 175 big drilling projects will start in the next four years, "the fear remains that most of this supply will be offset by high levels of decline". The oil industry has scoffed at the notion that oil supplies might peak, but "recent evidence of failed production growth would tend to shift the burden of proof on to the producers", as they have been unable to respond to the massive rise in prices. "Total global liquid hydrocarbon production has essentially flatlined since mid 2005 at just north of 85m barrels per day."

The issue is complicated, as ever, by the refusal of the Opec cartel to raise production. What has changed, Citibank says, is that the non-Opec countries can no longer answer the price signal. Does this mean that oil production in these nations has already peaked? If so, what do our governments intend to do?

Nine months ago, I asked the British government to send me its assessments of global oil supply. The results astonished me: there weren't any. Instead it relied exclusively on one external source: a book

published by the International Energy Agency. The omission became stranger still when I read this book and discovered that it was a crude polemic, dismissing those who questioned future oil supplies as “doomsayers” without providing robust evidence to support its conclusions. Though the members of Opec have a powerful interest in exaggerating their reserves in order to boost their quotas, the IEA relied on their own assessments of future supply.

Last week I tried again, and I received the same response: “The government agrees with IEA analysis that global oil (and gas) reserves are sufficient to sustain economic growth for the foreseeable future.” Perhaps it hasn’t noticed that the IEA is now backtracking. The Financial Times says the agency “has admitted that it has been paying insufficient attention to supply bottlenecks as evidence mounts that oil is being discovered more slowly than once expected ... natural decline rates for discovered fields are a closely guarded secret in the oil industry, and the IEA is concerned that the data it currently holds is not accurate.” What if the data turns out to be wrong? What if Opec’s stated reserves are a pack of lies? What contingency plans has the government made? Answer comes there none.

The European commission, by contrast, does have a plan, and it’s a disaster. It recognises that “the oil dependence of the transport sector ... is one of the most serious problems of insecurity in energy supply that the EU faces”. Partly in order to diversify fuel supplies, partly to cut greenhouse gas emissions, it has ordered the member states to ensure that by 2020 10% of the petroleum our cars burn must be replaced with biofuels. This won’t solve peak oil, but it might at least put it into perspective by causing an even bigger problem.

To be fair to the commission, it has now acknowledged that biofuels are not a green panacea. Its draft directive rules that they shouldn’t be produced by destroying primary forest, ancient grasslands or wetlands, as this could cause a net increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Nor should any biodiverse ecosystem be damaged to grow biofuels.

It sounds good, but there are three problems. If biofuels can’t be produced in virgin habitats, they must be confined to existing agricultural land, which means that every time we fill up the car we snatch food from people’s mouths. This, in turn, raises the price of food, which encourages farmers to destroy pristine habitats - primary forests, ancient grasslands, wetlands and the rest - in order to grow it. We can congratulate ourselves on remaining morally pure, but the impacts are the same. There is no way out of this: on a finite planet with tight food supplies, you either compete with the hungry or clear new land.

The third problem is that the commission’s methodology has just been blown apart by two new papers. Published in Science magazine, they calculate the total carbon costs of biofuel production. When land clearance (caused either directly or by the displacement of food crops) is taken into account, all the major biofuels cause a massive increase in emissions.

Even the most productive source - sugar cane grown in the scrubby savannahs of central Brazil - creates a carbon debt which takes 17 years to repay. As the major carbon reductions must be made now, the net effect of this crop is to exacerbate climate change. The worst source - palm oil displacing tropical rainforest growing in peat - invokes a carbon debt of some 840 years. Even when you produce ethanol from maize grown on “rested” arable land (which in the EU is called set-aside and in the United States is called conservation reserve), it takes 48 years to repay the carbon debt. The facts have changed. Will the policy follow?

Many people believe there’s a way of avoiding these problems: by making biofuels not from the crops themselves but from crop wastes - if transport fuel can be manufactured from straw or grass or wood chips, there are no implications for land use, and no danger of spreading hunger. Until recently I believed this myself.

Unfortunately most agricultural “waste” is nothing of the kind. It is the organic material that maintains the soil’s structure, nutrients and store of carbon. A paper commissioned by the US government proposes that, to help meet its biofuel targets, 75% of annual crop residues should be harvested. According to a letter published in Science last year, removing crop residues can increase the rate of soil erosion a hundredfold. Our addiction to the car, in other words, could lead to peak soil as well as peak oil.

Removing crop wastes means replacing the nutrients they contain with fertiliser, which causes further greenhouse gas emissions. A recent paper by the Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen suggests that emissions

of nitrous oxide (a greenhouse gas 296 times more powerful than CO₂) from nitrogen fertilisers wipe out all the carbon savings biofuels produce, even before you take the changes in land use into account.

Growing special second-generation crops, such as trees or switchgrass, doesn't solve the problem either: like other energy crops, they displace both food production and carbon emissions. Growing switchgrass, one of the new papers in Science shows, creates a carbon debt of 52 years. Some people propose making second-generation fuels from grass harvested in natural meadows or from municipal waste, but it's hard enough to produce them from single feedstocks; far harder to manufacture them from a mixture. Apart from used chip fat, there is no such thing as a sustainable biofuel.

All these convoluted solutions are designed to avoid a simpler one: reducing the consumption of transport fuel. But that requires the use of a different commodity. Global supplies of political courage appear, unfortunately, to have peaked some time ago.

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3.2 ISHS Commission Plant Genetic Resources Newsletter

The March 2008 issue of the new Newsletter published by the Commission Plant Genetic Resources is now available for download from the ISHS Scientific Structure pages at <http://www.ishs.org/science/>

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4. ICUC-related information

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4.1 Update: ICUC Scientific Advisory Board

In December 2007, Colin Chartres succeeded Frank Rijsberman as ex officio member from IWMI. George Rothschild, Narayan Hegde and John Palmer have agreed to continue to serve ICUC beyond their original terms until the proposed merger with the GFU is complete. This is good news for ICUC as all members have provided excellent support during the past two years and continuity is now guaranteed.

4.2 Joint ICUC-AVRDC intern

Mr Martin Hallensleben joined ICUC on 1 March for a period of 6 months as intern jointly supervised by ICUC and AVRDC. He is based with AVRDC's Regional Center for Africa where he will be involved in projects to analyse the market potential of African indigenous vegetables. Martin is currently an undergraduate at the Agricultural University Wiesbaden, Germany. He is supported by BMZ/GTZ through their internship programme.

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5. ICUC network

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

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- Dr. Ashok K Raina Scientist Phytotron Research Center Bangalore – 560064, India
- Albert Jacobus Calitz, Agricultural Researcher, Ministry of Agriculture Namibia
- Marius Ekue, Goettingen University, Germany
- Francis Kang'ethe Muniu. I am interested in germplasm conservation, production and value addition of underutilized fruits and vegetables in coastal climatic conditions and immediate hinterland
- Wouter Vanhove Ghent University, Belgium
- Jerry Miner. I am the Communication Officer of GlobalHort.

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Championing underutilised plant species for food, nutrition and sustainable development