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Photo C. Peim © Panos Pictures



**In this issue**

Among the coded language, in any language, of young people the world over, as they gather on street corners or under trees, is "The Word".

The Word on the street, or wherever, is usually a simple and fundamental truth, which may or may not challenge accepted knowledge. It is cool, it is brill, it is right.

How does a word become The Word? Quite simply, by being there, and by catching the mood of the listener and reader. One of the most enduring homes of The Word, and for many other messages, is the book. This issue looks at the book as a store and carrier of knowledge. We look too at an area which is full of people's knowledge, even if there are not enough books full about it: medicinal plants.

And having examined trends in food packaging, we have packed piles of news, book reviews and readers' letters into this issue. Sunflowers, urban cowboys, courses, participation, fishes, forums, decentralisation, rubber and trade tariffs. Cool.

**Medicinal plants**

## Pluck, not plunder

**Demand for medicinal plants is growing. But in the rush for quick profits, we may lose inestimable knowledge, much biodiversity and some common sense.**

Two in three people in developing countries use herbal medicine for their primary health care. Yet it took a small prickly plant and a group of bushmen to shine the world's spotlight on medicinal plants, and the issues around their cultivation and ownership.

In June 2001, a report on the hoodia cactus in the London-based broadsheet newspaper, *The Observer*, made quite a stir. Since time immemorial, the succulent hoodia has grown in the Kalahari desert in southern Africa and has been eaten by the San bushmen during their long hunting trips. Its juice takes the edge off appetite and thirst, and has enabled the hunters to respect their tradition of bringing home their entire catch, without eating of it on the way.

The appetite-suppressing essence in the plant caught the attention of the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, which patented it in 1995

under the code name P-57. In 1997, they sold the commercial drug rights to a British biotechnology firm Phytopharm plc. The next year, Phytopharm licensed P-57 to the giant US pharmaceutical company Pfizer, to develop as a weight-loss product in the massive € 6.5 billion dieting market. That deal was worth up to € 34.5 million.

In June 2001, alerted by journalists, the San decided at their annual gathering to demand compensation, feeling that their knowledge was being stolen. They argued that the companies should have made an agreement with them, instead of claiming they were extinct! In mid-March 2002, the San and Pfizer worked out a benefit-sharing plan, entitling the San to a share in future royalties. The P-57 anti-obesity pill is now in its clinical testing phase and should enter the market in 2006. The San will use these four years to develop the cultivation of hoodia, to protect it from becoming extinct.

Whose property was this knowledge, and who should be compensated? Was it the Dutch anthropologist who first recorded the tribe's use of the plant in 1937, his descendants, the tribe, or the country, asked Phytopharm? Or which of the four countries that the San people live in?

The Hoodia-P-57 case illustrates the complexity of medicinal plants issues, nowadays. In April 2002, at a United Nations' meeting on the Convention on Biological Diversity, guidelines were adopted that "promise to improve the way foreign companies and other users gain access to valuable genetic resources in return for sharing the benefits with the countries of origin and with local indigenous communities". There was, though, no agreement on intellectual property rights, nor against overexploitation of medicinal plants.

It is around those property rights that the heat is on. A coalition of 325 NGOs

and farmers' organisations has drawn up a draft treaty to protect the world's gene pool, also known as the Genetic Commons. The aim is to prevent plants from being treated as intellectual property and being patented. The coalition has been pushing, with scant success, for the treaty to be adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2002.

The argument goes further, and takes on an agricultural side, amongst others. While property rights may or may not be traded, genetic materials and plants can, and are. Grown in the field, or plucked from the bush and the forest, dried, fresh, in powder, processed into pills or dissolved in potions, botanical essences are used by all the various 'schools of health care', from modern pharmacological science, to aromatherapy, homeopathy and traditional medicine. The latter, incidentally, is defined by the World Health Organisation as being "the sum total of the knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to dif-

ferent cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health ... "

Explicable they are, in most cases. The issue of scientific validation of medicinal plants certainly needs further research, but most plant-based medicines today are used for what native people originally saw as their use. According to Maurice Iwu, director of Nigeria's Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme, claims of local communities and the subsequent scientific evidence were in agreement in 85% of the cases studied by BDCP.

### The cradle of cultivation

Some even say that medicinal plants stood at the cradle of agriculture. More than 50,000 years ago, the Neanderthal people in western Asia used woody horsetail (*Ephedra*) as a stimulant. It seems that active cultivation started with psychoactive and medicinal plants and not with foodcrops:

*Cinchona sp.* for quinine against malaria, liquorice from *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, a tranquilizer from serpent wood (*Rauwolfia serpentina*) and periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*).

History is long, but memories and time are short. The Worldwatch Institute reports that only 1% of all plant species have been screened for

bioactive compounds, and that traditional knowledge about medicinal plants is disappearing even faster than the plants themselves. Many are suffering from loss of habitats through land clearance and deforestation – and from overharvesting. Heavy demand, for example, for the bark of the *Prunus africanus*, used to treat prostate diseases, has led to severe depletion of the tree in central Africa.

Production, mainly by wild harvesting and increasingly by cultivation, is being pulled by a strong surge in world demand, growing at 15% a year. Prices paid to gatherers are often too low for small farmers to take up cultivation, although larger enterprises in, say, Senegal and South Africa, have done so.

The volume of world trade in medicinal plants is hard to measure, according to the International Trade Centre which estimates an export market value of several billion dollars, not to mention domestic opportunities. A substantial part is unrecorded, or underground, and it is difficult to separate medicinal usage from

other uses, such as flavouring, tenderisers, insecticides and perfumes.

While the leading world suppliers are China, Singapore, Brazil and Egypt, several ACP countries have medicinal plants (and plant extracts) high on their list of exports, including Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Vanuatu and Madagascar.

### Could be good for your financial health

The leading importer is the USA, followed by the EU, with Mexico, Poland and South Korea rapidly expanding their markets. The world trading centre for medicinal plants is Hamburg, Germany, mainly because of that country's leading position within the European market.

Despite the massive growth in market opportunities, the import trade is, if anything, getting harder to enter by the day. In the USA, Japan and the EU there are ever stricter quality criteria for consumer safety. The European Parliament is tussling with new definitions, alongside a similarly jumpy US legislature. The complexities and volatilities of these markets have been identified as a major constraint to ACP exports during the series of regional 'herbs' seminars involving the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Centre for the Development of Enterprise and CTA, of which the next, Caribbean version, is set for December 2002.

It is though a slice of business well worth going for, as long as you neither clutch at straws in the market, nor pluck too greedily at the plants. Most medicinal plants can be harvested – leaves, pods, seeds, flowers, bark – without killing them, in a measured way. Several community-based programmes have embarked on a sustainable use of forests. Cases in Madagascar, Indonesia and Belize have shown that one hectare of forest, when sustainably used for logging and harvesting medicinal plants yields more income than clearing it for crop cultivation or animal husbandry.

The wiser option is cultivation. That requires investment, and thus a security of income, as well as the guarantee that the habitats of the wild relative plants can be protected, and owned, somehow, for the common good.

See Links, page 10

The steps towards a sound medicinal plants scenario:

- Resolution of intellectual property rights
- Recording local knowledge
- Scientific validation of medicinal plants
- Accessible market information, especially trends and regulations
- Research to define sustainable levels and methods of cultivation and wild harvesting



Knowledge and hard work is of the essence: preparing the oil of cloves in Madagascar

Photo B. Locatelli

## Food packaging

# Package deals

**New food packaging protects the product, seduces the consumer, and follows the law. The challenge is in keeping up with the latest trends.**



Tomatoes in Kenya...

**A**t Owino market in Kampala, Uganda, there are times when the market becomes flooded in more ways than one. First with the rains, and then with an excess of produce due to over-production after the rains. Crop production and yields in Uganda, like elsewhere, depend very much on the rainy seasons.

In the market, Sarah Masaaba beats her competitors by cleaning her fresh produce and then wrapping it in fine green leaves and dry produce in transparent polythene sheets. It gives her produce that added attraction for some customers.

Packaging is as important as the product itself. It protects the product against damage and spoilage, improves handling, transport, informs the buyers about the contents and will make the produce easier to use. Sarah Masaaba and thousands of other tradeswomen know that the crucial determinants for profitable and safe trade in horticultural produce, as with all other perishable goods, are that the goods reach the consumer safe and whole.

In many ACP countries, the packaging of horticultural produce for the domestic market is usually carried out at the production area, but some farmers transport their produce from farms to go downs or retailer shops in containers not specifically designed to carry produce. This affects the nutritional and storage quality.

More still, in particular in larger enterprises, or where produce is pooled for export, it is packed in containers that facilitate accumulation of ethylene gases in storage. This accelerates the aging of produce.

In Uganda, post harvest losses account for 30% of cost of production in agricultural produce. In Senegal, research has shown that half the failures of small-scale

food enterprises are due to bad distribution, and spoilage from poor packaging.

### The boxes box

It is not just customer care and being economical with your produce that make it necessary for food processors and retailers to pay more attention to food packaging. There is also a growing volume of legislation. Each country has its own requirements for local and imported produce, and its standards are often derived from the guidelines of the international Codex Alimentarius Commission. This has drawn up standards for processing, labelling, presentation, advertising, weights, hygiene, and practices in processing and handling as well as packaging material requirements. They are complex, and sometimes hard for the small-scale operator to obtain, but they are available in national bureaux of standards, ministries, chambers of commerce, university food science departments, and embassies.

Importing countries also require evidence that processed food has had a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point check. The HACCP check examines critical points on the path taken by food from the farm-gate to the final distributor: purchase, storage, pre-preparation, cooking, cooling and packaging.

It is in the West that Codex Alimentarius and HACCP standards are applied most stringently, but since they directly affect exports from ACP countries, they will soon be incorporated into the laws of most ACP countries. They may not be rigorously applied, for lack of adequate mechanisms, but they will be there, in a statute book near you.

### The role of technology

A similar 'trickle-down' effect will affect the nature of packaging, and its production, from the paradoxical perspective of environmental laws. Many Western nations are reducing the amount of material and energy used in packaging food and non-foods, while respecting hygiene laws. The use of non-recyclable plastics is being minimised, with recyclable materials such as cloth and non-wood paper being preferred.

An extreme example: a factory in Wageningen in The Netherlands, about

two kilometres from the *Spore* offices, produces degradable waste-bags from maize cobs, for the collection of household organic waste to central composting sites. Here lies a future business opportunity for a resourceful ACP packager! The concern for 'dematerialisation' is not, though, always 'anti-plastic'. In Switzerland, consumers' shopping bags in plastic are about twenty times thicker than the ubiquitous thin blue plastic bags which now pollute cities and green belts the whole world over. The reason: a thicker bag will be used more often, and the energy used in production will be lower. Similar calculations lie behind recent changes in the shape of juice cartons in Europe. Taller and thinner, more can be shipped in a lorry, and more placed on shop shelves – all requiring less energy.



... coffee in Senegal: industrialisation is here

### Banana leaf, or banana skin?

The sums guiding the choice of packaging are complex, and in the future rare will be the times that a banana leaf wins over something manufactured. Yet for ACP processors and shippers, it is not just a question of getting proper information about laws and trade trends. It is much more about accessing the technology to produce the right cartons and cans. The sale of obsolete packing plants to ACP entrepreneurs, and the adoption of complex HACCP practices, may not be deliberate ploys to exclude some produce from Western markets, but one can see how the idea arises. While trade barriers fall, the technology barriers get higher. That requires a different strategy than demanding exemptions and quotas. It requires machines.

# Not by word of mouth alone

**Even in cultures dominated by oral tradition and history, the promotion of readership and of the book is one of the surest ways of breaking the cycles of lean lives. The book records, informs, exhilarates, liberates and makes history. Plough some pages today.**

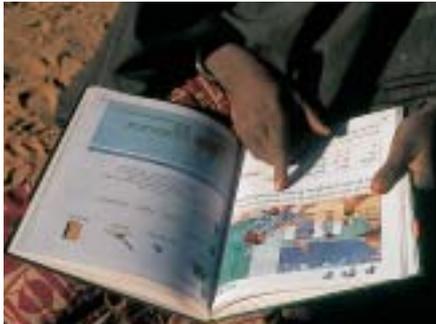


Photo R. Jones © Pianos Pictures

**"P**roducing quality books is only part of the publishing story. The second part consists of getting them to the readers." This comment by Serah Mwangi, of Focus Publishing in Kenya, sums up some key rules for successful publishing anywhere, and not least in the area of publishing books on agriculture and rural development in developing countries.

How important are books in many ACP countries? As some people speak of the world entering the 'knowledge century' and the 'Information Society', some ACP regions seem to be far removed from these notions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the average level of book production in the 1990s was less than 9,000 titles a year. A lot of ink and paper, and more books than most

bookstores in a capital city have in stock. Yet the largest chunk of these titles was produced in one country – South Africa – and schoolbooks dominated the list of every country's output.

That a book is an incalculably valuable way of storing and sharing knowledge is beyond any shadow of doubt. Yet in societies with oral tradition, and where literacy rates are low, there is little readership. The question then arises of which comes first, the book, or the reader? Some countries, with high rates of school attendance, have, relatively speaking, vibrant publishing sectors. Kenya, with an average literacy rate of 78%, in which 86% of men and 70% of women are literate, is a case in point, as are Zimbabwe, Jamaica and Fiji and many other countries. Some countries fare less well: Mozambique's average literacy rate is 40%, with 23% of women and 58% of men. Niger's literacy rate is 14%, with men 21% and women a mere 7%.

### Vicious or virtual circle?

The impasse looks like it is blocked solid, and there seems no way except forward – but how? It is all put succinctly by Gertrude Kayaga Mulinda, the former head of the Botswana National Library Service, and now at Uganda Martyrs Univer-

sity in Kampala. "The phrases 'ours is not a reading culture' and 'African society is an oral society' are often used in discussions of literacy, of publishing, of education levels, of book publishing and bookselling and of the availability of reading material in Africa. The discussions often centre around the vicious circle that afflicts African reading and writing and its book industry: no reading material, therefore no reading culture; therefore no market for reading matter; therefore no publishing and ... This, like any other circle, could be started at any point in the circle."

Turning the vicious circle into a virtuous circle is the challenge that a number of publishing professionals have responded to emphatically in the last few years. Conceived in the late 1980s, the Harare-based African Publishing Network has now grown into a vast and respected association of publishers in the majority of African countries. It has inspired the bookselling trade, as personified by the Pan-African Booksellers Association, to seek creative partnerships with publishers, to address the issue of the virtuous circle. APNET has even inspired other regional networks to promote their publishing sectors: CAPNet, the association of Caribbean publishers, is the most renowned (see *Spore* 95), while a similar network organisation is emerging in the Pacific.

Safety in numbers has certainly been a motif for these bodies, and those who have invested in their development can be proud of having made a wise strategic

### Courage and consequence

The old expression "If it's not appropriate to women, it's not appropriate", which was originally coined for technology, also holds true for publishing in Africa and other continents.

Whilst women publishers are part and parcel of the Caribbean publishing scene, it is different in the top management levels of African publishing, where women are under-represented. An exceptionally moving – and encouraging – book, *Courage and Consequence*, relates the personal experiences of ten African women who head their own publishing houses or organisations, of how and why they got into publishing, and their successes and failures. The women – from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe – represent state, commercial, non-profit and community publishing, a women's writers group and a bookseller. An eleventh contribution provides an overview of women in publishing in South Africa.

What is so moving about this book, which is recommended to all readers of *Spore* with an interest, professional or private, in the book and in publishing, and with a grasp of English? Few of the contributors, if any, had encountered direct discrimination on the grounds of their gender; the barriers for women are lack of education, and cultural factors. As a whole, the contributions give an overview of the sobering realities of African publishing, and in particular for women. They celebrate what the ten women have achieved, and show the courage needed to start and run cultural institutions in Africa. They are an inspiration for others to play their part in the cultural development of the development, and, who knows, in empowering the publishing sector to fully embrace rural life and agricultural development.

Courage and Consequence: Women Publishing in Africa.

African Books Collective, Oxford, 2002, 109 pp., ISBN 0952126974, GBP 11.95 • US\$ 19.95

ABC, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU, UK

Fax: +44 1865 793 298, Email: abc@africanbookscollective.com, Website: www.africanbookscollective.com

■ The African Books Collective markets the output of member publishers on the international market, using the most efficient and cost-effective infrastructure for distribution and financial management.

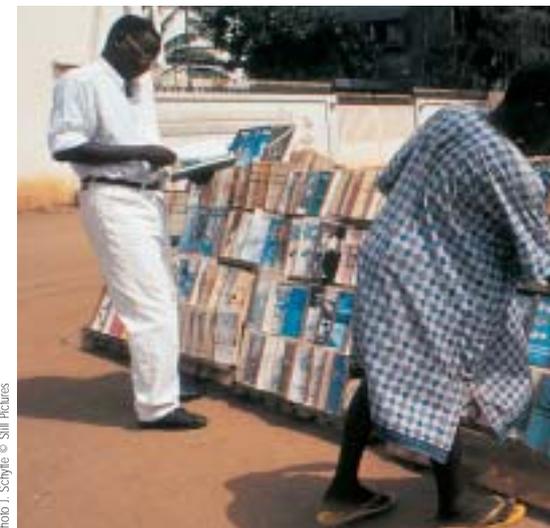


Photo J. Schyle © Still Pictures



Photo B. Pees © Panos Pictures

Less than 2% of the world's books are published in Africa

## Wanted: the book equation

To fully promote the publishing sector in ACP countries, and in particular its role in information for agricultural and rural development, there is a need to convince investors, whether internal or external, statal or private, of the value of a book to society. What are the financial gains that arise from the right reader having enriched her or his knowledge, and applying it, whether it is technical, organisational or literary? What are the economic gains of the cultural aspects?

If economists can estimate what the gains are of building a covered market or a silo, or a link road from a village to the main road, then surely we can express the worth of a book.

We invite readers to send suggestions on how to formulate the so-called Book Equation. Please use the addresses on page 15 or email: [book-equation@spore-magazine.org](mailto:book-equation@spore-magazine.org)



choice. Jane Katjavivi, who founded New Namibia Books in 1989, and was an early member of APNET sums up her ten years in publishing in *Courage and Consequence*. "I felt very lonely in my work. The APNET and African Books Collective networks provided friendship, encouragement, support and guidance, and without this, I might well have not lasted ten years." These and other professional and trading associations have strengthened their membership with training, resource guides, established standards, trading information, promotion support and representation at trade fairs, including Harare, Dakar, Accra and Frankfurt. They have also undertaken vital lobbying work in pulling donors and investors heading in the same direction, on issues ranging from funding priorities to respect of international conventions on copyright, and duties (or the need to abolish them) on paper, ink and printing.

## Publishing where there's no market

Every *Spore* reader knows the meaning of access to reliable, published information, even in areas regarded as marginal and unprofitable by publishers. The trouble is, and has long been, the absence of a viable market for technical publications, at least the absence of a demand that express itself in paying. If there is one place to break the vicious circle it is – though we can only write this with some trepidation – at the level of viable income for publishers. The potential income from sales of agricultural publications is, realistically speaking, not enough to cover the costs of their production: the readers simply cannot afford to pay a realistic price.

## • Book development and agriculture

Is such pessimism justified? The only sure way to move it towards optimism is to cover any losses with income from other sources. These can include external grants and loans, sales from other activities and publishing in more profitable sectors, namely school books and popular fiction. This approach has been taken by publishers for centuries. Almost all publishers, though hard-headed enough to read a profit-and-loss statement, are also soft-hearted enough to treat their wobbly balance sheets kindly. There is something special about The Book, and, thanks to the superhuman efforts of the dedicated publisher, bookseller and distributor, and strengthened by new media which help in the complex task of publishing, it is as much part of the future as it is of the past. It's just that, in terms of agricultural knowledge, we still need to find ways to reduce the fear of losses.



The ABC of book publishing: a training manual for NGOs in Africa by J A Nyeko. Co-publication CTA/J A Nyeko, 1999. 118 pp. ISBN 9970 510 012 — CTA number 961, 20 credit points.

## Be damned, and publish?

"The old adage of "Publish and be damned" could well be reversed in the case of many of those publishers met during the study [conducted by CTA on publishing activities in nine African countries in 1990 – ed.]. In addition to the obstacles faced by African publishers, and the self-maintained obstacles of brethren European publishers, there is another aspect of the book which is not paid (and usually cannot be paid) sufficient attention.

An essential part of the complex profession of publisher is to 'read' the demand and expectations of the readers, and to match the work of the author to them. In reality, few of the African publishers of technical publications get involved in this work, and they limit themselves to the technical steps of publishing: correction, preparation and printing. This is perhaps inevitable, given the distance between the potential reader and the publisher. It makes it more difficult to measure the readers' specific needs and it implies that income from sales will be low.

All this is compounded by the relative size of the publishing house; economies of scale have to be applied at all points in the book chain, including those that are essential to serving and expanding the market. Similarly, donor and development agencies often underestimate the value of communication between the public's wishes and the author. As a result, the quality and focus of a publication are often left entirely in the hands of the author and the agency. In such cases, quality and focus are less subject to an understanding of the demand than they are to the ever-changing fashions in development, to the desire of the agency itself to position itself and to the pressures of institutional competition."

Extracted from: Promoting technical publishing in Africa. Seminar proceedings, Arnhem, Netherlands, 3 – 6 November 1992. CTA, Wageningen, 1994, 129 pp. ISBN 92 9081 103 X. Out of print.

Internet caravan

■ In mid-March, 2002, the Mauritanian government gave a bustling send-off to its new 'Internet caravan' to introduce the Internet to rural communities. It is travelling through the Hodh El Chargi region, near the border with Mali and is set to continue for several months. Wherever it passes, free Internet sessions are offered to allcomers. Mauritania – or *Mauret@nie.mr* as it calls itself online – established full Internet connectivity in 1997 but the volume of subscribers remains very low – a problem being addressed by establishing permanent uplink services in rural centres.

Tree saver wins

■ The African winner of the 2002 Goldman prize of US\$125,000 is Fatima Jibrell, a Somali woman who founded the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Organisation. Since the mid-1990s, Jibrell and her organisation have halted environmental damage by training young people – and getting government to apply laws – to stop acacia trees being chopped down to make charcoal for export. Despite prices of US\$ 10 a bag, exports of Somalia's 'black gold' have dropped by 80%. The project has also cut local charcoal consumption by introducing solar cookers.

Moor fruit and veg

■ After years of investment in irrigation, exports of Mauritanian fruit and vegetables are now surging towards European shops, reports *Afrique-Agriculture*. Watermelons, French beans and chilli peppers will try to gain a foothold in a crowded market.

Virtually organic beef

■ From September 2 to October 15, 2002, join in an online conference on organic beef production. Each week will have a different focus: Agroecology and sustainable production; welfare and animal health; food and nutrition; meat quality; economic and social aspects and, last bite, organic production. If you cannot go online, ask the organisers for paper copies.

EMBRAPA-Agricultural Research Centre for the Pantanal CEP 79320-900 Corumba, MS, Brazil Email: *rsliva@cpap.embrapa.br* Website: [www.conferencia.uncnet.br/pantanal/organica.en.html](http://www.conferencia.uncnet.br/pantanal/organica.en.html)

## Blotches on the sunflower

■ Late in 2001, the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa reported a new viral disease in sunflowers, found in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, causing leaves to crinkle and – in cases of severe infection over 70% – smaller heads. The virus is tentatively placed in the genus *Umbravirus* and is found mainly on improved hybrids.

This new threat comes at a bad time for sunflower cultivation which has been booming in recent years in many ACP countries. On domestic and international markets, demand is increasing for cooking oil, most notably oil from sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*). Twenty years ago, most ACP countries imported more than 60% of edible oils for consumption, and sunflower oil has played a large role in cutting this back.

Edible oils are an essential part of a balanced diet and help to absorb vitamins and proteins. Traditionally, intake of fats in sub-Saharan Africa is among the lowest in the world. Over the last two decades, instead of relying on – relatively expensive – commercially available oils, home-made or locally produced edible oil has been promoted as a cheap and healthy alternative in the

rural areas. Now, of the 15 million hectares of sunflowers cultivated worldwide, half a million hectares are in Africa.

Part of the sunflower success story in Africa comes from the successful replication of a small manual ram press developed and introduced in the mid-1980s by Appropriate Technology International. ATI, incidentally, has been remodelled as an organisation and is now known as EnterpriseWorks, with regional offices in all ACP regions. Originally known as the Bielenberg press, it now has many variants and is

being manufactured locally in much of Africa, called RAMCO in southern Africa, and RAM32 in Uganda, for example. Different types are sold at a price ranging from €100 to €300. The press can process both sunflower and sesame seeds. With a yield from 50 kg of sunflower seeds of 10 litres of oil, the press is also manufactured and used, in Senegal, for sesame seeds.

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Photo NHPA © Sunset

## Pesky parasites

■ It is hard to find a sheep or goat in a tropical country without gastrointestinal parasites (helminths), and usually with an extremely high incidence.

Sheep and goats take in these parasites with the grass and herbs they eat and they survive for months in the intestines and spread easily through dung.

A study carried out in 2001 by the Zootechnical Research Centre in Kolda, Senegal, is one of many which confirms high levels of contamination. 70% of the animals were infected with *Oesophagostomum columbianum* alone, not to mention other parasites. These helminths cause up

to 40 % of ruminants' deaths and 33% loss in a herd's productivity.

A similar study in Ethiopia reports the presence of helminths *Haemonchus contortus* and *O. columbianum* in more than 90% of the investigated ruminants. In Guadeloupe and Martinique, prevalence of parasites in ruminants is 100%. Here *H. cortus* and *Trichostrongylus colubriformis* are the biggest culprits.

These infections can be treated with anthelmintic mixtures of chemicals which destroy or expel these parasites. They are not easily available nor affordable, and only effective in repeat-

ed and well-timed applications. They are best applied at a time when the risk of infestation is highest, including when the breeding levels of the parasites are dangerously high in the grazing areas.

Well-fed, healthy animals are obviously less vulnerable to these parasites. More specifically, nitrogen dietary supplements increase the resistance of ruminants to *H. contortus*. Mixed species grazing systems, such as sheep mixed with cattle, also reduce infestation levels and productivity losses. Overgrazing, no wise method in any case, also increases the infestation levels.

## A nose for negotiation

■ How can ACP countries participate most effectively in the world's highly complex agricultural negotiations? What strategies in information and communication could help? What barriers need removing, what bridges need building?

The questions will be debated in an electronic forum from late-September, and in person at CTA's international seminar to be held at the end of 2002, by negotiating teams, support groups, lobbyists, trade experts and others.

And answered, it is hoped, with action, swift and sharp.

Among the key negotiations are those within the World Trade Organisation. Between now and March 2003, countries need to define their 'modalities' ("how to") for the negotiations. They then prepare their 'first offers', to go to a Ministerial conference in Mexico in September 2003. After that, for 15 months, they can strike deals in groups of interested parties or bilaterally, and get them endorsed before 1 January 2005. It will require clear vision, and cool, informed heads. The seminar is not a moment too soon.

## Good bet on rubber

■ This could be a good time to get back into natural rubber. Although prices fell 50% from 1996 to US\$ 0.70/kg in 2001, a study published early in 2002 by the University of Amsterdam predicts that a rise in demand and prices in the mid-term future.

Liberia, Ghana and Cameroon have increased production in recent years, but the market share of Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria – Africa's biggest producers – is at risk. In Côte d'Ivoire privatisation has not worked well, leaving smallholder producers – the majority – to fend for themselves. In Nigeria, replanting has long been neglected and

most trees are more than 30 year old, at least 5 years past their prime.

Replanting is dear for smallholders: new trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) take six years before they can be tapped; regular replanting, and delayed production, cuts directly into the flow of sap and income. The National Agricultural Research Centre in Côte d'Ivoire has ways to soften these blows. Rubber can be intercropped with any one crop of rice, yam, groundnut, plantain, maize or vegetables, without any loss of yield. They claim it also grows alongside such cash crops as coffee, cocoa, oil palm, kola and lemon.



Photo: J. SainneBeuve

Elasticity in inter-cropping methods

## The morning news

■ Do you want everyone in your organisation to be up-to-date on the latest agricultural news? See if you can adapt this simple but smart practice devel-



oped over the last fifteen months by the Office of Information and Communication section of Fiji's ministry of agriculture.

For more than a year, four members of staff – writers and designers – have come into work an hour early, at 7 am, spending their first 60 minutes reading the newspapers – and making one. First they cull stories from all four national morning papers published in their nation's capital. On a typical day (the picture shows an issue from mid-February) there were eight such stories, including support from northern province farmers for reorganising the sugar board; a probe by US health authorities into alleged liver failure caused by consuming kava (a major Fijian export); reports of misused agricultural project funds; a failure in fertiliser quality tests, plus listings of that evening's rural radio programmes in Fijian and in Hindi.

They write up summaries of these stories, adding some proverbs, quotations and photos. Then, using their desk-top publishing set up, they produce and print a newssheet of 2 or 4 pages, delivering it at 8am to all departments in headquarters, and slipping into the morning's internal post to out-stations and extension staff.

## Diversity under local management

■ The 'Growing Diversity' Website was launched in May 2002 with dozens of case studies of successful agricultural biodiversity projects based on people's control and local knowledge, worldwide. Run by the Genetic Resources Action International network (GRAIN), well-known for its *Seedling* newsletter, the site is in English and French and facilitates debate and exchange of success stories on sustainable local management of agricultural resources. Join in, and turn the 55 starting projects into 5,000 or more!

GRAIN  
Girona 25, pral., E-08010,  
Barcelona, Spain  
Fax: +34 93 301 16 27  
Email: grain@grain.org  
Website: www.grain.org/gd

## Click that sack!

■ Seventeen lots of quality gourmet coffee, good for almost 4 tonnes, were up for sale at Africa's first Internet coffee auction, held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 10 April 2002. They came from growers in from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Only two lots got sold, but at a much better price (US\$ 4.10/lb for Kenyan Arabica AA) than at the local auction (US\$ 3.13/lb). Plans to alert more purchasers, earlier, are being made by the organisers, Eastern Africa Fine Coffee Association (EAFCA) and Lion Coffee Ltd.

EAFCA  
PO Box 27405  
Kampala, Uganda  
Fax: +256 41 34 71 45  
Email: fkavuma@eafca.org  
Website: www.eafca.org

## Knock on wood!

■ The XII World Forestry Congress will be held in Quebec City, Canada from September 21 to 28, 2003, organised by the Canadian Department and the Ministry of Natural Resources, with FAO (the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization). The theme: Forests, source of life.  
Website: www.wfc2003.org

## On stinging relationships

■ The System-wide Initiative on Malaria and Agriculture (SIMA) is organising a one-day seminar on its theme, on 20 November 2002 during the Third MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference in Arusha, Tanzania.

SIMA  
PO Box 2075  
Colombo, Sri Lanka  
Email: w.van-der-hoek@cglar.org  
Fax: +94 1 78 68 54  
Website: www.iwmi.org/sima

**Almost TBT free**

■ Bad news for the Caribbean Tropical Bont Tick (TBT or *Amblyomma variegatum*). Now four of the nine originally infested islands (St Kitts, St Lucia, Montserrat and Anguilla) comprising the Caribbean Amblyomma Programme (CAP) have succeeded in eliminating this livestock pest. At least 'provisionally', since 'definite' status will be given only when all islands are clear. Dominica is not far behind, and should achieve provisional free status by the end of 2002. The programme, which was launched in 1994, envisaged eradication of TBT and associated Dematophilosis and Heartwater diseases by the end of 2002. More than half-way to the target is, well, almost there; maybe a gale could blow the rest of the pests away.

Caribbean Amblyomma Programme  
PO Box 631-C,  
Bridgetown, Barbados  
Fax: +1 246 427 27 60  
Email: rcu@sunbeach.net  
Website: www.capweb.org

**Restless leaf rust**

■ For the first time since it was introduced in Nigeria almost one hundred years ago, soybean cultivation in Nigeria has been seriously hit by a leaf rust disease, this time caused by the fungus *Phakospora pachyrhizi*. Losses in the south-western region are as high as 80%. The leaf rust was first discovered on the African continent in South Africa, in March 2001, and has also affected Zimbabwe. The National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI) and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria have launched a search for resistant soybean lines.

NCRI  
PMB 8  
Niger State, Nigeria  
Fax: +234 46 46 234

**Fermented healing**

■ Here's a tip for healthy eating (and healthy sales if you grow soya). Fermented soya (tempeh) can reduce the duration and severity of diarrhoea, by preventing *E. coli* bacteria – notorious for causing diarrhoea – from attaching to the intestines. Normally, when they attach, the bacteria release a poison that increases moisture content in the intestines. A researcher at Wageningen University and Research Centre, J Kiers, successfully tested Indonesian tempeh on piglets, reducing diarrhoea by 25%. Tempeh is widely used as a baby food ingredient in Indonesia, Europe and the Americas.

**Urban cowboys needed**

■ A shortage in skilled livestock managers was a key problem to emerge from ten studies on urban agriculture sponsored recently by Canada's International Development Research Centre. Under IDRC's Agropolis programme to support post-graduate research projects (*other type of projects: do not apply!*), they included practice and prospects in southern Africa, Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba and Togo. The first results of an annual wave of research, they were unveiled in late March 2002 – with plans for a full publication by early 2003.

The studies reveal the ingenuity required to grow herbs, fruits and vegetables, and keep small livestock, on balconies, in



South Africa's town of Soweto is now famous for its urban farm too

backyards and unused blocks of land. For a few producers, it means a living, but for most city dwellers it means little to food security. Persuading city managers to tolerate and support it with extension services, urban vets and hygiene mea-

asures is still a major task. Clearly more research is needed.

Agropolis  
IDRC, PO Box 8500  
Ottawa, ON K1G 3H9  
Canada  
Email: agropolis@idrc.ca  
Website: www.idrc.ca/cfp/agrhome.html

**Voices from the desert**



There is something about deserts that makes the mind more fertile. To survive in a desert you have to be creative, and more. So too you must be if you are to protect your arid and semi-arid land against desertification through over-cultivation, over-grazing, deforestation and poor irrigation. Different to the spread of existing deserts, desertification directly affects 250 million people, including in much of Africa, parts of Pacific islands and significant areas of Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica and threatens another 800 million.

It was surely fertile minds who were behind the 'Desertification 2002 Conference' held in South Africa and Namibia over three weeks in April. Three weeks. The classical bit with speeches was sandwiched between longer field sessions with key stakeholders, and then spliced into the on-going work – through National Action Plans (NAP) – of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The UNCCD, agreed in 1992, will be reviewed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johan-

nesburg, South Africa, in August 2002 – with a hefty input from this conference.

Let's start in the middle. A three-day symposium in Cape Town brought together 150 'combatants' from 11 southern Africa countries; West, eastern and North Africa; Argentina; and from several south and central Asian states. Prior to these exchanges of scientific and practitioners' insights, there were four training days for community organisations in designing NAPs, writing proposals and assessing desertification through community perceptions and remote sensing.

And then 100 'combatants' took themselves off in groups to five stressed areas of South Africa and Namibia for a week, learning local communities' relationships with berries, water tables, game, soil, plants, elephants, traditional forecasting, and much more. Three days of inter-group debriefing followed, swapping tales and sharing plans, at the renowned Gobabeb Training and Research Centre in the Namib desert.

Among the deals they made in the desert (to be evaluated after 6 and 12 months): horizontal information flows; study exchange on microfinance; medicinal plant knowledge swaps; and co-producing action-reports for taking home. Five more days training awaited community groups on crafts marketing, community-based environmental assessment and land use alternatives. The whole, exemplarily inclusive, endeavour was co-led by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia, the German development agency, the US Bureau of Land Management and CTA with support from Canada's and Japan's development funds, UNCCD, and South African and Namibian authorities.



Even without dunes, as most are, deserts are to be avoided

## Some fat in the fire

■ Since 1 January 2002, the European Union has applied lower import tariffs on some oils and fats from developing countries, primarily for sunflower, groundnut, ricinus and palm oils. Bad news for ACP countries, who already enjoyed preferential tariffs of 0% (100% reduction).

Depending on the oil and its country of origin, the new system has two preferential reductions, instead of four before: either 100% reduction, or a deduction of 3.5% from the official tariff percentage.

Here's how some competitors benefit. The full tariff for unrefined sunflower or groundnut oil is now 6.4%. Under earlier preferences, groundnut oil from Argentina was taxed at 5.4%. Now, by deducting 3.5% from the full rate, the tax is 2.9%. As a result, Argentina – the second largest exporter to the EU – can now breathe down the neck of Senegal, the leader. Others such as Brazil and India have similar advantages with other oils, and in 2003, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines will join in.

There's another twist in the tale. The full tariff for refined sunflower oil is 9.6%. Under new preferences, Argentina and Ukraine can deduct 3.5%. The EU has decreed, however, that if they sign certain labour rights conventions, they can deduct 8.5%, making a preferential rate of just 1.1%. There is a certain justice in all this, and not just statistical. But from the point of view of an under-capitalised, drought-afflicted, small-scale producer, as our main article in *Spore* 98 says, survival is a decimal place. Is there life after zero?

## Lake Victoria's eye-openers

■ Some 20 members of the cichlid fish family – supposedly extinct – have adapted remarkably to the changed environment of Lake Victoria and are back in business. Scientists were

been triggered off. The Nile perch fed on the local fish, reducing their numbers. The volume of algae, the cichlid's food, rose sharply. This reduced the amount of light and oxygen

such as the *Haplochromis pyrrhocephalus*, were the least bothered by the changed environment. In addition, they have adapted their eyes to less clear and bright water and start-



PHOTO: R. A. HILL

Sleek, smart and adaptive, the *Haplochromis pyrrhocephalus* can see in troubled waters too

surprised to learn in 1997 that local fishermen were catching cichlids again, and hurried to understand why.

Way back in the 1950s, fry of the Nile perch was planted in the lake. This large, protein-rich, predator fish, was believed to be more useful and nutritious for the lake-shore communities, than the small, bony collection of more than five hundred, closely related types of cichlids that swam there at the time.

By the 1980s, it was clear that an ecological disaster had

and threatened some fishes' survival, since they could no longer pick out fine algae for feeding, nor potential partners for breeding. All in all, two hundred local fish species disappeared.

The 20 species that did recover, owe that largely to their eyes and to natural selection and adaptation. Research by the Institute for Evolutionary and Ecological Sciences, of the Netherlands' Leiden University, and local partner institutions revealed, in February 2002 that the least light-sensitive species,

ed to prey on larger organisms, which are easier to see. The survivors also adapted their gills. Compared to their ancestors from the 1960s, they can now increase the oxygen intake from the oxygen-poorer water. The sieve in the gills became more coarse-threaded enabling them to handle larger prey.

The twenty survivors offer a small glimmer of hope about the adaptability of nature, even if they take nothing away from the ecological disaster in Lake Victoria.

## Plant of the month

■ One of the features of MedPlant (see Links, page 10) is the "plant of the month". In May 2002 it was *Vernonia amygdalina*, a bitter leaf shrub indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa. Called *mujonso* by Tanzanians or *lwuro* by Nigerians, it is used to treat intestinal parasite infestation such as in schistosomiasis (river blindness) or bilharzia.

## Too early to market

■ The high prices for vanilla on the world market (see *Spore* 98) has been leading to local buyers in Uganda – a relatively small producer – encouraging farmers to harvest and sell their beans prematurely. Other farmers are harvesting unripe beans to be ahead of thieves. Compromising the quality of the vanilla has led to lower local prices.

## This forum's for all

■ The electronic conference to prepare the 'European Forum on Rural Development Cooperation' (Montpellier, France, September 2002) was set for launch on 20 July 2002. Discussions in French and English, open to all interested parties, cover sustainable natural resource management, land tenure and farmers' associations. Options include a Web edition on [www.agricta.org](http://www.agricta.org) or text-only emails. Send an email with 'subscribe' in the subject line to: [moderation-en@ccta.nl](mailto:moderation-en@ccta.nl)

## Let's heat it

■ Following the lead of other Pacific islands, the Samoan government has procured a High Temperature Forced Air facility (HTFA) to comply with import and pest quarantine regulations in New Zealand and Australia (see also *Spore* 92). The Samoan facility, which rids fresh produce of fruit flies, will be used first and foremost for export papaw exports. It is based at Nu'u Research Centre in Western Samoa.

## Nigeria beats China

■ Nigeria has become the main supplier of sesame to Japan, pushing China into the second place, and taking one whole quarter of the market share. In 2001, Nigeria exported more than 34,000 t of sesame to Japan, 57% more than in 2000, and just more than the accumulated exports to Japan of all other African countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda). One telling factor: Nigerian sesame beat the Chinese, on price.

## Medicinal plants

# Harvest more knowledge

If you want to top up your local knowledge, there are herbaria, botanical gardens, research institutes, NGOs and universities with agricultural, biological and medical faculties in your region or country that focus on medicinal plants, their cultivation, conservation and curative properties.

Some such services have a wider scope or a regional focus, such as the **Centre for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine (CSRPM, Mampong-Akwapim, Ghana, fax: +233 872 22 087 - Email: csrpmg@ug.gn.apc.org)**. A herbalist's heaven, it integrates traditional medicine into formal practice, operates three herbaria, and sells medicines and books.

The **Enda-Santé** programme of the NGO **Enda tiers-monde (BP 3370, Dakar, Senegal - Fax: + 221 8 22 26 95 - Email: endaste@enda.sn - Website: www.enda.sn/plantesmed)** works on enhancing the use of medicinal plants and traditional medicine. Its searchable database is in French, Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, Diola, Bambara, Mandingue, Djerma, Haoussa, Moré. It sells phytomedicines and publishes fact sheets and pharmacopoeia (lists of drugs, and their use).

Enda's Caribbean office (**Enda-Caribe, Apdo. 3370, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic - Fax: +1 809 535 54 50 - Email: ecaribe@aacr.net - Website: www.funredes.org/endacaribe/traduccion/tramil.html**) run the **TRAMIL** programme of applied research to integrate the use of medicinal plants in health practices. Their Website (English/French) provides a regional directory of activities and organisations.

One such body is **Iwokrama (Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development, 67 Bel Air, Georgetown, Guyana - Fax: +592 2 59 199)**. This R&D body demonstrates how to conserve yet use tropical forest biodiversity.

## The networks

On the other side of the globe, the UNESCO-sponsored **Asia-Pacific Information Network on Medicinal and Aromatic Plants** links up organisations in 14 countries. (APINMAP Network Centre, c/o Agricultural Information Bank for Asia (AIBA), Los Banos, College, Laguna 4031, Philippines - Fax: +63 2 817 05 98 - Website: www.pchrd.dost.gov.ph/apinmap). Their database of bibliographies and pharmacopoeia is compiled from members' contributions. It has been consistently reliable since the 1970s.

It's early days yet, but you'll probably find that most serious people in the sector will plug into the new interactive **Med-Plant Website** of the **Global Information Network on Medicinal Plants**, supported by IDRC and Bellanet: [source.bel-lanet.org/medplant](http://source.bel-lanet.org/medplant)

Somewhat staidier is the **World Health Organisation**, whose **Essential Drugs and Medicines** programme covers the topic, and whose May 2002 document *WHO Policy Perspectives on Medicines* will be a classic. *WHO, avenue Appia 20, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland - Fax: + 41 22 791 3111 - Email: info@who.int - Website: www.who.int*.

For an overview of networks, go to [www.genres.de/mpc-dir](http://www.genres.de/mpc-dir). Of the international environmental organisations, **IUCN (The International Conservation Union, rue Mauverney 28, Gland 1196, Switzerland - Fax: +41 22 999 00 02 - Email: mail@hq.iucn.org)** has the most comprehensive set of data, not always easy to find. There is always a national or member office near you. *Website: www.iucn.org/members/directory.cfm*.

The **People and Plants** programme combines conservation and development approaches. A partnership of WWF,

UNESCO, and the UK's Royal Botanic Gardens, it has an excellent series of books featured regularly in our English edition. (*People and Plants, c/o WWF-UK, Panda House, Weyside Park, Catteshall Lane, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR, UK - Website: www.rbgkew.org.uk/peopleplants/index.htm*).

## Protect and then trade

First follow the rules when looking at trade opportunities. The inter-governmental **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES Secretariat, International Environment House, Chemin des Anémones, CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland - Fax: +41 22 797 34 17 - Email: cites@unep.ch)** covers some 30,000 plant and animal species. It has more than 150 signatories, with Fiji, Mauritania and Grenada the most recent. Its rules are often flouted (don't you even think of it!), but increasingly well-policed. A user-friendly window with documents and advice on these very complex issues is available at the **TRAFFIC** agency (*219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK - Fax: 44 1223 27 72 37 - Email: traffic@trafficint.org - Website: www.traffic.org*).

The **International Trade Centre (ITC - UNCTAD/WTO, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland - Fax: +41 22 733 44 39 - Email: itcreg@intracen.org - Website: www.intracen.org)** is cluttered with information about all aspects of trade in medicinal plants, and provides a regular **Market News Service**.

Much clearer, though restricted geographically, is *Guidelines for Exporters of Medicinal Herbs to the European Market* (2001, 130 pp,

ISBN 0-85092-661-0. GBP 15 · € 24.) published by the **Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, England - Fax +44 20 7747 6168 - Email: info@commonwealth.int - Website: www.thecommonwealth.org**. This manual, unfortunately in English only at present, reflects CommSec's extensive knowledge.

## Refresher course

By now you may want to get back to a clear overview of all the issues, and maybe talk them through. Here the welcoming team of **ConserveAfrica International** can help you. They operate mainly on the Internet, but if need be, pester them with mail for paper information. (*CAI, 24 Carterhatch Road, Enfield, Middlesex, London EN3 5LS, UK - Email: info@conserveafrica.org - Website: www.conserveafrica.org*). Their set of recommendations of the Medicinal Plants Forum held in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2000 is the most succinct and comprehensive listing of the key issues. They also host a discussion forum – **Phytomedica** – on phytomedicine, traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia, ethnomedicine and other aspects. Send a blank e-mail to: [phytomedica-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:phytomedica-subscribe@yahoo.com)



Photo B. Payne

# Publications

## Put research on its way

One of the most senseless things to do is re-invent-



ing the wheel. Still, how do you know, what is going on in the field of agricultural research in the world around you, your region, your country or even abroad? Secondly, doing research, requires access to reliable information, either from

previous or new research. Information management, including libraries, research journals and databases, are essential for research organisations but also for politicians and planners, who need to know what research to support, expand, copy or abolish.

Nonetheless, in recent years the research budgets – especially in the developing countries – have been declining and libraries and other information processing activities faced paradoxically the first and heaviest budget cuts.

An extra reason and challenge to organise information storage, distribution and overall management as efficient as possible. *Knowing where you are going* accommodates a rich variety in concepts, examples and methodologies to achieve this.

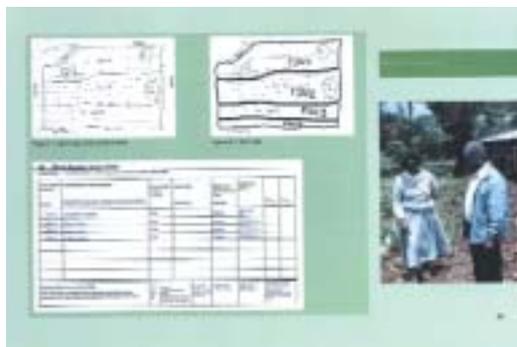
Small wonder that technologies, such as geographical information systems and new information and communication technologies, receive ample attention. The first part is specifically written for the research manager and explains how to establish a Management Information System, which is practically illustrated with cases in Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Latin American countries. The second part is for the information manager and is more technical of nature and deals with information and computer science, and new technologies.

*Knowing where you're going.*  
Information systems for agricultural research management  
By R Vernon, ISNAR-CTA co-publication, 2001. 376 pp. ISBN 92 9118 054 8  
CTA number 1075, 40 credit points.

## Measuring is knowing

No need to tell a farmer that over-use of land leads to soil depletion, they will know that, but it is hard to counter it if they do not have the means to do so with for instance fertiliser. To improve or prevent this from happening and to develop a good soil management plan, it is important to know what exactly is going on.

One such way can be by using the NUTMON toolbox. It is not the only existing participatory assessment method for uncovering soil – crop – farmer interactions, but it is a user friendly, well tested,



includes socio-economic considerations as well and finally applies not only to the field or farm level but can map an entire region, making it an important tool for policy makers.

Basically, the toolbox consists of a manual and a computer database. The first step is to collect data and enter this into the database. This includes information from farmers, such as soil characteristics, the amounts of produce harvested, earnings, the amount – and source - of animal fodder used and so on. This usually requires both information from farmers, through questionnaires and dis-

cussions as well as existing data in literature and research on climate, soils and farming systems. Next step is processing, checking and quantifying these data. The result is an overview of the nutrient flows on a farm and or region and various economic

indicators. In the final stage these results are presented and discussed with the farmers and a plan of action can be designed and implemented.

Monitoring nutrient flows and economic performance in tropical farming systems (NUTMON)  
Alterra – Agricultural Economics Research Institute, LEI, (manual – annex – CD Rom), Wageningen UR, 2001. ISBN 90 327 0303 x  
€ 250 per set but free for universities, national agricultural research institutes and NGOs in developing countries.  
Alterra  
PO Box 47  
6700 AA Wageningen  
The Netherlands  
Fax: +31 317 41 90 00  
Email: nutmon-support@alterra.wag.ur.nl  
Website: www.nutmon.org



## Green is my partner

Two more volumes in the 'People and Plant' series. One looks at marrying biodiversity research and traditional knowledge, which have for long co-existed quite separately. It offers practical guidance on partnership building in equitable biodiversity research and prospecting.

The other is an accessible guide to the value of the forest in all its diversity: crops, fruits, timber, game and tourism plus less obvious benefits, such as soil protection, carbon sequestration and cultural values. Where shall we be without the forest?

Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge. Equitable Partnerships in Practice

By Sarah A Laird, Earthscan, 2002. 546 pp.  
ISBN 1 85383 698 2  
GBP 24.95 • € 40.10  
Uncovering the Hidden Harvest  
By B M Campbell & M K Luckert, Earthscan, 2002. 280 pp.  
ISBN 1 85383 809 8  
GBP 24.95 • € 40.10  
Earthscan Publications Ltd  
120 Pentonville Road  
London, N1 9JN, UK.  
Fax: +44 171 278 11 42  
Email: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk

## Living apart together

This inspiring and much needed book explains the role of Angolan women in the society and economy, including agriculture and food processing. A fine set of text and tables, it demonstrates that the often-demanded 'gender disaggregation of data' (separating data by gender) is possible, even in a country at war (until recently). May other countries take heed! All text is in English and Portuguese.

Beyond inequalities. Women in Angola  
By Nairole Cohen dos Santos, Southern African Resource and Documentation Centre, 2000. 138 pp. ISBN 0797417508  
US\$ 13.75 • € 15.20  
African Books Collective Ltd  
The Jam Factory  
27 Park End Street  
Oxford, OX1 1HU, UK  
Fax: + 44 1865 79 32 98  
Email: abc@africanbookscollective.com

## Gone fishing

A handy manual on basics for small-scale fishermen, presenting various traps and pots and their construction. It gives guidance on selecting the right gear, rigging it, selecting places to fish, and improving and taking care of the catch.

Fishing with traps and pots  
FAO, 2001. 66 pp. ISBN 9251043078  
US\$ 16 • € 17.65  
For FAO's address see p.12.

Seaworthy volumes

■ Here are two new volumes in the multi-volume field guide on sea life in the Pacific, including seaweeds, corals, bivalves, gastropods, shrimps, lobsters, crabs, holothurians, sharks, batoid fishes, chimaeras, bony fishes, estuarine crocodiles, sea turtles, sea snakes and marine mammals. Each resource group chapter includes an illustrated technical section per species. A well-constructed standard reference work, covering species of interest to fisheries.

The living marine resources of the Western Central Pacific, Vol. 5.

*Bony fishes part 3. (Menidae to Pomacentridae)*, FAO, 2001. 590 pp. ISBN 9251045879 US\$ 120 • € 132.45

The living marine resources of the Western Central Pacific, Vol. 6

*Bony fishes part 4. (Labridae to Latinmeriidae)*, estuarine crocodiles, sea turtles, sea snakes and marine mammals, FAO, 2001. 844 pp. ISBN 9251045895 US\$ 120 • € 132.45

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

Rate of return

■ Whether you are in a private or public sector, investing in agricultural research is an uncertain business, even though you believe it will safeguard future production, productivity, and food security. Investments are large and benefits unknown and long-term, but with this book you can be surer of cost-effective outputs.

Planning Agricultural Research: A sourcebook

Edited by G Gijsbers, W Janssen, H Hambly Odame & G Meijerink, ISNAR, 2001. 363 pp. ISBN 0851994016

US\$ 55 • € 60.70  
Stock number: ISNAR288

Earthprint Ltd.  
P O Box 119  
Stevenage  
Herts SG1 4TP, England  
Fax: +44 1438 748 844  
Email: customerservices@earthprint.com

Where and how to look

■ A crisp and clear description, atlas-style, of more than a dozen farming systems, by region and by continent. Co-published with the World Bank, it shows how to use farming systems approaches to identify local, regional and international priorities for greater food security.

Farming Systems and Poverty.

Improving farmer's livelihoods in a changing world.

By J Dixon, A Gulliver & D Gibbon, FAO, 2001. 420 pp. ISBN 9251046271

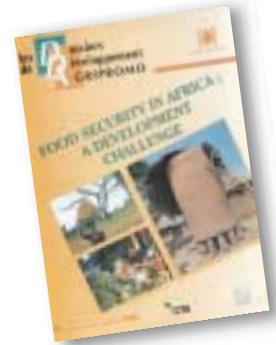
US\$ 30 • € 33.10  
For FAO's address see right.

Complex issues made clear

■ Food security might be a complex issue, explaining the ins and outs of food security does not need to be complex. The Agripromo dossier on food security in Africa, proves this quite clearly. It is a collection of sheets, each dealing with a specific sub theme, such as history of food security, trends in the world's food situation, the role of policies, effects of war, of farmers and their organisations. As one goes along, the sheets become more technical and practical, addressing questions on how to

improve nutrition, promote the storage of food stuffs and how to assess food situation at local level. The sheets are clearly written and well illustrated with tables and cartoons. Perfect material for educators, such as extension workers, teachers and general development workers.

This is the maiden English edition of the Development dossiers Agripromo, which are also being published in French. The dossiers each focus on a single issue, such as development financing or natural

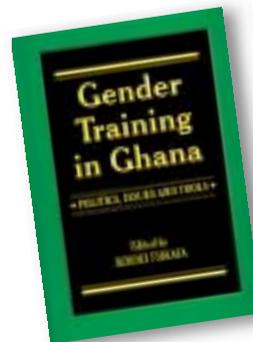


resources management. Look forward to the next ones!

Food security in Africa: a development challenge  
Dossier Agripromo, INADES-Formation - CTA - Solagral, 2001. 102 pp. ISSN 1018 8568  
CTA number 1064, 20 credit points.

The art of gender training

■ To impart to others what gender issues are and to 'make' other people gender sensitive is easier said than done. Training is one way of conveying this. Dzodzi Tsikata brought together an interesting set of essays on gender training in Ghana. One angle she elaborates, is based on research among trainers, training institutes and participants of gender trainings. Secondly, various gender trainers, including one male, share their methods and tools, such as theatre or social impact assessment, used in their trainings, and finally, the book incorporates the



results of a national conference of gender trainers, discussing the research, underlying this publication.

All in all, this sturdy publication provides a comprehensive picture of the Ghanaian situation and is interesting for people elsewhere who work on gender awareness raising. Books like these are sorely needed in other countries too.

Gender training in Ghana. Politics, issues and tools  
Edited by D Tsikata, Woeli Publishing Services, Ghana, 2001. 450 pp. ISBN 9964978766  
GBP 21.50 • € 34.55  
African Books Collective Ltd  
The Jam Factory  
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Gender and participation out of a box?



■ The *From farmer to planner and back* package highlights the advantages of incorporating participatory and gender approaches in development work. Two of the four-volume set provide case studies from Africa & the Near East and from Asia & Latin America. On

the basis of some of these case-studies a key-issues paper has been synthesised, which gives insights in recent development, such as on the effect of decentralisation of agricultural planning, on the effects of increased participatory methods and on the effects of increased attention to gender issues.

Resulting form discussions on these key-issues, a responsive planner has been drawn up, which offers ways to assure that agricultural development is participatory and gender responsive.

The final volume focuses on trainers, offering ideas and best practices for trainers, who integrate gender and participatory methods in their programmes. Examples include for instance,

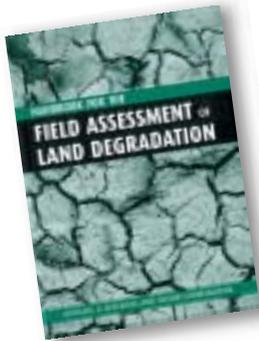
the use of visual techniques in gender based natural resource management and how to monitor participatory impact.

In this package, the Women in Development Service of FAO, has brought together analyses and lessons learned from field projects carried out throughout the world. The choice for the slipcace-concept might be a bit less fortunate, but there is a lesson from the publication.

Feedback rules throughout!

From farmer to planner and back.  
Harvesting best practices  
FAO, 2001. (4 booklets in a slipcace - not sold separately)  
ISBN 9251045720  
US\$ 50 • € 55.20  
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

## Where's my land?



■ Land degradation seems a very straightforward harmful process of fertile soil and nutrients being washed or blown away. Yet, ask farmers about it and you will get a variety of answers. Some will tell you that it has become difficult to get the same harvests as in past years, others that the walking distance to find fuel wood has increased and others

will explain that rocks and boulders started to emerge in their fields.

In field assessment of land degradation, the authors promote a different way of working to tackle land degradation. They explain that countless technologies to fight erosion have been applied in the past and have disappeared again. Not that they weren't working, but probably because the way they worked had no relation to the way degradation was perceived by the farming community.

Understanding the farmers' interaction with the land and determining the indicators for land degradation, provides possibilities to distinguish different perceptions of erosion, deforestation, siltation and measure the severity of the overall degra-

ation. Thus, appropriate action can be taken.

The handbook is practical, offers forms, tables to assess and measure land degradation and how to interpret the results. A useful book for fieldworkers in agricultural development and for students and staff in agricultural education.

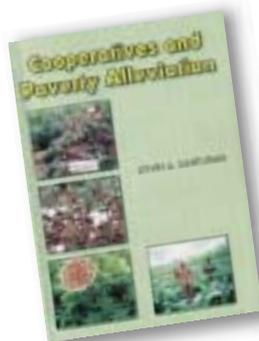
This publication and the NUTMON toolbox (see elsewhere in this publication section) are in fact complimentary, but read this one first.

Handbook for the field assessment of land degradation  
 By M A Stocking & N Murnaghan,  
*Earthscan*, 2001. 184 pp. ISBN 1853838314  
 GBP 25 • € 40.20  
*Earthscan Publications Ltd*  
 120 Pentonville Road  
 London, N1 9JN, UK  
 Fax: +44 20 72 78 11 42  
 Email: [earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk](mailto:earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk)

## Together we're still strong

■ Time has passed since the cooperative movement in Tanzania was established and celebrated. Nowadays, many would argue that cooperatives have lost their use for alleviating rural poverty – too much associated with 'old-fashioned' socialist ideals.

Jovin Banturaki conducted an extensive study on the cooperative movement as it is today in Tanzania. The data collection is impressive. He covered 24 cooperative societies (most focusing on agricultural marketing, some on production, savings, consumer interests) and 1614 rural cooperatives in 4 regions in Tanzania mainland.



He touches the sore spots, such as weak organisational setups, mismanagement, weak legislation and bureaucracy in cooperatives and government support structures, but emphasises the advantages of cooperatives' potential for rural devel-

opment and sees them as practical and dynamic actors in alleviating rural poverty too.

The book concludes with an extensive list of recommendations. Cooperatives need to become more competitive, the capital base and leadership structures need improvement and transparency, and a more conducive legislation, are but a few examples.

Cooperatives and poverty alleviation  
 By J A Banturaki, *Tema Publishers*, 2000. 160 pp. ISBN 9987250227  
 GBP 8.95 • € 14.40  
*African Books Collective Ltd*  
 The Jam Factory  
 27 Park End Street  
 Oxford, OX1 1HU, UK  
 Fax: + 44 1865 79 32 98  
 Email: [abc@africanbookscollective.com](mailto:abc@africanbookscollective.com)

### 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; individ-

uals 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@net-library.de](mailto:triops@net-library.de); Website: [www.net-library.de/triops.html](http://www.net-library.de/triops.html)

## French lessons

■ Two more good overviews, translated from French originals, from the Drylands Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), whose 'Issue paper' series offers many ways of looking at natural resource management in semi-arid Africa.

Local development and community management of woodlands: Experience from Mali  
 By *Intercoperation*, Issue paper no. 106, IIED, 2001. 26 pp. ISBN 1843692198  
 Stock number: 9124IIED  
 US\$ 5 • € 5.50  
 Securing secondary rights to land in West Africa  
 P Lavigne Delville, C Toulmin, J P Colin & J P Chaveau, Issue paper no. 107, IIED, 2001. 31 pp. ISBN 1843692201  
 Stock number: 9125IIED  
 US\$ 5 • € 5.50  
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## This land is my land. You wish!

■ Still looking for case studies of how women's rights and access to resources, particularly land, are governed by legal and customary arrangements? Or how gender relations affect women's and men's access to property? You'll reap a good harvest here – including South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire, but you'll find the best crop in the well-weeded bibliography.

Gender perspectives on property and inheritance  
*A Global Source Book Vol. 5, the Gender, Society & Development series*  
 By S Cummings, H van Dam, A Khadar & M Valk, *KIT Publishers*, 2001. 180 pp. ISBN 90 6832 714 3  
 € 22  
*KIT Press*  
 PO Box 95001  
 1090 HA Amsterdam  
 The Netherlands  
 Fax: +31 20 568 8286  
 Email: [kitpress@kit.nl](mailto:kitpress@kit.nl)

## Animal pharm, and more

■ Published twice a year – in January and July – this Caribbean journal reflects latest developments in the region. Scientific articles, case studies and research and policy news, such as in the January 2002 issue, focus, as island farmers do, on small livestock.

Journal of the Caribbean Veterinary Medical Association  
 US\$ 25 • € 27.60 per issue,  
 US\$ 40 • € 44.15 per year  
*The University of the West Indies*  
 St. Augustine, Trinidad, W.I.  
 Email: [caribjour@cablet.net](mailto:caribjour@cablet.net)

## Annual Report People at work

Most of us have done it. Trying to maintain, rebuild and expand your own house whilst still living in it. Things like replace the roofing against storms; move the kitchen doorway; rewire the electricity; lay out the backyard for more plants; add on an extension for visitors.

If you can picture CTA as a house, then the year 2001 was very much like this. Business as usual, and changes at hand. Not that CTA's well-maintained building itself saw any physical construction. The 39 people working at CTA's Wageningen office, plus one in the Brussels office, were all knuckling down to what the Director, Carl B Greenidge, calls in his introduction "changes in the work programme to meet longer-term demands and challenges", in addition to traditional activities. He characterises the changes as equipping ACP actors with the means to cope with more commercialised markets, liberalised international trade rules, advances in information and communication (IC) technologies, and growing ACP interest in IC management.

What stands out most from the Annual Report 2001 is an indelible impression of the creation of an infrastructure of institutional links – a network – in which CTA can function as the hub and be, in Greenidge's words, "a knowledge development base for ACP agriculture".



The policy of developing partnerships, launched in 1996, is now taking firm hold. An attitude of partnership pervades all the Centre's activities, no matter the distinctions between actual departments. Many services have been decentralised – such as Question-and-Answer, some book distribution – and many central services are in 'network mode'. The web of Spore's own network of correspondents in ACP regions is a good illustration of this, as were, in 2001, the meetings and studies which laid plans for network-style partnerships.

The traditional networks of CTA were busier than ever: Spore subscriptions rose in a disciplined way above 33,000, with the surge in new women subscribers and Esporo, our Portuguese sister, stronger than ever. More than 85,000 publications

were distributed, 75,750 on request, with more than 40 new titles being produced or supported. While the number of study visits shrank, the number of attendees (800-plus) grew at the year's 13 (co-)seminars, many featuring hands-on sessions, with the highlight being the seminar in Douala, Cameroun, on issues affecting federations of farmers' organisation. Similarly, almost 200 people attended other seminars with CTA support, and 369 attended the 23 training sessions run by CTA – an all-time high.

And to answer the question many readers ask of Spore: the 2001 budget, provided 98.5% by the European Development Fund, was balanced at €12,140,000. Of this, more than 61% was devoted to operational activities, clearly above the recommended minimum. Put it this way: the first person arrives at the office around 7 in the morning, the last one leaves around 8 pm. People at work. Challenges to meet.

 *Annual Report 2001. CTA. 2001. 134 pp. ISBN 92 9081 2567*  
CTA number 1078. Available free of charge.  
PDS subscribers: please use your order form.  
Downloadable in large PDF file from [www.agricta.org/annrep2001](http://www.agricta.org/annrep2001)

*The Special Paper in CTA's Annual Report 2001, by Betty Wampfler discusses "Achievements, limits and prospects of microfinance as a means of financing agricultural and rural development: the experience in West Africa".*

 *The Special Paper is also available from CTA separate from the Annual Report. 12 pp. CTA number 1080. Available free of charge.*  
PDS subscribers: please use your order form.

## Mailbox

Even whilst replying to the User Survey, some readers kept up their regular correspondence too.



### A fast mover!

■ A new subscriber, **Paul Bassey Okon** of Macpolykon Agrocare - Farmers' Welfare Foundation International in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, has already put *Spore* to work on new business ideas. "I was really challenged by the Viewpoint in *Spore* 97 that 'we have to be more inventive and more creative in finding viable niches'. In fact, the ideas in *Spore* have helped us to turn around and pull together local farmers into larger associations, learning to process perishables for northern or global markets. Not that these ideas weren't there, but knowing what the recent trends are is where *Spore* leads. I also really enjoy connections provided by *Spore*; it is wonderful."

### In good company

■ *Spore* moves all sorts of people in all sorts of ways, says **Simon Digdjad Antcha**, a rural communicator in Moundou, Chad, who wrote "After receiving *Spore*, and re-reading it, I hand it to my friends and relations to read. Several people have got so interested that they wrote in and have now become subscribers. *Spore* is my constant companion and witness each time I run an activity session. The contents

are informative for those people who can read, and the illustrations are useful for those who cannot. Magazines like this help people develop their awareness. When we put into practice a technique that we have seen in *Spore*, the positive results encourage people to wake up to new possibilities and it opens up the road to success for several more people."

### One man's watering hole ...

■ **Mr Alade** from the Animal Science Department of the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria wants more attention for his favourite topic. "Every copy has interesting articles that address farmers' problems through the use of modern and local methods of farming. However it is a pity that few articles are featured on livestock production. It is of little use to people engaged in animal production. Future editions should address this."

*Don't stampede us, Mr Alade, but we get quite a lot of requests like this. In 2001, we had an opening article (Spore 94), six news items, five readers' letters and 12 publications on livestock issues. Not enough, it seems, but we have to cover all sorts of topics for all sorts of aspects of farming and food. We shall try harder!*

## Staying power



It's time to say goodbye – and “Thanks!” – to a key person in the life of a *Spore* reader. After eleven and a half years heading the Publications Distribution Service,

Nico Roskam has a new challenge: to open an information shop in Cameroon. He should do well there: he was an extension worker in the 1980s after his masters in erosion control, has close family ties, and his direct Dutch way of doing business will foil the smoothest local trader.

He knows about keeping customers satisfied: the walls of PDS' offices are lined with photos of PDS and *Spore* subscribers, and the files bulge with 150,000 answered letters. His greatest achievement? Bringing some order into the flow of publication requests reaching CTA. Since 1997, a subscription system has empowered the customer with information on what to select, and how much. That makes sure there is (almost) enough for everybody, each to her or his need.

Will PDS outlive Nico? Of course, his hard-working colleagues will see to that. Nico himself foresees more decentralisation to national and regional publishers and distributors, including a controlled form of (subsidised) sales. He is right

## Cassava calling!

“Let's eat more cassava and cassava products!”. The President of the Association for the Integral Development of Women, in Dassa-Zoume in Benin, **Mrs Pauline Dade Dagbede** is full of praise for cassava.

“Everyone knows that cassava is now our second staple food, after maize. That's why it is more important than ever to extract more value from it, because when it comes to value, it has got a lot.

You can eat cassava in various forms: boiled, fried, grilled or ground. Or when it has been made into gari, there are many ways to eat it. So many in fact that some people say a house without gari is not a home.”

Making gari into sticks (known as *cosettes* in Benin) is a good way to keep the flour for making pasta, as well as bread, cakes and biscuits, just as good as anything from outside.”



there; such investment will strengthen the information trade in ACP regions. What will he miss most? Probably the eloquence, guile, charm, and poetry of some subscribers asking in the most fantastic ways for more than their fair share – that always won his smile, if not his big heart.

## Superlibrarian spreads wings

Role model for new-style information professionals, Thiendou Niang has little of the characteristics of the 1970's generation of librarians from which he came. Timidity, temerity, introversion, a dislike of doing deals, a fear of fixing, none of those belongs to his mind-set.



He joined CTA in 1985 to run its documentation services and left in April 2002 to lead the REPA expert network on agricultural policy, based in his hometown, Dakar, Senegal. In 1996, he took over the new Information and Capacity Development Department incorporating training activities, rural radio programmes and customised information such as Question-and-Answer services. At the time, the wind of the computer age and Internet was blowing through both the institution of CTA and across the landscape of its many partners, and it was decidedly his department that best hosted the many opportunities of these new technologies. In his spare time, he completed his PhD on information profiling in small and medium-scale enterprises.

Many who know CTA will have been first charmed by the flair and perseverance he applied to the job at hand – a fine example of the empowerment he earnestly sought for others.

## User Survey update

“Count me in!” – a dozen readers call out each week, with belated letters and emails, keen to join the *Spore* User Survey which officially closed several months ago. Do not worry, your views have been noted, even if some latecomers have not been counted in our statistics.

The more than 1,300 responses show, in broad terms, a specially high appreciation of news, publication reviews and long articles. Most people find an issue every two months fine. Almost every reader shares their *Spore* with others (you'll be amazed at how many!) as extension workers, advisors, trainers and policy makers, as well as using it themselves – in their own plots, as it were.

We are now finalising a survey of organisations mentioned in *Spore*, to get the other side of the picture of how it is used. In August 2002, we shall publish fuller details, in *Spore* 100, plus profiles of 100 users – and a separate report of results.



*Spore* is a bi-monthly publication providing information on agricultural development for ACP countries. *Spore* is available free-of-charge to relevant organisations and individuals in ACP and EU countries. Subscriptions may also be purchased from *Triops* (see page 13).

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Marcellin Laly is a trained agricultural technician, specialising in fisheries and fish-farming. He is the organiser of the Committee for Village-level Participatory Approach (VPA) in Grand-Popo in Benin.

## Participatory approaches

# When decentralising, put the fisherfolk and farmers first

.....

**Throughout Africa, the dual influences of globalisation and decentralisation are increasingly gaining a foothold. As a result, agricultural production has become a high-risk activity, a situation made worse by two key handicaps: natural disasters and the disorganised state of producers. Against that, there is a strong demand for quality products and we should find ways to meet it. Where can we find the tools to do so?**

**F**armers need to have access to knowledge and know-how if they are to succeed in improving their production, both in terms of quality and quantity. They have long been hindered by traditional methods of agricultural extension work characterised by being either 'contractual', such as the trial-and-demonstration model, or 'consultative', making much of trying to take endogenous knowledge into account. These models were managed in the hands of the trainers and did not properly involve farmers. It is little wonder that they either failed, or had rather mediocre results.

Today, another model is emerging, which is 'collegial' in nature, characterised by a sharing approach. In this, farmers have become partners and they are involved in all steps of decision-making.

In our work in Benin, the national research services have followed this line

of the situation; an analysis of the problems at hand and identification of solutions; planning; and setting up a consultative committee.

This consultative committee is open to all levels of occupation, and it has captured the interest of farmers in no uncertain way. They know exactly what they want, and they have caught on that their future was in their hands.

The programme started in Benin in 1998. Today it covers more than 1,000 villages across the country and in 77 sub-prefectures. It works through multi-disciplinary teams and has a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation.

After three years of experience, it can be safely said the level of awareness on the part of the farmers has evolved. They are now fully devoted to their work, well-accustomed to their tasks and receptive to new ideas. Now it is a question of helping

ferred to the levels of government and administration which are closest to the field.

As a phenomenon, decentralisation is well established in Europe, and it has also made great progress in Africa. Here, in countries such as Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia it has given an important impetus to rural development, which has moved forward as a result.

In other countries, those with a centralised form of government such as Benin, the day of decentralisation has also arrived. The government has taken all the necessary steps, legal, social and institutional, to move into decentralisation mode. The government is playing its role as guide, monitor and regulator, and large-scale information campaigns are underway.

At the forefront of all this, the VPA has taken the lead in already encouraging producers to manage their own affairs.

Despite these moves, it has to be admitted that rural development is a fragile and vulnerable practice, and it needs locally elected representatives and their advisers to meet certain conditions. They have to play the game fair and square with their constituents and be accountable for their activities and decisions.

It should be possible to achieve local sustainable development through the strategy of decentralisation, if it makes use of the VPA. Then we can confront the problems of poverty and open a new path towards rural development at the grass-roots.

This is an opportunity which we must not miss.

*The opinions expressed in Viewpoint are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of CTA.*

*“ Our projects can succeed, if we put our trust in the creativity of producers ”*

and have come out with a new methodological tool: the village-level participatory approach (VPA). It brings together the stakeholder partners: farmers, growers, fisherfolk, fish-farmers, herdsmen, foresters, rural women, NGOs and development associations at all levels of the process. They are involved in analysing constraints on the land, improving agricultural production systems and in natural resource management. This has, in turn, helped to strengthen the extension system, and to arrive at a participatory method of planning development activities.

The village-level participatory approach has four basic components: a general diag-

nosis of the situation; an analysis of the problems at hand and identification of solutions; planning; and setting up a consultative committee.

them to be better protected against pre- and post-harvest diseases and attacks, including in the area of storage. They are prepared to take risks, to work hard and to throw themselves at their work with great determination. No programme, no study, no development plan can even contemplate being objective from now on without following this project, that much is clear.