Come fly with us. Only a bird could do this. Imagine (we exhort you) that you are a bird flying on your annual autumn migration from Finland to the Niger delta in Mali. Your journey takes you over northern seas unnaturally full of algae and empty of fish, over fields of temperate Europe, yellow with the harvests of rapeseed, sunflower and maize, and brown with the ploughed stalks of wheat too dear to harvest, over the quasi-deserts of southern Europe full of subsidised olive trees and hydroponic tomatoes, down over the citrus orchards of north Africa and its reviving vineyards, before crossing the bleak Sahara. Less than a hundred years ago, it would have looked different, very different. Smaller fields, many more woods and forests, less dust in the air, less glare from glass-housed surfaces, the nights unscarred by streaks of light, and more errant insects to snap up out of the airstream.

Why the change? Was it man who chose to change, man, that most conservative of beasts? In a way, yes, because the hand of the farmer changed the fields. It was not, though, the farmer who had the idea. His hand was guided by changing markets, in turn steered by interventionist politicians responding to changes in land use, in population, in governance, and to changes in climate (though they are only recently understood, and then only slightly).

Adaptability of agricultural systems
The age of the flexi-farmer

Adapt! Adopt! Be adept! The exhortations of—well, of those who exhort—rain down every day on the heads of farmers. Out in the field, the flexibility of agricultural systems is not top of the agenda, but just how far should a farmer look ahead?
all recognise the changes seen by the generations of birds. Of our generations, of Spore readers, our adult feet have all trodden and trudged the soils of the second half of the last century and we have all seen changes happen to our countryside, our livelihood and our cultures. The deserted or deserted villages and smallholdings of our youth, the arrival of new land owners, or vacationing visitors, from the town. The building of long sheds by men with strange accents to raise fowl that neither walk nor fly, to sell in town. The demise of your entire groundnut sector because of newly discovered consumer allergies in another continent.

The fun of watching strangers telling you how to plough straight, and you beating them in a ploughing competition. The long walks to school and to market replaced, for the fortunate, by journeys on pedal bikes and mopeds and trucks. The intrusion of radio and television, blaring out their, your, reasons to leave and rea-

sions to stay, like a nanny goat unsure what to do. And they say that nothing ever happens, nothing ever changes, in the countryside. No way. It’s in the town that things don’t change so much. The crowding, smells, hustle and bustle, the anonymity of city life, and the regret that country life will not, apparently, provide a living for our sons to stay, like a nanny goat unsure what to do, but not knowing what else she should do.

And they say that nothing ever happens, nothing ever changes, in the countryside. No way. It’s in the town that things don’t change so much. The crowding, smells, hustle and bustle, the anonymity of city life, and the regret that country life will not, apparently, provide a living for our sons to stay, like a nanny goat unsure what to do, but not knowing what else she should do.

Opposing directions, or rainbow farming?

What do these phenomena mean to the farmer? What do they mean in terms of priorities for those who should serve the farmer—the scientist, the banker, the trader—even though they may describe their role differently. There are routes attracting us whichever way we look, enticing us to serve different markets. A seminal list of attractions was recently set out by Stein Bie, the director general of the International Service for National Agricultural Research, for his own profession of soil scientists, but his routes (ladders) have a general value: the green ladder, which emphasises natural resource management; the equity ladder, stressing fair development aimed at poverty eradication; the eco-label ladder, producing healthy, often organic, food and the cheap food ladder, maintaining high-yielding agriculture.

To choose one route to market will mean missing out, in part, on the benefits of the others. They are in part an illusion of contradictions, in part complementary, a sort of ‘rainbow agriculture’. Each route requires obtaining and investing various forms of capital, of which the single most important element is probably information, namely on production techniques and the nature and needs of the market. There are countless examples, starting with a farm near you, of the flexibility of the ACP farmer in shifting production towards export of organic, or fair, or dinner-party products, or meeting regional demand. With access to adequate financial, social and informational capital, such a change can be made. But can the next? And the next?

Change is always with us

Why is there so much talk about change in agriculture at the moment? It is a tad incongruous, is it not, to see so much nervous twitching about change in a profession where it is known that some things just cannot be hurried along. At the level of global macropolicy, specialists are struggling to practise the very imprecise art of balancing agricultural production with masses of other inter-related issues: biodiversity, cultural diversity, economic diversity, ecology, energy, employment, empowerment, food security, gender, health, industry, least-deep and complexity of our understanding of it, however incomplete it may be.
More than just adding water

A method of growing fruit and vegetables that needs little land, uses two-thirds less water, and increases productivity seven times. Too good to be true? Not quite, but it asks more of you.

Hydroponics

A method of growing fruit and vegetables that needs little land, uses two-thirds less water, and increases productivity seven times. Too good to be true? Not quite, but it asks more of you.

At a demonstration plot at the Manicaland Agricultural Show in Zimbabwe in 1997, 50-year-old Oliver Waziweyi showed off his ‘poor man’s garden’, according to a report in The Manica Post. Using hydroponics—or growing food in chemically-enriched water—he explained that one needs neither land nor soil. His garden occupied just one square metre of land, and had ten strawberry plants, four peas, ten spinach, six covo, one pineapple, six shallots, ten carrots, four herbs, two cabbages, three lettuces and several flowers. The plants were growing in bamboo sleeves, with four centimetres of water in the bottom, and requiring just five litres of water a day.

A very ancient medium

Hydroponics is also a rich person’s technology, used increasingly by astronauts on missions in space. It is a historian’s technology too, thought to have been behind the Hanging Gardens of Babylon several thousand years ago, and the floating gardens on Lake Titicaca high in the Andes mountains of South America. In more recent times, market gardeners in the Netherlands, a ‘hydroponic nation’ composed of waves of refugees who took shelter in a very soggy wetland, have turned hydroponics into an intensive industry, pushing even exotic fruits out of nutrient-enriched water under the glare of 24-hour lighting.

Despite its ancient origins, it is only since the Second World War (1939-1945) that hydroponics have been properly researched and applied. As with many innovations, it was a war that stimulated the research, then into ‘nutriculture’, as part of Britain’s Grow More Food campaign, and to feed military personnel in transit in such non-arable places as Ascension Island in the Atlantic and Bahrein in the Gulf. In the last 50 years, the technology has spread fast in wealthy arid zones, in the land-scarce industrial world, in southern Africa and in several ACP island states. The last decade has seen the technology simplified, for household use, indoors and in greenhouses, raising the question: why did we wait so long?

Essential: correct mix of nutrients

The simple key to hydroponics is the understanding that a plant does not need to grow in soil, as long as it can get from elsewhere the physical support and the nutrients normally provided by the soil. Indeed, soil is a least preferred ‘medium’, compared with clean water in a bacteria-free sterile container such as plastic trays and other non-corrosive units. This avoids soil-borne pests and weeds, and saves labour.

The thirteen nutrients which a plant needs, in addition to carbon dioxide and oxygen from the air, can be bought in mineral form, or—with great care—made in organic form. The nutrients, which include magnesium, sulphur, potassium and nitrate nitrogen, can be obtained in powder form and dissolved into water in an exact mixture. This is a much more precise way of feeding a plant than trying to calculate a soil’s fertility and the amount of fertilisers to be added, having taken into account the tendency of a soil to leach water and nutrients away from plants. This need for precision can be met by buying—usually importing—readymade mixes of nutrients. A realistic alternative is to make your own mixture, by carefully following standard ‘recipes’ or formulae, with such detail as 293 grams of potassium nitrate for each 1000 litres of water. A very precise pair of fine-tuned scales is definitely part of the tool kit of the hydroponic farmer! Furthermore, since all nutrients in the water will be used by the plant, the water will be safer to recycle (heat at 85 degrees for 3 minutes) than run-off water with fertiliser residues.

More folksy, but in fact more complex, is the mixing of the same nutrients from organic sources, such as chicken manure, compost, worm casts, wood ash and straw. Most practitioners advise against this approach, if there is a possibility of using a mineral mix instead. There are risks of infection and contamination, and measures are less precise. Indeed, in the popular hydroponics movement, a vital area for attention is how to break down into simple detail the precise composition of an organic nutrient mixture, as has been done for the inorganic.

Stop the hostilities please!

It is this attention to detail that has fed the reluctance of much of the scientific community to promote hydroponics as a way to improve food variety and production, for home consumption or for resale. This is a shame. Surely the most magnificent science is not the most complicated and impenetrable, but the one which, despite its complexity, has been made simple—and affordable—to the man and woman in the street, in the field, in the backyard and—increasingly—on the rooftop. We should be making hydroponics more accessible, and more acceptable. It is everyone’s right to grow, grow, grow!

To know more:
Global Hydroponic Network
PO Box 151, Corvallis, Oregon 97339, USA
Website: www.hydrogarden.com
Email: peggy@carbon.org

Further reading:
Home hydroponic gardens
GHN, 240 pp. US $34.95 • € 40.95
Address above.
Reviewed in Spore 90.

Connectivity

I connect, therefore I am ...

While the techies have been twiddling away with the Internet, and you’ve been wondering if you’d be left out, the phone has still been getting on with connecting people. Yesterday’s future is tantalisingly close, today. Make that call. Send that email.

H

ands up if you have not seen an Internet café or telecentre in a market near you this year! There are thousands in ACP countries. Some are public, others private, and a good many are geared up to provide market information (from costs of inputs and goods available, to sales opportunities) for agricultural producers and traders, as just a part of their services. Some are fumbling to translate their fuzzy vision of an ‘ICT-enabled knowledge society’ into working reality, and some are more sanguinely trying to sort out the most reliable sources of market information.

None are yet financially viable, in the same way that most Internet services in the West are still climbing their expensive learning curves. The rise and fall of ‘dot com’ companies in the years 1999 - 2000, when the balloon-like faith of finance companies in electronic commerce swelled and burst, bear witness to the volatility of the new economics (see Spore 88). Far from being dead, electronic commerce, or e-commerce, has now culled its weak and weak-hearted and is preparing for a serious surge from 2002 onwards. Unlike what happened in the first wave, many ACP countries will be relatively well equipped to join in. There is reason for confidence; some even talk euphorically of ‘e-velopment’.

Some of today’s initiatives will indeed flourish. They will be the ones that looked before they leaped. They will be taking a deep breath and ensuring financial stamina to get through the thankless early days. They understand that cash flow will come from social phone calls, emails or Internet searches (illness, family news, lotto results, shopping lists for visitors from the diaspora, even eco-tourism bookings!). Calls and emails about fertiliser prices, shipping costs or veterinary services will not alone provide the critical volume of business.

Is the waiting almost over? We think so, for most.

A kind of magic, all the same

It all started with the second telephone, and the world’s first telephone call, in 1876. The world has not looked back since then. For the 3 billion people who allegedly have never made a phone call, most of them in Africa and Asia, the notion of hearing the voice of an unknown person, an untold distance away, will be a surprise. It will come soon, as more people become ‘wired’.

The stated goal of the telecommunications people—Universal Service—has suffered from the ‘Last Mile’ problem. This defines the technical and financial difficul-

The world recognises:

e-farmer@acp-farmers.net*

*This domain has been reserved by Spore to keep it in safe hands. Any offers? Email: info@spore-magazine.org

In November 2000, seven new top-level domains were accepted. Subject to final approval in April 2001, they include .info for information services and .museum (guess!). Of special interest to Spore readers is .coop for cooperatives, which is for genuine cooperatives only, and is an excellent way to promote their ‘business’. The Poptel cooperative will register coop domains. More details: www.poptel.net

More businesslike approach in telecentres

In the second half of the 1990s, multi-purpose community telecentres (MCTs) were established with heavy investments in many countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guyana, Kenya, Mal, South Africa, Suriname and Uganda. Their services included telephone and fax, some email, and information brokerage – notably telemedicine and agricultural market information.

Recent evaluations expressed concern about inappropriate siting, lack of customer service skills, management barriers and a predominance of public service orientation. Some observers felt that with a technological thrust to the centres, there had not been sufficient appreciation of how to operate advisory services. More recent initiatives, such as with the Fédération Nationale de l’Agronomie du Burkina Faso, and the Jamaica Agricultural Society, have taken this aspect of service provision into account.
ty of installing telephone cables from a central point in a city, or a market town, to customers in surrounding communities. With apologies to the copper producers amongst us, we have to stop thinking of only phone wires, and Think Wireless.

**Revolutionary: from cell to cell**

While many specialists have focused on how to computerise ACP countries, the telephone infrastructure has been growing fast. A virtual miracle has appeared in the form of the handheld mobile cellular phone, and low-cost satellite links. What has made the mobile a revolutionary tool, even in rural areas? The cost of installing and maintaining local receiver/transmitter stations (called cells) has fallen dramatically, as have the costs of sending signals by satellite. Each local station needs to be at most at a few kilometres’ distance from the next cell, literally to pass signals along. In isolated areas where there are no or few customers, and access is hard for maintenance, the signals can now be ‘leapfrogged’ over longer distances via satellite. Where there are just a few dozen customers in a settlement, it makes most sense to establish a local station with fixed-line phone on the spot, ideally in a so-called telecentre which provides fax and computer services too. If there are several hundred customers in the area, cellular mobile phones become viable.

The economics of covering an entire nation are not yet sound—even parts of the densely-populated Netherlands have no mobile phone access—but it is now feasible to provide such access to a good 95% of your population in any country. Universal Service has been quietly replaced by Universal Access. If you can get your hands on a mobile phone, or go to a telecentre, you can reach any other phone or computer in the world.

Many governments have resisted the de-regulation which would allow such systems to flourish, in part because a heavily regulated system offered a slim chance of collecting significant revenues from incoming international phone calls. The global telecommunications market, however, is fast becoming a free-for-all, and there are opportunities galore.

**Barefoot telecentres**

Normally such liberal talk excludes much of the ACP world. Not here. Here is not a reason to curse globalisation, nor to despair at the prospect of your rural community being isolated and never getting connected. Those classical reactions just do not work. The technology is evolving so quickly that notions of “being priced out of the system” or “the unbridged Last Mile” no longer apply. Hence, *The Economist* magazine reported in November 2000, Ghana now has five Internet service providers, and three mobile-phone operators. They set up a subscriber with a phone for $50 and a crystal clear connection within four hours, instead of the dark tunnel of a $150 connection, when it came, from the former state monopoly.

**Watch this space**

The topic of ICTs and rural development” is still in the phase of the anecdote. *Spore* has reported over the years of how readers “use the Internet”. Remember the chicken farmer in Senegal who sold his 3,000 hens by using the Internet café at a Dakar hotel to locate a customer in the US, through the World Wide Web? Or the readers who send their technical enquiries by email? Or the cooperatives who market their jams, waxes and clothes to a global audience? The results of a survey of such CyberTales by the International Institute for Communication and Development will be available from May 2001. See www.iict.org/stories See p. 11 for details of CTA’s new ICT-Update.

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It could be true today: “To Bolga Farmers’ Retail Coop via Kumasi: “Thank you for your email price list of 11h00 today. Please confirm you can deliver by airfreight to Amsterdam for arrival on 29 June 2001: 500 crates of medium size mangoes, 40 per crate, 1200 kg of small green peas. We shall confirm by fax after your reply. Thanks, ACP Traders bv, Amsterdam 26 June 2001”

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Many governments have resisted the most deregulated and dynamic system in Africa is in Somalia. The state system was destroyed in the civil war and has now been replaced, at least in the main towns, by enterprising Somalians. They simply buy a satellite dish and telephones, build a shed of phone booths and charge $1 a minute for anywhere in the world. A model for the rest of the continent?”.

Isn’t it time you called someone today?
In brief

All welcome at the show!

- A highlight on the national calendar, the annual Denbigh Agricultural Show will take place in Jamaica from 4 to 6 August 2001. The organisers, CTA partners Jamaica Agricultural Society, are keen to welcome people from the region and other ACP States who are interested in exchanging experiences about the use of shows as a means to inform and motivate farmers. Sorry, no funds available for travel or accommodation, but the warmest of welcomes is ensured!

JAS, 67 Church St, Kingston, Jamaica
Fax: +876 922 0610
Email: jas@jjsl.com

Sour sweet harvest

- After Fiji’s sugar crushing season ended in January 2001, it turned out that the country only produced 341,000 tonnes of sugar—about 25% less than in 2000. A late start to the season because of last year’s coup, wet weather and an over-supply of burnt cane were blamed for the reduced harvest. According to the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC), Fiji will meet its contractual obligations.

(Government of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand, January 2001)

Beef improvement

- One hundred beef-type cattle—sixty heifers and forty bulls—from Guatemala and another sixteen bulls and forty heifers from Mexico have been imported by Belize to improve the growth rate and meat quality of Belizian cattle. After the required quarantine of one month, the cattle will be available for breeding programmes in the Department of Agriculture and to district agricultural stations. These are now in a position to provide bull rental services to farmers and supply them with quality breeding stock.

(Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Co-operatives, Belmopan, February 2001)

African vets get together

- The heads of the Veterinary Services of over 30 African countries have agreed to establish a regional representation of the OIE, the World Organisation for Animal Health in Bamako, Mali. OIE monitors the occurrence of animal diseases and supports governments in the prevention of and dealing with diseases and in harmonising regulations in trade of animals and animal products.

(OIE, Arusha regional conference, January 2001)

A tonic for citrus research

With a wave of disease threatening citrus fruit production in the Caribbean, it is no wonder that a regional seminar on the topic in Guadeloupe in December 2000 was well attended and intensely followed.

In addition to significant levels of domestic consumption throughout the region, citrus fruits are in heavy demand in the tourist trade, and for export to the markets of northern America and western Europe. At present there are four diseases which are seriously affecting or threatening the citrus sector: the Tristeza virus; the CVC virus or citrus variegated chlorosis, which is spread by the bacterium Xylella fastidiosa (see Spore 90); Huanglobing (Greening)—this has reached Guadeloupe, and ravaged crops in Florida in the United States during 2000; and citrus canker (Xanthomonas campestris).

Community takes initiative

The communities of the wetland and catchment area of Lake Chilwa, Malawi’s second biggest lake and largest producer of fish, are engaged in a community based project to conserve the ecosystem of this inland drainage lake which dried up in 1997.

In partnerships with government agencies, NGOs and community based organisations, the communities have used needs-based approaches to set up micro-community groups to draw up concrete plans for managing soil, trees and fish resources.

The lake is important at a macro-level too. It used to contribute 20 percent of the nation’s catch, all the more significant because fish is the only affordable source of protein to poor people, who form over 60 percent of the population.

The Lake Chilwa wetland is Malawi’s only listed site under the ‘Ramsar Convention’ as a wetland of international importance. Apart from fish it supports large populations of other specific plant and animal species such as waterfowls.

The inland drainage lake has a maximum depth of less than six metres; it is this shallowness which contributed to its drying up, alongside coastal agriculture including rice and maize. Farming practices have been reviewed and farmer experiences exchanged through micro-projects.

Now alert monitoring by beach village committees is succeeding in curbing overfishing, and other local watchdog bodies are cutting back on deforestation. This is being helped by reforestation work with seedlings provided by the community’s financial partner, the Danish development agency Danida.
Sweet comeback or a rat-race for the ackee?

It's only a yellow fruit, but it is almost sacred among its aficionados, or 'acker-onadas' as they are to become known. The ackee is widely regarded as poisonous, yet it is the official national fruit of Jamaica, among whose diaspora it is revered.

The ackee (Blighia sapida) is an evergreen tree of West Africa, introduced into Jamaica in 1797. It is widely known in central America and the Caribbean, with such Spanish names as fruto de huevo (egg fruit—its cooked fruit looks like scrambled egg). In Ghana, the fruiting tree is a much liked ornamental. In Côte d'Ivoire it is known as akye, akyen or ishin, and in Portuguese it is castanheiro de Africa (African chestnut).

How can a fruit which is so widely known in at least three ACP regions have been developed so little? In Trinidad it was outlawed in 1900, having allegedly caused fatalities; in the Sudan, finza. Elsewhere in Africa it is known as akye, akyen or ishin, and in Portuguese it is castanheiro de Africa (African chestnut).

The reason is fear of poisoning, which are not fully founded. The seeds are poisonous. The fleshy arils surrounding the seeds, however, whilst poisonous for some species when raw, are not toxic when ripened, dried in the air and cooked. So, as with so many plants, pay regard to some basic rules and the ackee is safe and enjoyable to eat, and nutritional. There are medicinal uses for its bark, and its oils are used to treat dysentery.

With the US export ban lifted, Jamaican producers see a prospect of export earnings doubling within two years, from the 2000 level of US$ 14 million—of which 70% was from sales to Britain and Canada. But the export euphoria has also a threat: the widespread belief that the nation's ackee, like its coffee or pimentos (all-spice), are surely the world's best and probably the finest too, has blinded people to other countries starting to cash in on the ackee hype. From Mexico to Kenya there is barely a country without plans for this crop. Be that as it may, this correspondent recognises a nation's gift to the world: cook it with a little onion, tomato and salt fish, add a thyme leaf if you like, and your day is made.

Now see the trees too

With a recent surge in forestry networks, it has been getting hard to see the wood from the trees lately. The Federation of forestry research institutions from 41 sub-Saharan African countries launched the Forestry Research Network for sub-Saharan Africa in the second half of 2000. The goal of FORNESSA is to strengthen forestry research in sub-Saharan Africa for greater impact on management and conservation of forests and tree resources. The network includes AFREA, the Association of Forestry Research Institutions of Eastern Africa, CORAF-Forêt, the network of the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development and SADC-FSTCU-Forest Research, representing research institutions in the 14 SADC States. Let's hope things are getting clearer.

P Koruche
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Kenyan Forestry Research Institute (KFRI)
PO Box 20412, Nairobi, Kenya
Fax: +254 154 32844
Email: Kef@arc.or.ke
or
A M Yapi (Secretary)
IUFRO-SPDC
PO Box 1628, Accra, Ghana
Fax: +233 21 7010934
Email: atse.yapi@faso.org

Challenge of complex change

A workshop on "Agricultural services provision and the challenge of complex organisational change" was held in early December 2000 in Tune, Denmark, with support from Danida and CTA. The several dozen participants, including nine from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, examined changes to learning approaches in extension work, with a special emphasis on changes taking place in extension and agriculture support agencies in terms of privatisation and decentralisation.

Institute develops seed bank

The Nigerian-based branch of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), has recently set up a seed bank for some 5,540 varieties of groundnuts and 1,500 varieties of millet. The bank will help to stem the disappearance of many locally adapted landraces.

ICRISAT Sahelian Centre
BP 12404, Niamey, Niger
Fax: +227 734 329
Email: ICRI5ATC@cgiar.org

Hit me with your mouse

The CTA site on the World Wide Web is being 'hit'—or visited—about 1750 times a day, you might be pleased to hear. Is that a lot? Not bad at all, given the little publicity it has had so far. It's about one-third of the number of visitors to the South African Government Online service, and one-quarter of those visiting the CGIAR family pages linking almost twenty international agricultural research organisations.

The 'site' is a collection of 'pages' which describe CTA, reports on its activities, lists a calendar of events, carries the catalogue of publications, and several full texts of publications, and, of course, every issue of Spore since the end of 1977. The statistics for a two-month period from mid-November to mid-December 2000 onwards show that Spore gets 'hit' the most, accounting for about one-third of all visits. This is partly because the various questions which bring people to the site are mentioned most often in Spore. Having read Spore in part or in full (more than 300 complete sets were copied to other people's computers), it seems that many people visit other parts of the site.

Who is hitting us? That's hard to tell; we can only see the location of the 'visitor' in some basic charts. But the export euphoria has also a threat: the widespread belief that the nation's ackee, like its coffee or pimentos (all-spice), are surely the world's best and probably the finest too, has blinded people to other countries starting to cash in on the ackee hype. From Mexico to Kenya there is barely a country without plans for this crop. Be that as it may, this correspondent recognises a nation's gift to the world: cook it with a little onion, tomato and salt fish, add a thyme leaf if you like, and your day is made.
African Farmer’s Academy

The African Farmers’ Academy, an initiative of the APM Africa network, will launch the first module of its two-year—six module—course at the Ecole Nationale d’Economie Appliquée in Dakar, from 1 to 16 December. The module will cover the topic of changes in local communities and changes in the national and international context.

Details:
ENEA, BP 5084, Dakar-Fann, Senegal; fax: +221 825 25 48
Email: enea@telecomplus.sn
APM Africa, BP 10008, Yaoundé, Cameroon; fax: +237 205 520
Email: apm@camnet.cm

Money, money, money...

In November 2000, the Ford Foundation launched the International Fellowships Program (IFP), providing US$280 million over the next 10 years for post-baccalaureate students in selected countries, including some in Africa. The IFP will award 350 fellowships annually, for up to three years of master’s or doctoral study at universities worldwide. Fellows will be selected on the basis of their leadership potential, academic excellence and commitment to development; study will be in fields that further the foundation’s goals, such as reducing poverty and promoting international cooperation. For the ACP community, the IFP is starting in Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana. During 2001-2002 the programme will expand to other countries and regions.

For Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana: Association of African Universities (AAU)
PO AN 5744
Accra, Ghana
Email: ifp@auu.org
Website: www.aau.org/ifp

Polish your skills

The Tanzania-based Training Centre for Development Cooperation is offering a one week course on gender and development in Africa from 19 to 23 November 2001. Other courses include basics of NGO administration, community development programmes, officers, information management, NGO management and policy advocacy.

Training Centre for Development Cooperation
PO Box 254
Arusha
Tanzania
Fax: +255 811 651 715
Email: mstcdc@mstcdc.or.tz
Website: www.mstcdc.or.tz

A solution to salinity

The problem of saline water is increasing in ACP agricultural production. Already half of the world’s groundwater resources are saline, and on almost half of the world’s irrigated land salinity is limiting production. Even if today in most countries irrigation is only used on a small proportion of cultivated land, the problems associated with it can only grow. Some locations suffer more from than others, within and between ACP countries and beyond. Coastal lands are obviously at risk. The problems are now being addressed in those areas with the acutest problems, through the Dubai-based Biosaline Agriculture Centre (BAC). The Centre began operational at the end of 1999, and for the current four-year period it is gradually developing its network. It has started with a regional focus (“the Gulf, and other regions of the Islamic world”) and it intends to develop a wider role during the period.

Its primary activities are focussing on developing sustainable management systems for the irrigation of forage and food crops and greening plants with saline water, on providing a source of salt-tolerant plants, and providing training and information on saline-irrigated agriculture and associated technology. The applications will be focused on coastal and marginal lands.

For the immediate future, the geographic focus means that for interested parties elsewhere, it will be a question of observing and noting the work of the Centre, rather than seeking concrete active partnerships. However, its extensive research and development portfolio, and its institutional strength, are themselves reason enough to follow its work, and, once informed, spotting the opportunity to develop closer links.

The Centre has a regular newsletter, published three times a year, and it is set to grow into a hub for the exchange of information and experiences of people and institutions working in saline agriculture.

Biosaline Agriculture Centre
PO Box 14660
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Fax: +971 4 336 1155
Email: bac@biosaline.org ae

Heat treatment beats chemicals

In view of the gradual global banning of chemicals used in pest control in packaging fruit, the Cook Islands have trialled and adopted a viable alternative in heat treatment which meets quarantine requirements for their exports of papaya. In a good year, the country produces, besides for domestic consumption, 258 tonnes, worth US$ 322,000, for export mainly to New Zealand. Previously ethylene dibromide (EDB) was used to control fruit flies (Bactrocera melanotus and B. xanthotica), the quarantine pests which require control in papaya. Since 1994 however, New Zealand has banned imports of produce treated with this fumigant. The Cook Islands therefore adopted a high-temperature forced-air (HTFA) treatment, comprising basically a treatment of 47.2°C for 20 minutes in sealed chambers.

There is one heat treatment facility in the Cook Islands, with a capacity to treat 1,600 tonnes of fruit annually. Heat-treated mangoes have been exported and there are plans to expand exports to other produce, including aubergines (eggplants).

If carried out properly, the treatment even enhances the market quality of fruit. It produces an even colour on the fruit, and slows down the rate of internal ripening. This helps to extend fruit shelf-life and the fruit flesh does not develop the bitterness which is characteristic of fruit treated with EDB. The treatment can also be adapted for controlling temperate pests in avocadoes, litchis, bell peppers, nectarines and apricots.

In brief •

Website: www.mstcdc.or.tz
Email: mstcdc@mstcdc.or.tz
Fax: +255 811 651 715

A full report is available on website: www.uneptie.org/ozonaction.html
See also: www.paciﬂy.org
Silk route now through Africa

In late 2000, several African countries could soon be a serious competitor to Chinese and domestic silkworms (Bombbyx mori). Wild silk demands high prices, but in many African communities the worms are ignored without knowing their worth as the source of precious silk cloth. As part of its sericulture (silk growing) programme in Kenya and Uganda, the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) has identified at least 65 different wild silkworms and has selected two wild species, Argema mimosae and Gonometta spp., for their high quality silk fibre. Studies in Kenya on Gonometta spp. show that a single acacia tree with a canopy of 8-10 cubic metres can host up to 200 larvae. A two hectare orchard of 1,000 trees can yield 200,000 cocoons — worth about US$ 3,300 — annually. ICIPE is providing information, eggs and training to farmers to take up the cultivation of wild varieties. Thus far, 5,000 farmers have been trained, and the yield of 9 tons of silk from Uganda last year justifies their enthusiasm for this new line of micro-business.

IClPE
PO Box 30772
Nairobi, Kenya
Fax: +254 2 860 110
Email: kipe@icipe.org

Foot and mouth disease outbreaks in Africa

In late 2000, several African countries were startled by an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD). Besides a probable modest outbreak in the south of Mauritania, eastern and southern Africa were particularly badly hit by the highly contagious disease. After 44 years of absence, FMD broke out in South Africa has prompted imports from Mpumalanga. Despite extensive measures, such as slaughtering and quarantining animals, followed by an outbreak-free period from mid-December onwards, a new case reared its ugly head in the Northern Province in February 2001. In all, the FMD outbreak in South Africa has prompted around 30 international bans on the country’s meat products, including the countries of the European Union, themselves including the countries of the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan and China. The outbreak is the first since FMD further since they tend to migrate to Kenya in the month of July.

The OIE, the world organisation for animal health has a very up-to-date monitoring and reporting section on its Website (www.oie.int).

OIE
12, rue de Prony
75017 Paris
France
Fax: +33 1 42 67 09 87
Email: oie@oie.int
Website: www.oie.int

Well I’ll be damned

Large dams generate 19% of global electricity production, provide water for 12 to 16% of world food production, and have displaced between 40 and 80 million people. Their role should be better restricted and channelled. In the future, all stakeholders should review plans from the perspective of ‘rights and risks’. The World Commission on Dams concluded in February 2000 after a two-year review, urging governments, civil society, local populations, the private sector and donors to share goals and resources.

Meanwhile in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in November 2000, participants at the ‘Eau et Santé’ (Water and health) seminar urged more study of the negative impact on health and hygiene by small-scale dams installed for agricultural purposes.

To catch or cultivate

Farmers in West Africa prefer local rice varieties for their taste and adaptability to local pests, drought spells and soil conditions. However, these varieties hardly yield enough to cover home consumption, let alone a surplus to sell at the market. A breakthrough in trying to combine good traits of African rice with their Asian relatives has won the West African Rice Development Association (WARDA), in Côte d’Ivoire, the 2000 King Baudouin Award. The New Rice for Africa (NERICA) produces up to twice as much grain as the current popular varieties and is more resistant to stresses in African fields.

WARDA/ADRAO
01 BP 2551
Bouaké 01, Côte d’Ivoire
Fax: +225 31 63 47 14
Email: warda@cgiar.org

Nice rice wins a prize

The Forest Policy and Environment Group (FPEG) of the Overseas Development Institute has launched a new independent website (www.odifpeg.org.uk). The well-stocked site includes research papers and a searchable database of all Rural Development Forestry Network (RDFN) papers, in English, French and Spanish. Their ‘links’ page points to all well-known national and international papers in the world of trees, forests and related research including ICRAF and CIFOR, and some lesser-known sources. The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan at www.inbar.int offers you all there to is know on these two versatile plants. At www.sdp.org/gi/iyowkrama, the website of the Iyowkrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development in Guyana, you’ll find multi-lingual information on the management, conservation and sustainable development of about 360,000 hectares, of pristine tropical forest. The government has dedicated the Iyowkrama forest to the international community to demonstrate how tropical forests can provide economic benefit while conserving biodiversity.

Finally, at the website of the Forestry Conservation Portal at http://forests.org—it is all in the name—you’ll find a vast amount of news and information on forest issues. Particularly helpful are the regional ‘forestry search engines’ enabling you to find forestry news updates in your own region.
The traditional sources of information on small-scale food processing have been commercial (the manufacturers of equipment) and the information networks which operate question-and-answer services (QAS). Most QASs are now organised nationally and regionally, having been ‘decentralised’ from, typically Europe and the USA to other, more ‘in-touch’ centres of knowledge. CTA’s own service, which was dominated by enquiries about food processing, is operated by partners in the Caribbean, Pacific and four regions in Africa. (Note that each CTA-QAS can handle other topics too!). Each new CTA-QAS is announced in Spore’s ‘Between Us’ section, and all addresses are in the CTA Annual Report (see Spore 87 and 93), available from the ‘QAS desk’ at CTA, and on www.agricta.org.

QASs on the move
The few residual QASs in Europe have formed a functional consortium to direct queries to the most relevant response, under the label International Network on Technical Information (INTI). On food processing, one lead agency is the perennial Dutch NGO Agromisa, which is also shifting much of its work to new centres in the South: Agromisa, PO Box 41, 6700 AJ Wageningen, Netherlands; fax: +31 317 419 178; email: agromisa@wxs.nl

The other lead QAS agency on food processing was the “Technologies Produits Alimentaires” programme of the French consultancy GRET. TPA, GRET; 210 rue La Fayette, 75010 Paris, France; fax: +33 140056110; email: tpa@gret.org; Website: www.gret.org/tpa However, early in 2001, GRET ceased to operate the TPA secretariat and its QAS, and halted its publishing work. The TPA programme will continue as a decentralised network with ‘cells’ in several countries which have included Madagascar, Senegal and Benin in the past. TPA-GRET will continue to distribute existing publications, and is planning to launch an electronic newsletter.

Both Agromisa and GRET have also provided some of the substance of the InPHo Post-Harvest information network which pools the experiences of the German GTZ and the French CIRAD with its hosts at FAO. InPHo, FAO, via delle Terme di Catania, 00110 Rome, Italy. Email: inpho@fao.org.

The well-respected ACO-PAM, of the International Labour Office, ceased operation in June 2000. Its publications are available from former participants in West Africa, and from ILO. Get their addresses from ACO-PAM-Employment, ILO, 4 route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland. Email: edemp@ilo.org. Full details on Website: www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/ent/coop/ acopam.htm

Much of ACO-PAM’s heritage has been carried forward by the many national West African partners of the well-established Procejos network for promoting local cereals. PROCELOS, 01 BP 1625, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; fax: +226 333 173.

New stars
The overall trend for food processing information services is to go national, serving only local farmers and traders, and often linked to national market information systems. This has the disadvantage, for the active information seeker looking for ideas and synergies from abroad, of creating more intermediaries than before. However, information middle-men and brokers have their uses too, and it is a question persuading them to hunt around for you!

The most promising newcomer is the Strengthening African Food Processing Project (SAFPP). Since its launch in 1999, it has maintained its information output with a rare degree of perserverance and clarity that deserves to be continued, and emulated and replicated by others. SAFPP provides links to programmes, sources of information and finance, and market information throughout Africa and beyond (with a major focus on southern and West Africa). It has an impressive collection of local commercial contacts rather than just the subsidised sector. Being dependent on grants—up to 2004—is one of SAFPP’s two weaknesses; the other, which shows in some of its technological choices, is the familiar and transitional issue of, as a body based in South Africa, being able to flip between the mind-sets of the First and the Third World with more ease than many of its ACP partners. SAFPP PO Box 395, 2000 Pretoria, South Africa; fax: +27 12 841 3726; email: dharcourt@csir.co.za; Website: www.saftp.co.za

Similarly promising but somewhat less proven is the Foodnet network operated by the Association for Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA). Its current portfolio of research projects aims at encouraging market research and implementing commercial agro-enterprise activities, in partnerships with public and private enterprises throughout the region. This Foodnet is not to be confused with the thirty-or-so other Foodnet networks in the world, none of whom have understood that Rule Number Two when launching a new product on any market is to check out the ‘uniqueness’ of its name! The Foodnet you want has an international mailing address: Foodnet, c/o Lambourn and Co., 26 Dingwall Road, Croydon CR3 9EE, England and a national fax: +256 41 22346; email: foodnet@imul.com; Website: www.esiar.org/foodnet.

A very lively service is provided (in English and Spanish only) in the commercial post-harvest sector by Poscosecha.com (meaning post-harvest in Spanish), which publishes an extensive International Directory of Post-harvest Suppliers in printed format (€ 30) and on a Website (free). More for the commercial and cooperative sector than a household business, the directory is clearly organised and suppliers are listed by sector, by name and by country, including ACP countries. Ediciones Horticultura, Apdo de correo 48, 43200 Reus (Tarragona), Spain; fax: 34 977 753056; email: biblioteca@edibo.es; Website: www.poscosecha.com

Food processing
Big changes in management of food processing information
Small-scale and enterprising?

Every person involved in agricultural production luckily left with a surplus will seek possibilities to sell this produce. *Marketing for small-scale producers* is a practical booklet, guiding you step by step through the basics of marketing, weighing the advantages and disadvantages. Storage of produce might affect quality, but make better prices later in the season when the product is hardly available. Processing a product adds value and if you put it in a nice bag, jar, box or bottle it will even be more attractive to a possible customer. That is all well and good but these things cost money. How you can calculate these costs and benefits and determine the consumer price and when and when not you could borrow money for these investments is also dealt with in the concluding chapters.

*Marketing for small-scale producers*
CTA number 1007. 5 Credit points

Finally various technical options for design and construction are provided as well as options to arrange the management and maintenance of the water point.

Establishing and managing water points for village livestock: A guide for rural extension workers in the sudano-sahelian zone
CTA number 1021. 5 Credit points

It’s flexible and versatile

If you hear the words ‘footwear, a car tyre and condoms, what do you think would be the connection?’ Well, they are all made of rubber. Many plants contain rubber and latex, but *Hevea brasiliensis* is the only one commercially grown for harvesting rubber. The latest issue in *The Tropical Agriculturalist* series is dedicated to it. A sound and simple manual for anyone growing rubber, it covers the plant’s history, biology, propagation, processing and uses of rubber, as well as how to establish, maintain and operate a plantation. The authors of *Rubber* focus on the benefits of cultivating rubber as an environmentally acceptable closed ecosystem. In the habit of this series, it is practical, well illustrated and easy to read.

*Rubber*
CTA number 1011. 10 credit points

These designs hold water

On the basis of a case in northern Cameroon, the entire process of establishing a water point for livestock in a dry rural area is unfolded. What consideration have to be made beforehand, how to organise and mobilise the community, to choose the right spot, to get a clear picture of the costs and how these are being covered.

*These designs hold water*

*Get the picture*

Images are widely used to convey messages. As such they are a powerful, direct and instant means of communication. An image of a jagged arrow pointing downwards from a cloud means that there is a thunderstorm brewing and nothing else. But things rarely are what they seem at first sight. Certain logos or symbols vary from one place to the other to indicate similar things. This can cause confusion or misunderstanding, when used in a different setting and thus completely miss the point.

Volker Hoffmann, author of *Picture supported communication in Africa*, argues that for communication purposes, the combination of imagery and language is superior to either of the two alone but that the potential of imagery is both overestimated and underestimated. He elaborates the theoretical underpinning of concepts like communication, expression and perception in the field of imagery. He explains the various historical developments strongly influencing these concepts and which lead to substantial differences between, for example, Europe and Africa. Having discussed different approaches and communication settings in rural development programmes throughout Africa, the book concludes with two extensively described cases—one in Burkina Faso and one in Rwanda—describing two successful examples of using imagery for communication. How could we say all this with pictures?

*Picture supported communication in Africa: Fundamentals, examples and recommendations for appropriate communication processes in rural development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa*
By V Hoffmann, Margraf-CTA, 2000. 367 pp. ISBN 3 8236 1342 1
CTA number 1014. 40 Credit points

Updating for onliners

The new bi-monthly ICT-Update is well underway with its third issue planned for April 2001. It serves to keep people abreast of developments in the fast moving world of ICT (information and communication technologies) which are important to, or could be applied in, agriculture and rural development. The February issue includes stories of networks in Benin, Burkina Faso and Gabon; new technological developments in Africa, Caribbean services, free softwares and significant events. *ICT-Update* is available only in electronic form, in email and on www.agric.org

To subscribe to the English edition, send an empty email to i ct-bulleng-request@cirad.fr with the word subscribe as the subject. (For a French subscription replace bulleng with bullfr in the address.) To correspond with its compilers, write to ict-update@cirad.fr Please note that the CIRAD server has been known to be sensitive to emails from certain sources, including major email services. If your email is refused, please send a copy of your email to cta@ctaml.nl for forwarding.

The progress of processing

The second volume in a series of study reports on small-scale food processing subsectors. The first one focused on Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia (see *Spore* 89, p 13). After this volume, which assesses this subsector in Tanzania and Uganda, others covering Benin and Senegal will soon follow.

Assessment of the small-scale food processing subsector in Tanzania and Uganda
Study report
ISBN 92 9081 2338
CTA number 1019.

STRATEGIES

strengthening small-scale food processing in Eastern and Southern Africa

Proceedings of a workshop, held in 1998 in Entebbe, Uganda.
ISBN 92 9081 2338
CTA number 1019.
10 Credit points

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STRATEGIES

strengthening small-scale food processing in Eastern and Southern Africa

Proceedings of a workshop, held in 1998 in Entebbe, Uganda.
ISBN 92 9081 2338
CTA number 1019.
10 Credit points
Living off the fat of the land?

Land resources are a major element in the development of agriculture, no question about that. Still, a lot has to change in peoples minds and in reality before this can be taken in hand. Anthony Young discusses land resources and their management, how this interacts and relates to food security and poverty and what the future options are.

Land resources. Now and for the future
GBP 19.95 + € 31.30
Cambridge University Press
Edinburgh Building
Shaftesbury Road Cambridge
CB2 2RU, England
Fax: +44 1223 31 50 52

Not just for show
A technical paper highlighting the potential of tissue culture in ornamental plant propagation allowing for mass cloning of selected varieties. The document describes general information on the state of the art of tissue culture propagation and gives details for propagating some 30 ornamental plant species.

Ornamental plant propagation in the tropics
ISBN 9251044600
US$ 1 4 + € 14.95
see FAO address elsewhere

Of dormancy and germination
A comprehensive coverage of all aspects of seed ecology, including reproductive allocation, dispersal, predation, evolutionary ecology of seed size, the roles of fire and of gaps in regeneration and seedling colonisation.

Seeds: The Ecology of Regeneration in Plant Communities
ISBN 0851994826
GBP 65 + € 102

Of all creatures itchy and small
A source book on all aspects of insect pest management; the major players, besides the plants and pests, monitoring techniques, yield losses, resistance in plants, biological and chemical techniques, legislation, codes of conduct and the principles of integrated pest management.

Insect Pest Management
GBP 27.50 + € 43.15

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See how the land lies

You’ll probably know that there is something like a ‘land-issue’ in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In most of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, tenure—private or communal—ownership, access, laws and rights related to land are also much debated issues. Partly, this has historic reasons. Colonial rule—also applying to land—superposed local, often customary laws; in the post-independence era land was nationalised by various new governments to foster development, modernisation or re-distribution of resources. Since then, customary systems have been both denied as well as recognised and land has been both privatised as well as nationalised by post-independence governments. Evolving land rights, policy and tenure in Africa presents and discusses these issues and the ongoing land policy debates in various parts of the continent. It describes how different countries have approached this highly political and sensitive subject and explores possible future scenarios. The book will be of interest to those involved in African land matters, from officials in governments to development practitioners, donors, scholars and students.

A splendid road map of European funds

The European Community, and the European Union, in explaining the funds available for external partners has often presented a picture of a dense and highly diverse jungle, seen through a misty maze. You really do need a guide to get through it all. The world has been done a very great service by the European Citizen’s Advisory Service in their seventh edition of the guide to ‘our money’ as European taxpayers rightly call it. The guide explains the structure of the European Commission and related bodies, with an obvious desire to simplify and clarify that has not always been emulated by the bodies themselves. Importantly, it takes into account the recent streamlining and transparency reforms made by the Commission in early 2001.

For potential users in ACP countries, the guide explains which funds may be used, how, and for how much, by civil society, private sector and public bodies. It also provides an insight into what is available for European bodies to mobilise as co-funding for projects in ACP countries. The procedures for obtaining and accounting for funds - sometimes surprisingly simple, other times arcane – are explained.

The tireless and very understanding compilers must find that this is a lifetime’s work, like painting a big railway bridge. A shame that they did not find the time to fully remind applicants of the disappointments experienced by many civil society organisations who have been awarded a grant, and then had to wait several years for the first payment to arrive.

Spore readers please note: this book is compiled as a public service by a non-profit organisation with limited resources, and not by the European Commission itself. It is only fair to order a copy if you intend to pay (or have someone else pay) for it in full.

A guide to EU funding for NGOs
ISBN 2-9600280-1-5
€ 45 incl. postage
ECAS
53 rue de la Concorde
B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
Fax: +32 2 548 04 99
Email: admin@ecas.org
Website: www.ecas.org

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A fine collection of fish

This commendable practical field guide from FAO covers the major catches off the shores of Namibia, but it has its uses for other coasts. Catches include shrimps, lobsters, crabs, sharks and fish as well as some their lesser known relatives such as bivalves, gastropods and chimaeras. However, it’s not all fish; seaweeds, turtles, seabirds and marine mammals have their rightful place in the book.

The introduction outlines the geographical, environmental and ecological factors influencing fisheries, and the basic components of the fisheries of Namibia. As an aid to identification to higher taxonomic levels, a pictorial index to families is included and most groups are preceded by an illustrated guide to orders and families. Each species-account provides scientific nomenclature, common names, sizes, habitat and biology, diagnostic features, and one or more illustrations. A list of useful references is appended. All in all, an exemplary presentation.

Field Guide to the Living Marine Resources of Namibia
US$30 + € 32.05
FAO Sales and Marketing Group,
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy
Fax: +39 06 57 05 33 60
Email: publications-sales@fao.org
Something else is stirring in Africa

Few would contest that poverty in rural areas and environmental degradation should be dealt with urgently. However, the ways to achieve each goal may differ greatly. It is stresses that poverty is caused by declining productivity and a degrading resource base (land, forest, water, soil etc.), which, in turn, is worsened by an increasing population pressure. Measures should be taken to increase production, improve inputs, expand information access, and increase levels of organisation. Many also feel that the solution lies in actively involving communities, building on their initiatives and designing participatory programmes and policies in order to reduce poverty and achieve sound environmental conservation management.

Whatever may be the perspective, African enclosures argues that the analyses use in such approaches fail completely to address the effects of the wider political, social and economic forces on different users, and their uses and ways of managing natural resources. Worse still, most avoid addressing this wider context, out of naïvety, and they make use of idealised versions of a ‘community’, ‘government’, ‘participation’ and ‘good governance’. The book examines changing land and water use in four wetlands in dry-land areas of Kenya, Mali, Botswana and South Africa. Each case is quite different but can be compared, since they all address changes in resource bases, in social and economic terms and how local governance works. It reveals a far more dynamic and detailed picture of African society. It turns out that production patterns change rapidly in response to market opportunities, even in remote areas. These changes are driven largely by local, often migrant, farmers’ initiatives and an increase in market-based access to land under both ‘customary’ and private land tenure. The social and economic consequences are clear. Large increases in aggregate production widen the gap between winners and losers from the changing terms of access to land and water. A theoretical, and important and revealing book.

African Enclosures? The Social Dynamics of Wetlands-in-Drylands
GBP 14.95 • € 23.45
James Currey Publishers
73 Botley Road
Oxford OX2 0BS, England
Fax: +44 1865 24 64 54
Email: orders@plymbridge.com

Ever pitied a plant?

While reading Main pests and diseases of cotton in sub-Saharan Africa, you really begin to feel sorry for the cotton plant and increasingly appreciate your cotton wear. Behold in mind that this booklet only deals with the main pests; it leaves weeds aside, for instance. It is a concise and clear manual enabling cotton growers to recognise what might be attacking their crop. This can vary from the entire range of flying, creeping and sucking insects to leaf and vascular diseases and mineral deficiencies. Three hope-giving pages provide information on ‘beneficials’—predators and parasitoids—in controlling insect pest populations. With an average of two beautiful colour photographs per page, it is a very attractive booklet on a perhaps less attractive subject.

Main pests and diseases of cotton in sub-Saharan Africa
CTA number 1012. 10 Credit points

How to obtain these publications

The green leaf symbol indicates publications that are on CTA’s list. Subscribers to the Publications Distribution Service (PDS) can obtain them from CTA. All other publications, indicated by an orange square, are available from the publishers listed, or through commercial outlets, but not from CTA.

Publications on CTA’s list are available free-of-charge to PDS subscribers. Subscribers can order publications on CTA’s list up to the value of the credit points available to them. Subscribers can only request publications on the order forms provided.

Non-subscribers who wish to join the scheme should write to CTA for an application form. Applications will be considered from agricultural and rural development organisations in the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States; individuals resident in ACP countries may also apply.

If you are not eligible for a free subscription to the PDS, or if you need publications beyond your free credit allocation, you may buy publications on CTA’s list from our commercial distributor, Triops, Hinderburgstrasse 33, D-64295 Darmstadt, Germany, Fax: +49 6151 314 048, Email: triops@triops.de, Website: http://www.triops.de

Good governance in town

In a time that everyone argues that participation and good governance are prerequisites for any successful attempt to achieve sustainable development, municipal authorities are rarely mentioned or taken into account. Although the case studies in this book are mainly from South Asia, it provides useful analyses about how municipal authorities can incorporate a permanent, participatory engagement with their citizens.

Municipalities and Community Participation. A Sourcebook for Capacity Building
GBP 20 • € 31.35
Earthscan Publications
120 Pentonville Road
London, N1 9HN, UK
Fax: +44 20 7278 1142
Email: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk

Adam's ale is a precious brew

A collection of papers that assesses the eco-systems approach, offers tools for implementation and provides case studies for development and assessments of threats to sustainability and water resources development in eastern and southern Africa.

Advances in planning and management of watersheds and wetlands in eastern and southern Africa
GBP 14.95 • € 23.45
The Africa Book Centre
38 King St, London WC2E 8JU, UK
Fax: +44 20 74 97 03 09
Email: orders@africabookcentre.com

The perilous plight of pesticides?

A series of compact Thin country manuals offering you the state of affairs of pesticide usage, general laws, legislation on banned and obsolete pesticides and briefly, conclusions and recommendations.

Regulation of Dangerous Pesticides in Ghana
GBP 17 pp • € 23.45
The Africa Book Centre
38 King St, London WC2E 8JU, UK
Fax: +44 20 74 97 03 09
Email: orders@africabookcentre.com

Regulation of Dangerous Pesticides in Uganda
USD $5 • € 5.35 per manual (including p&p)
Pesticide Action Network Africa
PO Box 15938 Dakar-Fann
Fax: +221 825 14 43
Email: panafrica@telecomplus.sn
Regional programme strengthened

Following on a workshop of its partners held in August 2000, the Southern African Centre for Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Training (SACCAR) has embarked upon a Regional Information Project (RIP). The RIP will be one of the four specific goals for SACCAR to focus upon in its current five-year plan. The workshop, held in Gaborone, Botswana, gathered specialists from Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as the host country.

The project will address five major bottlenecks to the smooth operation of its information activities. The major constraint, identified during an earlier study, is the poor recognition of the value of information and communication, and related inadequacies in local networking at national and regional levels. This has resulted in a poor dissemination of information with the national partner networks of SACCAR. Other constraints have included poor physical resources and infrastructure, in particular the lack of modern equipment and facilities for rapid processing of information; a lack of sufficient skills in information technology and communication; poorly organised information resources and inadequate means to sustain even conventional services.

The RIP will therefore develop and establish an interactive information system, aimed at strengthening operational capacity, as well as addressing issues of training, provision of equipment and facilitating the foundations of a regional communications system. Some activities will be supported by CTA, especially in the realms of training in electronic communication and publishing, traditional publishing and networking, and exposure to the experiences of similar initiatives in other regions.

Mailbox

Haven’t you written to Spore yet? It’s always a quandary, isn’t it? You think we may not publish it? You know that we get more letters than we can publish, even if we read and appreciate them all. We just do not have enough space.

That is no reason to hold back. Some statisticians will even try to persuade you that the more letters are sent in by readers, the greater are your chances of getting yours published. Don’t think too long about it. Just write in now, and see what happens!

The community’s hand on the wheel

The article in Spore 90 on irrigation management and “Whose hand on the wheel?” rang more than a few bells with Beruk Kabtamu, planning and monitoring officer of the Lutheran World Federation’s programme in Ethiopia. As well as reproducing the article in their annual report (Yes, re-publishing is OK, if you mention Spore – ed.), he told us about the “Soil and water conservation projects which have been involved in 115 small-scale irrigation schemes for crop production and 12 micro-earth dams mainly for livestock and fishery since 1985. The beneficiary farmers in these villages are no longer affected by drought, are able to produce at least three times a year, have benefitted from increased household income and are food secure.

Each project is involved in a village for two years intensively and two more years as follow-up. Then who manages the wheel? Before the intervention begins, the request comes from the community. Based on this, with feasibility and other technical studies conducted, the role and participation of the community, from planning through implementation to hand-over, is clearly identified and agreed upon. Once the project has completed the major construction work for irrigation – with community participation – the farmers are trained on irrigation agronomy, water management and the maintenance of structures and canals.

In most rural areas, the community has traditionally had Abba Melak (water fathers). In such areas, the project strengthens them as Water Committees, with good results achieved in the gender balance. In areas where there are no such traditional institutions, the project establishes and trains them. Once the project hands over the structures, it is these water committees which manage the water distribution, maintenance and resolve any conflicts with minimum assistance from the local government bureaus and local synods of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. This has worked well, as witnessed from the project sites where interventions started more than 12 years ago are still functioning, with no major problem using the community management system.”

Egg plants success in Mvara

Roy Stephen Muto, teacher of agriculture at Mvara Secondary School in Arua, Uganda, wrote in to “thank you very much for the good agricultural books you have been mailing me. I also want to say thank you for Spore. With all this literature, my agricultural knowledge has increased tremendously! I wish to give you a report on a vegetable growing project we carried out in our school this year. We – the Senior One and Senior Three classes – grew...
New partnership in Cameroon

With a far flung reputation for building up farmers’ organisations in Cameroon, the organ known as the Network for Farmers’ Agriculture and Modernisation in Africa/Caribbean and Botswana, respectively. For those keen to sharpen their skills in evaluating the impact of agricultural information, a new Working Document provides a selective review of the issues and the relevant literature. Its illustrative case studies include the Caribbean and Botswana.

More to work on

The new batch of Working Documents based on studies undertaken for CTA include an analysis of functional literacy (see Spore 88), and a set of two case studies on small-scale food processing of cassava and maize in Congo and Cameroon respectively. For those keen to sharpen their skills in evaluating the impact of agricultural information, a new Working Document provides a selective review of the issues and the relevant literature. Its illustrative case studies include the Caribbean and Botswana.

Study on functional literacy programmes for agricultural and rural development in Ethiopia
CTA number 8020.
$5 credit points

Approaches to impact evaluation (assessment) in agricultural information management
CTA number 8021.
$5 credit points

Savoir-faire et réseaux de petites entreprises agroalimentaires en Afrique
CTA number 8022.
$5 credit points

Stop bush fires!

The President of the Ghana Wildlife Society at the Kumasi National University of Science and Technology in Ghana, Mr Abotsi Anselm, told us of his group’s appeal to all concerned parties to avoid bush fires at the critical period early in 2001. In a circular public letter, he reminds readers that the fires of 2000 did not spare “precious life, valuable properties, our environment, our forest and our wildlife. (…) Our farmers should be careful about how they handle fire, in cooking and trapping animals in the bush. Burning of weeds should be done only when very necessary since it destroys soil nutrients and microbes. They should also create fire belts around their farms.

Hunters set the bush ablaze and wait to kill any animal on the run. They even smoke animal holes. They do not realise any need to put out the fire, and we appeal to them to stop these destructive acts.

Those missing yams again!

Ok, it’s over. Mr A A Olanijan from nothing less than the National Horticultural Research Institute in Ibadan, Nigeria, joins the mass of readers who still remind us of our error of publishing a photo a woman with a basket of cassava with a caption referring to yams, with our article in Spore 87 (June 2000) called “Ghana yam exports surge ahead”. Sorry, sorry, sorry!

This correspondence is now closed. Except, of course, if you live in the Seychelles. There, the Seychelles Bureau of Standards (whose motto – we fool you not – it’s ‘The Guardian of Quality’) included the yam article and photo, error and all, as one of several Spore articles used in their Quarterly Journal of July-September 2000. (Yes, even re-publishing our mistakes is OK, we suppose! – ed.). The people at SBS can count their blessings. With a national population of less than 110,000, at least they might get fewer complaints than we did. Good luck, SBS!

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Identifying the problem is the problem half solved.

Gender, development and empowerment

Power shared is power gained

Development is empowerment, and that is not just a methodology or a development gimmick. Empowerment means that people get equipped to deal with their own situation in a practical and viable way. The first step towards empowerment is assisting communities in making power analyses. Help them understand the difference between positive and negative power and how to cope with that. Power is important, believe me, I have been in different power circles including being a Minister, I know what power is.

In Sindbele, the language spoken in south western Zimbabwe, the equivalent word for ‘development’ means actually taking control over what you need to work with for survival. So development in this sense means empowerment and that is a very fundamental human right. When things are difficult and resources are scarce, it are always the weakest, who benefit the last, and it are the strongest that get the resources before the poor. I find that a great deal of the poorest people in the poverty stricken bracket of our communities are women. So it is not by design that I focus on women, it is because women are there and because the majority of people that need empowerment, are women.

A foremost strategy of people working for development has to be assisting communities to understand power. One cannot empower somebody else. People can only empower themselves and an essential prerequisite for empowerment is understanding power and how it is acquired, exercised and maintained, between women and men, between those who own resources and those who do not. Power dynamics play within the family, the community, the society and the globe.

Power is neutral until it is acquired and used. But completely without it, we just are lethargic. Power enables people and enhances life but one should clearly distinguish positive and negative power. Positive power is one of caring and sharing, the power to connect and to work together. Negative power is the power that dominates and oppresses. It is selfish, greedy and wants things for itself. It is often possessed by men, but by powerful women too. They want to flex their muscles and exercise their power in order for their presence to be felt. However, since everybody has to take part in this power analyses, I favour a family approach rather than a women approach. Both men and women must be exposed to the same kind of dialogue.

The powers that be

As a member of a rural community, for instance, ask yourself what the existing powers are and which powers prevent you from acquiring positive power. Who is it that is sharing positive power in your family and in your community and how can you link up to this person? Power shared is power gained. If it is a negative power that is exercised in your community; who is exercising it? Is it your husband, your children, your neighbour, a rich neighbour, the politician, the rural councillor? This power could prevent your community from doing things, from accessing economic resources or infrastructure. Then together you determine what the strategies are which need to be put in place in order to acquire positive power and to reverse this negative power. There is a limit to which you can hold negative power. Sustainable development exists when you can regenerate your energies and when you can re focus and reconnect to a wider world.

The positive power is the power we should use in development. In agriculture for instance we go back to our culture of working together. The basis of the village groups is a tradition of collective work called ‘amalima’ whereby all members attend to each family’s fields in rotation. Most jobs are done collectively—gathering firewood, fetching water, even home improvements, which have been extensive. You have to identify what you need to grow or build and having identified that you can see and find out whether your neighbours also want to grow or build the same and how they want to do that. This is a process of empowering themselves through empowering each other. This applies for any activity, be it food processing, harvesting or building dams.

One example is the ‘Give a Dam Programme’ that started with the drought of 1993-94. Various member communities wanted to have a dam for water. In order for the communities to achieve the implementation of a dam, they needed for instance the approval of a councillor for permits, a government official to peg the dam, they had to authorise a NGO to get the tools and had to organise themselves to arrange manual labour.

By working around this, they also discover that individuals might be blocking the process. An NGO or political leader, who is promising things that do not happen, a local leader who is corrupt and using people’s time and resources. The process of discovering, discussing and developing strategies to cope is really learning and understanding the power dynamics. Identifying the problem is the problem half solved. A politician who wanted to peg a dam for political reasons at a spot not to the liking of the community, saw his intentions abandoned. On the other hand communities can be convinced by a technical expert to choose a spot farther away from the village than their initial choice, simply for physical and geographical reasons. To me both examples illustrate positive power. Constructive criticism and engagement with others along the line. Then together you share power.