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Website: www.cta.nl



In this issue

*Change is in the
air in the ACP*

*world. You can see it in the
climate, the political environment
and the institutional framework.*

*Early in June 2000 a new
partnership agreement will be
signed in Suva, Fiji, between the
ACP Group of States and the
European Union. It will be the
successor to the four Lomé
Conventions. More about that,
and the implications for CTA's
role, in future issues.*

*Other changes are highlighted in
this issue of Spore. There is news
of a change of Director at CTA,
and we look at the implications
of the wave of mergers as the
huge companies that dominate
much of our lives grow even
larger.*

*We also consider communication
because it can lead to changes in
attitude which, in turn, lead to
changes in action and
performance.*

*Don't forget to write in and let
us know how all these changes
are affecting you and the way
you work!*



Photo: Stone Pictures

Organisations join forces

Merger mania!

The past few months have seen a spate of major companies getting together across the globe. It really is wild out there in "merger mania" land, with big organisations gobbling up small ones and giants climbing clumsily into the same bed. There are big implications for ACP agriculture and food security.

If you were looking for proof that the world has gone crazy, you would simply need to look back to the last few months of the past century and the opening months of the new one. You would conclude that whilst some of humanity's follies—regional wars and climate change induced by human activities to mention but two—continue unabated and unchanged, respect for the traditional laws of the market place appears to have been absolutely forgotten.

Energy prices have soared to levels unknown since the 1970s, pushing up the price of a bus journey from Yaoundé to Douala in Cameroon to over \$7. In Europe, a young airline headed by a lad in blue jeans sells tickets that allow you to fly from England to Spain—that's over five times the distance from Yaoundé to Douala—for less than \$20, and it claims this is profitable. In the

Netherlands, in March 2000, a company selling services on the Internet announced annual losses of \$10 million and was sold on the Amsterdam stock exchange for about \$25 billion—more than some ACP countries' net worth. No wonder market analysts, and the man and woman on the street, are left shaking their heads in incomprehension.

Driven by the need to maximise profits and obsessed with cost-cutting efficiency, companies worldwide are rushing to become the fittest of all, and to thus ensure their survival. The method many choose is the time-honoured practice of buying out suppliers and taking over competitors. It has happened in market places ever since traders first came together to barter and exchange. Nowadays, the language used by such companies—'hostile take-overs'—reflects

the rough-and-tumble of such transactions, whereas other terms, such as 'strategic alliances' and 'permanent partnerships', are less than economical with the truth in describing how big fish eat small fish.

At first sight, it would seem that the dire predictions made in the heady 1960s, about the control of the world economy falling into the hands of a few transnational corporations, are now coming true. It is easy to make a simple calculation, particularly in the area of agriculture, to "prove" this point of view.

During part of the past decade, the US corporation Monsanto expanded its activities from its established base of chemical engineering into the Brave New World of genetic engineering, focused on seed manipulation. Where has this taken the company? It is an often told story: the company identified a smart way to lock farmers into a permanent relationship by ensuring that they had a need for their products. One ploy was to introduce the so-called 'terminator' gene into improved seed varieties of essential crops. By halting the natural process whereby plants generate their own seeds, this gene would mean that growers would no longer be able to select and store seeds from one harvest for growing the next. The idea has not gone ahead, at least not yet. Opinions are divided about it, to put it mildly. The chair of the Monsanto board passionately believes that by ensuring the continued high quality of its seeds, his company would make a significant contribution to world food security, as well as to its long-term profit margins. Cynics say that the latter objective, seen as greed, far outweighs the moral objective, seen as self-interested protectionism. So it may seem, but people who sit in boardrooms have a mixed bag of motives for doing what they do: a wish for personal wealth, a feeling of responsibility to the workforce and the company's dependent communities, a similar responsibility to shareholders and customers, and a general social commitment to, for example, equitable and sustainable food production.

Monitoring trends

The dramatic implications of the Monsanto initiative were seized upon by such bodies as GRAIN in Barcelona, Spain, and the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) based in Manitoba, Canada. The mission of these non-governmental organisations is to promote and protect existing seed supply systems as part of the fabric of today's rural world, with special emphasis on countries of the South. They monitor trends that may endanger that equilibrium and they campaign against any undesirable developments. And campaign against the 'terminator' gene they did, to such effect that Monsanto, not helped by some classic public relations blunders, announced towards the end of a turbulent

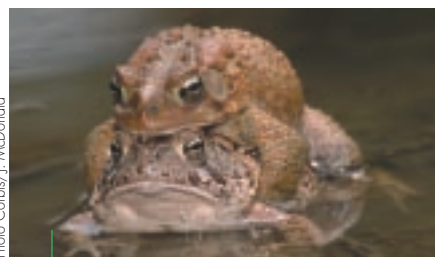


Photo Corbis/J. McDonald

Mergers, conquests, value-added partnerships: what's in a name?

1999 that it was 'suspending' its work on the programme.

While the campaigners were prematurely celebrating their "victory", Monsanto went ahead and continued a long-term strategy of mergers with related companies. The largest of its many steps along this road was to join forces with the American corporation Cargill, the largest seed distributor in North America, with activities worldwide. In January 2000, the Monsanto Corporation effectively disappeared from the map, by renaming its latest incarnation. Even if its work on the 'terminator' gene continues to be suspended, the fact remains that much of the world's future seed supply—and, equally awesome, of its research on new varieties—is now concentrated in the hands of one transnational conglomerate.

Similar trends are taking place in related fields of life science research: companies involved in the manufacture of agrochemicals, vaccines, and veterinary products and pharmaceutical companies like Ciba-Geigy, Rhône-Poulenc, Bayer, Hoechst have been moving in and out of mergers in the last few years, creating massive corporations with misty new names like Novartis and Aventis. The consequence of pooling programmes and patents again concentrates the knowledge of professional researchers with, some say, grave results for the future of Southern research, the ownership of indigenous knowledge, and the availability of scientific information. Their merging also tightens the links between research and the market place, with worrying forecasts that medical research priorities will be distorted. Some critics predict that research on new and resurgent strains of malaria will be dropped, since it is not as profitable as, for example, research on cosmetics based on plant materials from the rainforest.

All along the food chain, mergers are concentrating power and profitability and are apparently eroding whatever flimsy influence the small farmer, trader, shipper, or processor ever had.

In the field of finance, global mergers of banks are further marginalising ACP national banking services, enforcing attitudes of retrenchment and risk reduction—not the sort of thinking that will encourage the innovative, and ultimately profitable, rural savings and credit

schemes that are often essential to food security.

Mergers and margins

Perhaps the largest clouds on an already stormy horizon are in the allied fields of telecommunications and information. In Europe, North America and the Pacific Rim countries, transnational media corporations of unimaginable size are taking control of the means to exchange information, whether verbal, written or electronic, through mass media or between individuals. What, the everyday ACP agriculture professional may well ask, are the possibilities now for rural communication networks? How can the African Information Society (the jargon term for an Africa that participates fully on the global Internet and uses ICTs in all aspects of its economies and culture) flourish if it is primarily seen as a loss-making venture, with perhaps some market potential in five decades from now? And once the means to share are controlled by a few, and out of control of the many, will these few not start to dictate the content too? What will be the future for all our exciting networks of decentralised market information systems, women's banking programmes, alternative and fair trade, or specialised research?

Merger mania is in the air, and not just in commercial enterprises. Non-governmental organisations in Europe are merging madly, as did the Dutch development co-funding agencies Bilance-Cordaid. Environmental movements and trade unions, nationally and globally, have seen the values of pooling their work. National governments are slowly learning the benefits of partially merging, or at least sharing, their agendas. Regionalisation, whether in ACP or European terms, is also a form of merging.

It might seem kind of funny, but merger mania may provide new opportunities for people who tend to think of themselves as being on the margin. Most mergers are in fact subject to the scrutiny and control of the stakeholders, in this case, the shareholders of transnational corporations (TNCs). Their accountability is often greater than that of many of the organisations that claim to operate in, and even to represent, civil society.

Maybe the sincere partnerships developed by such TNCs in the food chain as Danone, Nestlé and Accor with suppliers and trade unions provide a model for moving forward, and away from a fear of mergers. Partnerships and openness there have to be. After the first wave of ACP independence there were several schools of thought that promoted self-reliance and autarchy, and "de-linking" from the rest of the world. Globalisation, which barely allows such thinking today, may not be ours in the making, but surely it has to be ours in the taking.

Theme for a dream

Making money out of essential oils extracted from plants is like taking a magical mystery tour. ACP growers and producers need to meet a lot of conditions, but success can be sweet.

It takes just a tiny drop of oil from the ylang-ylang plant rubbed into the chest, and the user is carried away on the wings of the scent. Sedated, restored, rested, energised, even seduced – the effects are varied, and ‘in the mind’. The treatment – known as aromatherapy – has physical effects, and can have subtle effects on the mind and emotions.

Essential oils have been used for thousands of years, not only in aromatherapy, but also in perfumes, pharmaceuticals and food flavouring – and, as a more recent innovation – in bio-pesticides. The market is well-established, at an estimated € 1.2 billion per year. With the growing interest in ‘healthy lifestyles’ in Europe for example, demand is rising steadily.

Essential oils are found in the cells of various plant organs, ranging from the roots, bark and leaves to the seeds, fruits and flowers. There are more than 3,000 essential oils known today, of which more than 500 are sold commercially. The term itself shows the importance attached to them: it is accredited to Paracelsus, a 16th century physician, who believed that the oil extracted from a vegetable contained the ‘total flavour’. He described it as the quintessence, meaning the pure, highly concentrated essence of a thing. In ancient philosophy, the fifth (in Latin: ‘quintus’) and highest essence after the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, was thought to be the substance of the heavenly bodies and latent in all things.

Heavenly they may be, but essential oils are all around us. The oil of the clove leaf contains eugenol and is used in toothpaste, and the oil of the clove bud is used against toothache; the oil of citrus seeds is used in beverages; rosemary oil is used as a sedative.

Good for employment

The traditional artisanal methods of production, usually by distillation, expression and solvent extraction, cannot easily provide the consistent levels of quality demanded on the export market. Traders in essential oils are now demanding the use of modern, and capital-intensive equipment. The Phael Flor company in Madagascar, for example, had to invest more than € 300,000 in industrial plant to produce export quality oils from organically grown geraniums, pepper, cinnamon, camphor, ginger, vanilla and cloves. The scale of their operation – which

accounts for less than 10% of national oil exports – is impressive: they employ more than 50 people in their processing and distribution activities, and generate employment for several hundred plant producers ‘upstream’.

As an agro-industry, the essential oil sector is an important contributor to a nation’s agricultural economy, and balance of trade. This is well understood by several ACP countries: investment projects are currently underway in Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, Togo and Zimbabwe. In Mali, for example, the UPROCOHE company is typical of start-up enterprises, having to deal with the standards set by the International Standards Organisation, with the need to obtain special packaging materials (since essential oils must not be stored in plastic bottles) and importing equipment. Other countries, ranging from Guatemala to Australia, are hoping to corner their share of the market and world competition will undoubtedly grow.

Some ACP countries are already well established: in the Indian Ocean, the Comoros, Seychelles and Mauritius have significant production, although they are overshadowed by Madagascar, which produces more than half the world’s clove essence and one-third of its ylang-ylang oil, from which it derives annual export earnings of € 5 million. It even exports ylang-ylang to Jamaica, where it is blended with locally-produced lemon grass oil. And Jamaica itself is well-placed with its virtual monopoly on the production and trade of allspice (*Pimento officinalis*).

Fools rush in

Great potential exists for many ACP countries to produce and market essential oils, but if the recent experience of Madagascar is anything to go by, a lot of work is required to get the sector operating smoothly. Between 1992 and 1997 millions of dollars were invested by local banks and companies: the World Bank, the UN Industrial Development Organisation, the ACP-EU Centre for the Development of Industry, and the German, United States and European development cooperation agencies. In the apparent gold-rush, dozens of enterprises were set up, but many failed through lack of attention to consistent supply of plant materials, quality control, plant diseases, and technol-

Photo Corbis/R. van der Hilst



Photo A. Rival



Photo Texarome



**How would you like your ylang-ylang oil?
Steamed or squeezed or diluted, and then exported?**

ogy selection. One lesson learned was the need to better organise the sector with the assistance of a professional association, SYPEAM, which now provides support to producers through training and technical information.

It is a rewarding, but exacting market to conquer, and one where quality counts. But there are abuses: because of the oils’ concentrated nature, unscrupulous traders sometimes blend in synthetic oils. Not only could this get noticed in quality inspections by purchasing agents, but it will also lead to rejection by customers, who believe that only natural products contain the ‘life elements’ that are central to the oils’ invigorating or restful values.

The market for essential oils is attractive, but it is also volatile, especially now that it is in fashion. Yet, if high standards can be maintained, it could reward you with the sweet smell of success.

For further information:

International Federation of Essential Oils and
Aroma Trades (IFEAT), Federation House,
6 Catherine Street, London, WC2B 5JJ, UK.
Fax: + 44 171 836 0580. Website: www.ifeat.org.uk

Essential Oils World, PO Box 72, Chipping Norton,
Oxon, OX7 6JU, UK. Fax: +44 1608 659 257
Website: www.cotpubco.demon.co.uk/coswebleswhome.html

SYPEAM

(SYndicat Professionnel des producteurs
d’Extraits Aromatiques alimentaires
et médicinaux de Madagascar)
B P 1348, Antananarivo 101, Madagascar
Fax: +261 2022 26921
Email: sypeam@sinergic.mg
Website: www.sinergic.mg/sypeam/default.htm

The art of communicating on paper

The verb 'to communicate' has a lot of synonyms: speaking, divulging, passing on, publishing, conveying, explaining, informing, exchanging, corresponding ... To communicate is more than just 'being in contact with the outside world' – a simple handshake has the same effect. It is more about expecting a result. And so it is in development, where there are competing messages and demands for attention from various centres of power. Amid all the noise, the top priority has to be about communication leading to understanding and action.

Designing a newspaper, a folder, a technical leaflet or an extension chart, submitting a funding proposal, or sending a summary or a full report to decision makers, are all acts of communication grouped together as 'the paper media'. They are the preferred – and somewhat inflexible – methods of communication for researchers, extension workers, groups and associations, business leaders, NGOs and farmers.

Effective communication involves a choice of writing style and presentation which varies according to the intended audience, the message to be communicated, and the medium to be used. These three facets are always interlinked, but, at the outset, it is the choice of audience which determines how it should be addressed. After all, you do not address scientists the same way as you address a group of farmers, students or children.

When a researcher is communicating his findings to other researchers, he uses a structure and a style which bear nothing in common with the style used to disseminate the same findings, or a press release, or a training brochure, about them. The rules used in the different types of documents change, but the underlying logic stays the same: it is about helping the chosen audience to best understand the message.

And so the same basic text can be used in variety of ways. A scientific article can be used, for example, as the basis for writing a technical leaflet. This assumes, of course, that the original text and the message to be passed on are suitable for repackaging. It would be wrong, for example, to tell a group of farmers about a



Illustration H. Larkins

Look good!

An illustration (photo, drawing, cartoon, etc.) always gets noticed by the reader first, before the words. A picture can inspire or trigger off a dream, and is at least as powerful as a text. A photograph is not an ornament; it can bring home a message. It provides a second level of information to the text, which it also makes more attractive by creating more space, something most readers find inviting.

A diagram, or a sketch, especially when clear and simple, is a good way to explain how something works. It is often used in "how to" guides.

A table can help the reader absorb information through a graphic visualisation of, for example, statistics (through graphs and charts).

The use of cartoons is growing in extension work, reminding us how much they help in getting a message across. A great help here, if you are not a gifted artist yourself, is to use or copy the extensive set of drawings of people, objects and animals in *Where there is no artist*, available from the publisher.

Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997, ISBN 1-85339-391-6, 123 pages, £14.95 • €23.40.

103-105 Southampton Row, London, WC1B 4 HH, UK.

Fax: + 44 20 7436 2013 - Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk - Website: www.itpubs.org.uk



A good picture keeps the reader's eye.
Try it out first with some typical readers.



Training organisations

The African Publishers Network (APNET), set up to promote local publishing in Africa, now brings together national publishers' associations in more than 27 countries in Africa. It organises short-courses on publishing techniques.

PO Box 3773, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Fax: + 263 4 705 106

Email: apnet@internet.co.zw

Website: www.africanpublishers.org

- CESPA, a specialist centre on communication for development, offers services in the design of multimedia, and training and advice in the development and implementation of communication strategies.

BP 1820, Bamako, Mali

Fax: + 223 21 11 09

Email: cespa@datatech.toolnet.org

- The Institut supérieur des sciences de l'information et de la communication (ISSIC) organises professional training courses in communication.

BP 15948, Dakar-Fann, Senegal

Fax: + 221 825 06 06

Email: issic@metissacana.com

- The New Media Laboratory provides short- and long-term courses in communication in Southern Africa.

Department of Journalism & Media Studies,
Rhodes University

Grahamstown 6140, South Africa

Fax: + 27 12 46 603 84 47, Website: nml.ru.ac.za

series of experiments conducted on a water pump if the real message to be communicated is about how the pump works.

A range of materials can be used for written communication, each one of them with a distinct structure that is derived from the content, use and target group. A network newsletter, for example, serves as a forum for exchange which brings together members or subscribers around a shared activity. Technical leaflets, on the other hand, aim at passing on a piece of knowledge or instructions on using a technique, and express information in clear language,

with supporting illustrations and simple references. And, as the saying goes, a picture speaks a thousand words, which is why extension materials and posters often use images as an attractive and easy way of communicating information to people with reading difficulties.


Another medium with a specific use is a series of booklets, a collection of small documents dealing with the same subject from different perspectives. A series aims at encouraging reading habits, and familiarity (through using the same typefaces, presentation, colours and layout of texts). So


the choice of medium to be used is defined by the situation of the reader, who has to be able to understand the message immediately.

A learning strategy

The selection of the target group, the choice of the message, the multiple uses of the same basic information, letting the message define the medium, style and form: all these are skills that can be learned, alongside the ground rules of ethics in communication skills. There are specialised centres and institutes, such as ISSIC in Senegal (see box), which provide training courses in communication. There are other bodies too, whose role is to run professional workshops and short courses in communication techniques and the skills of the written media.

No matter how skilled you may be, every writer well knows the state of total fear of writing, of staring at an empty page hoping it will fill itself with words. The condition is called 'writer's block' and afflicts anyone who writes for a living but cannot get started. Nowadays therapy is available in the form of writing workshops which dispense writing exercises. They are designed, like gymnastic exercises, to clear your thinking, and give you the courage to get going. It should be painless...

 The ABC of Book Publishing. A Training manual for NGOs in Africa. Co-publication JANyeko Publishing/CTA, 1999, 116 pages, ISBN 9970-510-01-2, CTA number 961, 20 credit points. (This book was reviewed in Spore 85).

 Guide for technical writers. CARDII/CTA, 1996, 56 pp. ISBN 97 661 700 29. CTA number 767, 10 credit points.

Keep it simple, silly

There are some basic rules in writing. They crop up in every training event:

- go for clarity, simplicity and brevity. The maximum length of a sentence that should be memorised is 12 words. And, for it to be memorised, write the sentence simply, like this. The ideal sentence has just one idea or piece of information;
- use a direct vocabulary, especially when dealing with complex topics;
- avoid superfluous terms (like too many adverbs or adjectives) and steer clear of jargon, which simply clogs up your message;
- remember to keep your paragraphs short, and no longer than 15 lines;
- organise your information and try to follow the rule of WWWWWH (who, what, when, where, why, how) also known as Five W's and an H.

Finally, be courteous to the reader and avoid spelling errors. Read and re-read your text to remove any irritating 'spelling'.

Making a good impression

After the writing and illustrating is over, it's all down to reproducing the original.

- Work out as closely as possible the number of copies you will need and which you will be able to distribute during your document's life;
- Remember that photocopying is only economical for 300 copies or less. If you want more copies, it will be cheaper to print them, so ask a printer for a quotation. And the more you print, the cheaper each copy becomes;
- Some printers still compose texts using lead characters. This is a cheap method, and always useful for short texts without any illustrations: leaflets with announcements, visiting cards etc.;
- Most printers use offset printing techniques now, and can reproduce any original document, whether it is hand-written or typed, and with illustrations;
- Colour, or black-and-white. If you are producing less than 500 copies, go for black-and-white. But if you want more than 1,000 copies, it can be worthwhile opting for colour.

Bushmeat, now on the Web

■ A discussion forum on the dangers of eating bushmeat has been started on the Internet (bushmeat@AZA.org) (see *Spore* 83, p 7). It is drawing attention to the reasons behind the rising consumption of bushmeat in Africa. These include the general economic crisis (hunting is a direct source of income), shifts in population resulting from civil war and political disturbance and the devaluation of such currencies as the CFA franc. An online working party has come up with some recommendations: increase the responsibilities of forest growers, so that they provide more food to their personnel and prohibit hunting in their concessions; public awareness building; respect for legislation to protect fauna; and, above all, promotion of alternatives to local communities, for whom bushmeat is an important source of food.

△ ECOFAC (Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des écosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique centrale)
B P 15115, Libreville, Gabon.
Email: coordination@ecofac.org

Shaping rural regions

■ The conflicts and opportunities existing between local and global processes, and their impact on rural communities will be the main themes for discussion at the International Symposium on Globalisation and Local Development: Challenges to Small-Scale Production. This symposium is organised by the International Farming Systems Association (IFSA) and will be held from 27 to 29 November 2000 in Santiago, Chile.

△ IFSA,
Casilla 228 Correo 22,
Santiago, Chile.
Fax: +56 2 236 4558
Email: ifsa@rimisp2.cl
Website:
www.rimisp.cl/ifsa_jesa2000.html

Genetically modified foods a little safer

■ Novartis, a Swiss multinational, has developed a sugar-based replacement for antibiotic resistance marker genes. The latter are used in the development of genetically modified foods, but some scientists fear that these genes might spread to harmful gut bacteria, making them resistant to antibiotics. Novartis' new alternative, manA, already exists in familiar crops, which should increase confidence in the safety of the method. Marker genes are used to reveal whether cells have taken up packages of new genes.

New Scientist, November 1999

Keep at it, you fish farmers!



Photo CTA

What's the net worth of fish farming without viable and accessible support services?

■ A set of concrete action plans for improving the extension and promotion of agro-pisciculture was drawn up by appreciative participants during a study visit to Malawi on sustainable agro-pisciculture systems in sub-Saharan Africa in November 1999. The 14 participants from 9 sub-Saharan African countries were enthusiastic about the extension system used in smallholder aquaculture in Malawi, although they

indicated a gap between the governmental services and NGO structures. Many fish farming projects were set up in Malawi with donor support in the past 10 years, which has resulted in an increase in the number of people hooked on fish farming from 500 to more than 3000. But extension and research services were curtailed drastically once the projects ended, and maintenance of infrastructure

became difficult. Another lesson learnt is that fry production centres (commercial or governmental) and extension services should be strategically spread throughout the country. The study visit was organised by CTA in collaboration with the Malawian Department of Fisheries and the Malawi office of the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management (ICLARM).

A plateau of potatoes

■ Potatoes are hot stuff on the plateau of Fouta Djallon in Guinée. In the last ten years, productivity has risen more than four-fold (up to 22 tonnes/hectare from 5 t/ha). More than 2,000 tonnes are sold annually on the local markets, but also to neighbouring Senegal. One contributing factor to this was the fact that imports of European potatoes were blocked for a six-year period to encourage local production. It seems that the potato is well suited to the cool season from December to March in Guinea, when it is grown in rotation with rice, maize and

groundnuts. It also commands a good price, of 350 FG/kg (about € 0.22/kg) for the producer. This price is fixed prior to harvest, and farmers' associations guarantee to take the crop, being sure of sales to traders who come to collect sacks whenever there is a lorry load.

The Farmers' Federation of Fouta Djallon (FPPD) lies behind this success story. It is a dynamic grouping, organised on a cooperative basis (with central purchasing of fertilisers, and central stocking). It brings together almost 12,000 members. Their work has been complemented by

assistance from organisations overseas and French farmers. The success has been especially sweet for women, who represent 70% of the membership. They have been able to benefit from training opportunities in literacy and marketing, and have invested their returns on potatoes into health and schooling costs. The FPPD is now looking further afield, as it were, with plans to grow onions and tomatoes, both much in demand on the local market.

Afrique-Agriculture, 276,
December 1999

△ FPPD
BP 52, Pita, Guinea

Laurels for Mozambican film

■ Mozambique won the second place in the 16th international Agricultural Film Festival (Agro-film 99) held in October 1999 in Nitra, in Slovakia. The winning film was a 13-minute production called "War on Hunger", which showed the losses involved in existing harvest storage facilities. It also showed how to build improved silos using simple tech-

niques. The film was produced during a study of communication in rural areas and was part of the campaign organised on the theme of post-harvest techniques by the Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries. "War on Hunger" was assisted by the participation of local communities, and was supported by the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture. Two

sound tapes, each lasting nine minutes, were also produced. In 1997, Mozambique won a special FAO prize at the same festival for the video "Drought: the forward-looking farmer is worth double".

✉ *Direcção Nacional de Extensão Rural*
Ministério de Agricultura e Pescas
CP 1406,
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Fax: + 258 1 46 00 27
Email: sg2000@sgmoz.uem.mz

The fair share for rural life

■ FIARA 2000, Senegal's international fair for agriculture and animal resources was held in Dakar over 11 days in mid-December 1999. It came close to meeting its targets of attracting more than 20,000 visitors each day. Designed to be a meeting place for various farmers' organisations and for direct contacts between producers and urban consumers, FIARA 2000 was organised by the national council

for rural cooperation CNCR and the association of rural council presidents APCR. Expanding opportunities were highlighted both in regional trade and among the renowned Senegalese diaspora in Europe, southern Africa, and the Americas.

Alongside the bustle of the show-and-sell stands was a daily discussion forum focussing on specific themes, such as women, fishing, and decentralisation.

CTA facilitated the sessions on communication, engaging in dialogue with users and partners on its services, and supported the participation of five representatives of farmers' organisations from other countries.

✉ *FIARA*
C/o CNCR
BP 13453
Dakar, Senegal
Fax: +221 827 52 62
Email: cncr@telecomplus.sn

Phosphates galore: handle with care

■ For the last three years in Senegal, a total of 70,000 tons of phosphate fertilisers have been made available to farmers each year. This has been part of a programme of adding phosphates to increase the fertility of 300,000 hectares of land. The programme was launched by the Senegalese farmers' movement CNCR and the Association of rural councils (APCR) in 1997. Under the programme, each farmer has had a right to eight 50kg sacks of fertiliser each year. But there's just one small problem. No instructions for use are given with the fertiliser, which comprises 50% tricalcium phosphate and 50% phosphogypsum, a sub-product of the industrial process of phosphoric acid manufacture. In fact, the fertiliser should be dug into the soil, and not scattered on it. If it is not applied properly, it can damage crops and increase soil salinity. Some argue that it does not redress soil fertility, and claim that it also contains heavy metals (cadmium, mercury and lead) just as all natural phosphates do. It is even claimed to have poisoned some users. The



Take a deep breath, at your peril

producer, the Industries chimiques du Sénégal (ICS) company, have confirmed that the amount of heavy metals is less than the level permitted by international standards. For the rest, it has to be noted that some farmers in the groundnut zone use it gratefully each year. So people are urged to

remember that caution is the mother of safety, to use the fertiliser with care, and to take advice from technical staff.

Syfia, November 1999

✉ *CNCR*
BP 13453
Dakar, Senegal
Fax: +221 827 52 62
Email: cncr@telecomplus.sn

Nothing gets wasted

■ A new fuel for cooking and heating, which at FCFA 50/kg is cheaper than firewood, is coming onto the market in Burkina Faso. Briquettes of compressed agricultural waste (straw and cotton stems) are shaped into cylinders 7cm in diameter; they are easier to cut than wood, but they provide same amounts of heat. The new product was developed to ease the pressure on the nation's woodlands (more than 5 million tonnes of wood are used annually as fuelwood, the equivalent of 140,000 hectares of forest). A pilot project has been started at a plant in Boromo (150 km west of Ouagadougou) with finance from UNDP and Denmark. In operation since May 1999, its annual production (currently 200 t) could rise to 2,000 or 4,000 tonnes of briquettes.

✉ *Eric Lacasse, UNDP, B P 575*
Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso.
Fax: + 226 31 04 70
Email: eric.lacasse@undp.org

Ghana privatises cocoa exports

■ The Government of Ghana has announced the privatisation of the Cocoa Product Buying Company, the central purchasing and export agency for about 70% of national production. With a production of 409,000 tonnes of cocoa beans in 1998-1999, Ghana is the second largest world producer, behind Côte d'Ivoire, at 1.15 million tonnes.

Broiler production

■ A distance learning certificate in broiler production is on offer now, and two on-site diploma programmes on livestock production and animal health start in September 2000, at

✉ *REPAHA,*
PO Box 10962, Georgetown,
Guyana.
Fax: + 592 20 6557
Email: repaha@sdpn.org.gy

Ducklings and rice—a different recipe

■ Researchers at the Can Tho University in Vietnam have quantified the efficiency of rearing ducklings in a rice paddy. They put ducklings (100/ha) in rice fields 22 days after sowing and removed them again when the rice started to flower. The ducklings eat weeds and insects and their manure improves soil fertility. Fields with fertiliser yielded 3880 kg/ha, duck-only plots 2100 kg/ha, and plots with neither fertiliser nor ducklings, barely 500 kg/ha.

Teach yourself sorghum

■ The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) recently launched the Sorghum Tutorial Online. This service is entirely dedicated to sorghum: its biology, current breeding techniques and how these work, and the pests and diseases of sorghum and how these are controlled or prevented. Unfortunately, the site is not yet available in French.

Website:
198.93.234.24/maha/sorg.htm
Email: V.Mahalakshmi@cgiar.org

Organic food processing

■ Convenience and fast-foods occupy a growing share of many people's diets. To help producers of organic food to adjust to this trend, IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements will organise its first international seminar on Organic Food: How to Guarantee Premium Quality for the New Millennium, It will be held in Basel, Switzerland, 29(30 August 2000.

Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL)
Ackerstrasse Postfach, 5070 Frick, Switzerland.
Fax +41 62 865 72 73
Email: ifoam2000@fibl.ch
Website: www.ifoam2000.ch

Measuring the immeasurable

■ Everybody favours, and strives for, sustainable development. Developing sustainability indicators (SIs) is an important element in achieving sustainability, but it is tricky since it involves highly emotive and nonmeasurable aspects. The International Development Centre (IDC) of the University of Reading, UK, will run a short course on SIs from 14 August to 22 September 2000, setting out the current debate and experience on practical use of SIs.

IDC,
PO Box 239, Reading RG6 6AU, UK.
Fax: +44 118 975 64 67
Email: idc@reading.ac.uk
Website: www.rdg.ac.uk/idc

Research proposals

■ A workshop on how to draft funding proposals for agricultural research was hosted by the Malagasy research centre FOFIFA in Antananarivo in December 1999. Attended by 12 specialists from Burundi, Congo (DR), Madagascar, and Rwanda, it followed hot on the heels of an English-language course in Nairobi. The co-organisers, ECAPAPA and CTA, plan to publish the courses' materials as a manual. Details will be announced in a future edition of *Spore*.

Cameroon stops export of precious timber

■ Cameroon has halted export of mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis* or *anthotheba*) and sapelli (*Entandrophragma cylindricum*) which until now represented almost 70% of the country's timber exports. Twenty other species are also on the prohibited list. Another 69 species will continue to be exported, but they will be subject to export duties of FCFA 3,000 /m³ (€4.60/m³). The government's decree marks the end of a long process started a decade ago, aimed at increasing timber processing within the country, rising from 25 % in 1968, to 60 % in 1981, and 70 % in 1994). The decree allows for strict control of timber exports, which are the nation's second export and, at a level of 2.7 million m³, accounted for 7% of GNP in

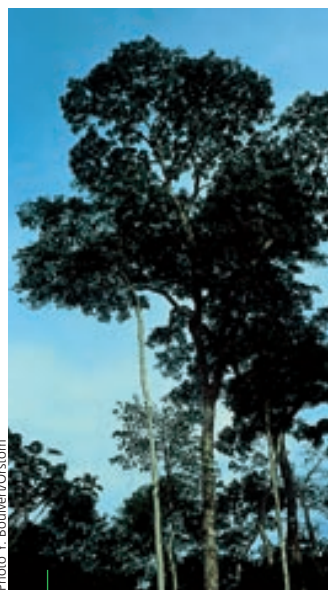


Photo: Y. Boulvert/Orstom

The challenge:
cut less and
earn more

1998. It aims at accelerating the rate of local processing, with an eye to job creation and exporting value-added products. High quality conditions have been set for local factories, which should have levels of productivity and output comparable to those of European or Asian plants, but the overall capacity should not exceed the biological capacity of the forest. "There is a certain risk here that needs assessment, and a need for an appropriate industrial policy", according to Jean-Claude Carret, of the Centre for Industrial Economy at the French School of Mines. Already investments worth FCFA 40 billion (€ 61 million) have been made. And local processing capacity has risen by more than one million m³!

Something's growing in those cities

■ Agriculture has long been part of the urban landscape, and now it is spreading its roots throughout urban life (see *Spore* 82). Now many of the urban poor, in the South and the North, base their survival strategies on growing food or raising animals and selling them in the city. Urban agriculture (UA) also contributes to a city's food security and ecology, although issues of water supply, land access, health, and hygiene require special attention.

These and many more issues came up for discussion at the seminar "Growing Cities, Growing Food—Urban Agriculture on the Policy Agenda", held in Havana, Cuba, in October 1999. Organised by the Cuban livestock production association ACPA, the German and Swedish development cooperation agencies GTZ and SIDA, the Dutch Foundation ETC, and CTA, the seminar brought together 70 specialists from more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe.

Among their conclusions: the need for more public awareness efforts, improved information exchange, greater involvement of city planners and politicians, plus lively ideas for new projects, such as the integration of water and organic waste recycling to

serve urban agriculture, public health and environment protection. The proceedings will be published in mid 2000.

In the meantime, the new collection of essays *For Hunger-proof Cities* is a splendid introduction to UA. It examines urban food systems, improved accessibility to food for city dwellers, community-based agriculture, and alternatives to land-

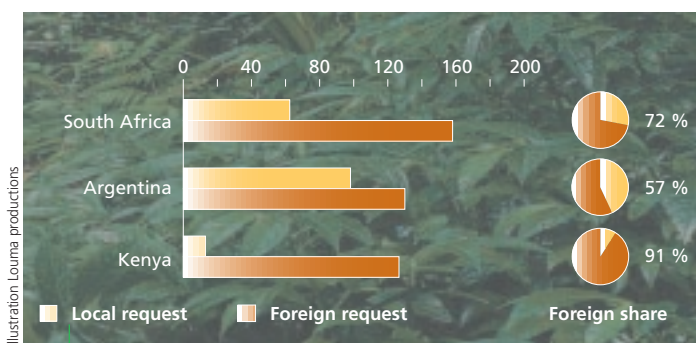
based methods such as rooftop hydroponics and bee-keeping.

For *Hunger-proof Cities. Sustainable Urban Food Systems*.
M Koc, R MacRae, L Mougeot, and J Welsh. IDRC. 1999. 238 pp.
ISBN 0 88936 882 1.
US\$35 · €36.40
International Development Research Centre
PO Box 8500, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1G 3H9.
Fax: +1 613 563 2476
Email: pub@idrc.ca

Patenting life?

■ Plant variety rights exist to provide legal protection for improved plant strains. In developing countries, requests for such rights are often registered by foreign producers in the

country, usually large agro-industrial companies. The chart here shows three countries that have handed such rights to breeders: South Africa, Kenya and Argentina.



Root and branch sell-out of plant variety rights

Source: Grain (Genetic Resources Action International), October 1999

Happy combinations

■ Rubber cultivation has been underway in Gabon for only the last fifteen years, but tests are well advanced on mixing the cultivation of hevea (*Hevea brasiliensis*) with food crops, to see if this will increase the productivity of the land. Traditionally, rows of rubber trees have been combined with single cycles of food crops, and yields have often been low. Now experiments have come up with new combinations of crops which use few inputs and require

no special material. The approach compensates for the non-productive period of the rubber trees' youth, over the first five to seven years. The combinations of crops which work best in the forest soils are rice and groundnuts for two or three crop cycles, followed by plantain for one cycle, or cassava as an annual crop, or vegetables with rice, groundnuts and plantain for one or two cycles. There are many benefits to these mixtures: tillage

is cut down, the rubber trees grow better, and farmers' incomes rise and diversify. There is one condition that should not be overlooked: the plots of land should be near the village, to facilitate access, and to ensure that the crops can be got to the market.

Plantations, recherche, développement,
n° 1, 1999

▲ Centre d'appui technique à
l'hévéaculture
BP 643, Libreville, Gabon

The future of biological nitrogen fixation in Africa

■ The next congress of the African Association for Biological Nitrogen Fixation "Challenges and Imperatives for BNF Research and Application in Africa for the Twenty-first Century", will be held from 25 to 29 September in Nairobi, Kenya.

▲ Organising Committee AABNF
Congress
Botany Department, University of
Nairobi
PO Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya.
Fax: +254 2 622 733
Email: biofix@arcc.or.ke

There's no business like small business



Photo B. Favre

Pressing needs: credit, hygiene and marketing

■ Small agrifood enterprises are very important as they offer employment and livelihood to many families and contribute

both to the economy and food security.

From 30 November to 3 December 1999, CTA, together with CIRAD, the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and ENDA-Graf (Senegal), co-organised a seminar on small agrifood businesses in western and central Africa. The seminar was linked to a series of four regional studies and workshops in Africa. The main objectives were to assess the importance of the sector and its main constraints, and to find ways of supporting and improving it. More than 60 participants discussed four major themes: learning and education, access to credit, marketing and quality of produce, and opportunities to promote new means of support.

The need for education and training in hygiene, human

resource management, stock management, and quality control, for example, is enormous. Access to credit remains a problem due to the dispersed location of the enterprises and their desire for long-term, low-interest loans. For marketing and quality the biggest constraints lie in the remoteness of markets as well as inadequate processing and packaging techniques, lack of information on hygiene, and low awareness of what consumers want and about how competing businesses operate. Many participants stressed the need for more business support and advisory services in this sector.



Traditional foods: processing for profit. *Fellows, P (ed), 1997.*
ITP & CTA. 210 pp. ISBN 1 85339 228 6.
CTA number 796, 20 credit points.

Rural radio goes to town

■ That old favourite of thousands of rural radio stations, the Developing Countries Farming Radio Network, recently expanded its coverage to urban agriculture and animal breeding. Now the DCFRN programmes scripts, made available free of charge to local stations worldwide, can be heard by millions of city dwellers, with such items as growing vegetables in pots, raising guinea pigs in cages and growing herbs on rooftops. All serious stuff for those 'townies' for whom urban agriculture is key to food security and income generation. DCFRN

estimate that their urban audience is already 25 million people.

DCFRN

366, Adelaide Street West
Suite 706
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1R9
Fax: +1 416 971 52 99
Email: dcfm@web.net
Website: www.web.net/~dcfrn



Radio serving the rural areas of the ACP countries: directory 1998.
This directory provides details on rural radio stations in 71 ACP countries, and on the main national and international partner organisations of these rural stations.
CTA, 1998. 320 pp.
ISBN 92 9081 2052
CTA number 941, 20 credit points



Photo CTA

Shrimps, turtles and talks

■ The United States has recently banned the import of shrimps from Guyana and other countries because the fishing nets used to catch them could endanger marine turtles. Shrimp-producing countries filed an appeal at the World Trade Organisation, which ruled in their favour. However, the WTO also recognised that the shrimp trade could damage the environment, and accepted the right of the US to protect the turtles. Reason enough, surely, to start off some talks, instead of imposing rules unilaterally?

Spiruline exports start

■ Madagascar has started to produce spiruline from the alga *Spirulina*, which is rich in plant proteins and is used as a food additive. Initial production levels are modest, but by the end of 2000 are expected to reach 50 tonnes of powdered spiruline. It is produced industrially at a plant in Tulear, in the south-west of the island. All reports are of a very high quality product, able to command a price twice that charged for Chinese spiruline, the best known product on the market to date.

Marchés tropicaux, 2029

New water management fellowships for women

■ Fellowships for the MSc course *Irrigation and Water Management* at Wageningen Agricultural University in the Netherlands will be awarded to female professionals in water management. The English-language course consists of 11 months course work, 3 months field work in the home country and 3 months thesis writing. The course starts every September.

▲ M Z Zwarteveen, Nieuwe Kanaal 11, 6709 PA Wageningen, The Netherlands.
Fax: +31 317 484759
Email: Margreet.Zwarteveen@users.tct.wag-ur.nl

ENDA Graf Sahel



There is nothing new in the message that local communities are well able to innovate, and that efforts should be focussed on identifying and mobilising such latent innovative talents, so that they can better manage their living conditions and local resources.

What is new, though, is the approach adopted by ENDA Graf Sahel (Graf meaning group for research, action and training). This body was set up in 1975 in Dakar (Senegal) with the following basic principles: to build all development action on the basis of local situations in the field; to make maximum use of local dynamics already in place; to open up local knowledge through encouraging flat forms of networking between technical staff, development workers, farmers and support bodies.

Nowadays ENDA Graf organises several support pro-

grammes each year in West Africa for farmers' initiatives, improvement of local resources and running networks. The local development programme of Mont-Rolland in Senegal is a case in point, being focussed on natural resource management (agriculture and livestock production) and capacity building (training, literacy and inter-organisation exchanges). Another programme, focussing on food and institutional security of the poorest groups in the community, brings together the rural communities of the department of Louga.

ENDA Graf's support is through training and planning in project areas of fisheries, market gardening, livestock production, agriculture, health, employment and tourism. Their support for a network for goods and services in Dakar city is typical of their approach to enhancing local community innovations.

Known as Doole (meaning the strength of union, in Wolof), the network was launched by a group of women supported by ENDA Graf. It embraces 500 members of SECs (community exchange systems, such as LETS, local economic trading systems). The SECs do not use cash to pay for their exchanges, but instead use vouchers worth a number of hours of work or service. These vouchers can be used to purchase goods in markets or shops which are part of the network, or to pay for services (such as driving lessons, electricity supply or sewing) from another member, or to follow training opportunities (such as literacy, language, computer or management classes) provided at the network's 'University' which is operated by its members. And members of Doole can undertake joint community projects and workshops, paid for with vouchers.

ENDA Graf also publishes case studies of the rich use of human resources that is represented by the work they support. Their collection "Recherche popularise", with works in French and Wolof, includes works by farmers, clergy and development workers on their research.

ENDA Graf Sahel has a total of 11 offices, of which seven are in Dakar, one is in Benin, two are in Guinée, and one is in Belgium.

✉ ENDA Graf Sahel
B P 13069
Dakar, Senegal
Fax: + 221 827 20 25
Email: forumpop@enda.sn
Website: www.enda.sn/graf.html

A network that could grow on you



There is somebody available in Kenya if you want to discuss your research findings on forest plants with horticultural potential. You can contact Hawaii for pineapple, Taiwan for tropical vegetable production, or New Zealand for tuber crops. All these experts are members of the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), an international network of horticultural scientists, stu-

dents, and researchers looking for international cooperation. Currently ISHS has around 3800 individual and 270 organisational members in more than 100 countries, with a modest but active representation in ACP countries. The network's secretariat, which is based in Belgium, coordinates membership and manages the Society's publications. ISHS publishes *Acta Horticulturae*, a journal mainly devoted to the proceedings of ISHS symposia and the *Dictionary of Horticulture* (10 languages, 1990, Elsevier, ISBN 0 444 88062 3, €200).

The secretariat is also the gateway to the numerous subgroups of the ISHS. Six sections currently cover major horticultural crops grown throughout the world (fruits, medicinal plants, root and

tuber crops, vegetables etc.) and 12 commissions focus on different scientific and technical aspects such as biotechnology, economics and management, education and training, plant protection, postharvest, urban horticulture, and plant genetic resources. These sections and commissions have established almost 90 working groups to study specialised areas. Some of these groups are more active than others and have their own symposia, magazines, and websites, such as the *Commission Post-harvest Newsletter* (www.ishs.org/sci/ph12000.pdf) and the *Fruit Section Newsletter* (www.ishs.org/sci/frtnwslt.htm), or they form part of other networks, such as the Cucurbit Network (www.cucurbit.org).

To participate in these groups you need to be a mem-

ber of ISHS. Individual members pay €35 annually, organisations €146, and students only €12. Members in developing countries are granted membership for two years for the same fees.

All members receive the annual members directory, which lists practically all specialists in horticulture worldwide, and the quarterly magazine *Chronica Horticulturae*. They also get discounts on *Acta Horticulturae* and a significant reduction on the registration fee at specialised ISHS symposia, of which more than 30 are convened annually.

✉ ISHS Secretariat
K. Mercierlaan 92
3001 Leuven, Belgium
Fax: +32 16 22 94 50
Email: info@ishs.org
Website: www.ishs.org

Publications

Sowing the seeds of food security

“Improved seeds, more than any other input, hold the key to enhanced farm productivity and increased income generation.” That was the assumption behind a CTA study visit to 19 seed supply projects in Zimbabwe by 16 seed supply experts from Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and the host country in February 1999. The visits focused on work with smallholder farmers since, according to the visit report, “considering that small-grain and other indigenous crops hold the key to household and national food security, denying smallholders continuous availabil-

ity of high-quality seeds implies that food security will remain unattainable.”

The report details each visit, outlines the seed supply situation in participants’ home countries, and explains the follow-up work to which each participant was committed upon return home. Much of the information is technical, but it also encompasses socioeconomic aspects in management decision-making.

Among the crisp set of recommendations, the ones on strengthening marketing and distribution, and on emphasising local knowledge and informal systems are most appropriate for



replication and adaptation in other countries.

The Role of Smallholder Farmers in Seed Production Systems. Report and Recommendations of a Study Visit, Zimbabwe, 1999. CTA. 2000. 100 pp. ISBN 92 9081 2176. CTA number 965. 10 credit points.

European research revealed on disc

■ EIARD Infosys is a European information and communication system about research for development involving European organisations. It is based on the Internet, and its data are now also available on CD-ROM for EIARD’s partners in developing countries. EIARD, the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development, aims to improve coherence between policies in agriculture and rural development among 15 EU Member States, the European Commission, Norway, and Switzerland.

German Centre for Documentation and Information in Agriculture (ZADI), Villichgasse 17, D - 53177 Bonn, Germany
Fax: +49 228 954 8111
Website: www.dainet.de/eiard/infosys/europafraameset_about.htm

Forests for the future

■ As sturdy as most of the trees it seeks to defend, this collection of specialised papers provides a



rich insight into the experiences of local communities in managing the natural environment of the forest. Its 17 case studies from five continents include the work of the Green Earth organisation in Ghana and conservation in national parks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It insists relentlessly on defending local interests and on ignoring or denying external demands, without touching upon how to reduce the pressures on the forest of, for instance, urban consumers. For some read-

ers that will be a weakness, but for the single-minded reader who believes that local management of forests should always be supreme, here is a good bunch of arrows for your bow.

Forests for the Future. Local Strategies for Forest Protection, Economic Welfare and Social Justice. Edited by P. Wolvekamp. Zed Books in association with Both ENDS and Econet, 1999. 288 pp. ISBN 1 85649 757 7. US\$25 • €26 (excluding postage) Zed Books. 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK. Fax: +44 20 7837 4014

Real grass roots

■ The third issue of *Akirma*, a dynamic new journal in English and Amharic, was published at the end of 1999 with features on water conservation, pastoralism, farmer’s opinions, and indigenous trees. Aimed at extension agents and field workers, it is named after a tough grass with a strong root system. Published by the NGO Forum for Environment (FoE), with support from ENDA-Ethiopia, the Institute for Sustainable Development, and the Netherlands government, *Akirma* is available on subscription from the FoE.

FoE, PO Box 278, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
Fax: +251 1 514 580
Email: sustain@telecom.net.et

Western African scenarios for resource access

■ Western Africa has a very diverse ecology, history, and socioeconomic setting. In *Land Tenure and Resource Access in West Africa*, the region is therefore divided in four subareas: Gulf of Guinea (from Cote d’Ivoire to Cameroon), Land-locked Sahel (from Mali to Chad), Atlantic Sahel (Senegal, Gambia, and Mauritania), and Atlantic Forest (stretching from Guinea Bissau to Liberia). The book describes the characteristic developments of each region and their likely evolution over the next 25 years. Recent decades have brought many changes (urban growth, population increase, migration),



and new markets and technologies, which have exerted significant pressures on land. The report discusses key policy areas like the usefulness of recognising

customary tenure systems and implementing land registration, mechanisms for conflict resolution, decentralisation, and good governance. With its bird’s eye view, the book is a reasonable introduction to these urgent policy areas to be addressed by governments, donors, and civil society.

Land Tenure and Resource Access in West Africa: Issues and Opportunities for the next Twenty-five Years. ILED Drylands. 1999. 43 pp. ISBN 1899825312. £7.50 • €12.30 (free to non-OECD) ILED Bookshop. 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. (Quote #7396) Fax: +44 171 388 2826

Somewhere between heaven and earth

■ Soil and the biological environment are more than just neighbours. Modelling techniques can be of great help to understand their often complex interactions. This publication shows examples of energy balance, nitrogen transformation, and soil(crop) relations, using an easily learnt software package.

Modelling Soil-Biosphere Interactions. C Müller, Department of Applied Microbiology, Justus-Liebig University, Germany. 1999. 360 pp. ISBN 0851993532. £49.95 • €81.95
CAB International (CABI), Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 8DE, UK.
Fax: +44 1491 833508
Email: cabi@cabi.org

Go to the library by computer ...

■ The African Digital Library was launched in November 1999 and offers Internet access to full text versions of over 3000 books including reference books and books on business, technology, agriculture, and much more as well as bibliographies. It is free for African users who have an Internet server with an African domain suffix. Others should contact the Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Technikon of South Africa (TSA), which operates the virtual library. The collection will be built up as fast as funds permit. TSA established the service in cooperation with the Association of African Universities and NetLibrary.

Website: www.africaeducation.org/adl/default.htm
Email: pwest@tsamail.tsa.ac.za

... or be a bookworm at home

■ African newspapers, journals, libraries, publishers, Africana libraries in the North (you name it, as long as it has anything to do with books and Africa and has a website, you will most likely find it at the Electronic African Bookworm. This web navigator is hosted and maintained by Hans Zell Publishing Consultants, UK, and can be found at: www.hanszell.co.uk/navtitle.htm

For people without access to the Internet, there is also a printed version.

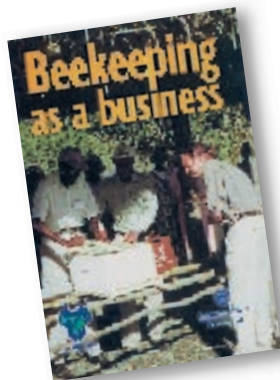
The Electronic African Bookworm. ABC. 1998. 144 pp. ISBN 0952 126958. A limited quantity is available free for African book communities, if funds are not available for purchase; not for re-sale. £8.95 • €14.70
African Books Collective Ltd (ABC). The Jam Factory, 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU, UK. Fax: +44 1865 793298
Email: abc@dial.pipex.com

DNA Marker-assisted improvement of the staple crops in sub-Saharan Africa

■ These proceedings based on a workshop held by IITA in Nigeria in August 1996 have been published with CTA's support.

IITA/CTA co-publication, edited by JH Crouch and A Tenkouano. 1999. 240 pp. ISBN 978 131 163 0. CTA number 960. 40 credit points.

Get your business buzzing



■ Bees are useful insects. Besides their tasty honey and quality wax, they are indispensable for pollination in some crops. In

crops like avocado, cotton, and sunflower, bee pollination actually increases seed and fruit yields. Beekeeping provides people in rural areas with additional sources of income and nutrition. *Beekeeping as a business* is a useful and easy reference manual for all there is to know about keeping bees. The book—with a handy spiral binding—describes the history of beekeeping, bee biology and how a colony works, which plants they pollinate, various types of hives and how to construct them, how to harvest the beehive products, what to wear and what to put on a bee

sting. It is printed on a thick, coated paper so it can survive outdoor conditions or honey stains. Nice touch!

Beekeeping as a business. R Jones. Copublication of the International Bee Research Association (IBRA) and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). 1999. 70 pp. ISBN 0 85092 631 9. £10.99 • €18 (excluding postage) IBRA. 18 North Road, Cardiff, CF10 3DT, UK. Fax: +44 29 20 665 522
Email: ibra@cardiff.ac.uk

Lift up your hearts

■ A lively read, this reprint of a 1999 lecture to the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center CIMMYT is a breathless overview of the continuing failure of agricultural institutions and agricultural practice in Africa to mesh together. We visit the obligatory Afro-pessimism and nostalgia for the good old 1960s when Africa was a net exporter of food; we learn lessons from the causes of Africa's empty harvest, such as poor long-term strategies; we recall the imperative of capacity building in a knowledge triangle linking teaching, research, and exten-

sion; and finally we confront the institutions with the challenge to reform themselves and be nearer rural reality. *Institutions and the African Farmer* is one of those rare books that "talks": you can almost hear the author's voice, begging your questions, challenging your ideas, yearning for a dialogue and the courage to be open. Just as he is.

*Institutions and the African Farmer. Issues in Agriculture 14. C Eicher. CGIAR. 60 pp. 1999. Free of charge. CGIAR, 1818 H St NW, Washington, DC 20433, USA. Fax: +1 202 473 8110
Email cgjar@cgiar.org*

Pacific delights



■ "Cassava is grated, then squeezed to remove juice. Meat, sometimes with coconut cream, is placed in the centre of the grated cassava, which is then moulded to cover it. The preparation is wrapped in softened

banana leaves and baked in the *lovo* (underground oven)." This is one of the "Pacific delights" described in a new booklet about common staple foods of the Pacific islands. Cassava appears alongside yam, banana, taro, sago (*Metroxylon* spp., a palm growing in Papua New Guinea), coconut, sweet potato, breadfruit, rice, and potato. Not only their uses and nutritional value, but also their cultural significance, health, social and economic benefits are discussed. Whilst tables of the nutrient composition of these staples may titillate your health-conscious mind, the recipes and photographs will surely make your mouth water!

The Staples We Eat. CTA/Secretariat of the Pacific Community co-publication. 1999. 102 pp. ISBN 982 203 695 7. CTA number 959. 10 credit points.

Black jacks and slimy sticks end up in soups

■ Rapid changes in food habits and lifestyles, increased urbanisation, and the search for new sources of income have revived interest in vegetables traditionally cultivated in Africa. However, little information is available, and interested producers, extension workers, and agricultural students alike have a hard time trying to access the data that exist. Here is just what they are looking for: a well-illustrated book that provides practi-



cal information for identification, cultivation, pest and disease control, and uses of 54 African indigenous vegetables, as well as details of distribution and nutritional value. Many local farmers, traders, students, and researchers assisted the author to produce this essential information source on plants originating from Africa, from black jack to zom, through fluted pumpkin, garden eggs, and slimy sticks. More of these colourful names can be found in the index, together with the relevant scientific names...

African Indigenous Vegetables: An Overview of the Cultivated Species. R. Schippers. NRI/CTA co-publication. 2000. ISBN 86964 515 6. CTA number 974, 20 credit points.

We knew you had it in you



■ This book is a fine and readable example of a new wave in agricultural thinking, also known as Farmer First, which recognises that the farmer often knew best all along. The power of the farmer to innovate is now being

accepted for its real worth. *Promoting Farmer Innovation* provides a variety of insights into innovation, using examples of programmes in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

For those who know farmers well (including farmers themselves, of course!), it has little value, but for agricultural professionals who know they must change their approaches, this book is a great encouragement. It has the excited air of a person who has just had his eyes opened to something new, and it darts around from praising indigenous knowledge, through a case study of organic matter management, to some rather self-conscious homilies on partnership building.

Never settling long enough on a phenomenon to discuss it in length, it barely touches on the issue of gender and "women's low participation in innovation". But there's the clever bit: the compilers know that attitudes do not change by ponderous preaching but by continued exposure to new ideas, bit by bit. They have done well.

Promoting Farmer Innovation. Harnessing Local Environmental Knowledge in East Africa. SIDA-RELMA and UNDP copublication. 1999. 133 pp. US\$ 10 • €10.40 (Payable to DOS VU Amsterdam) Resource Development Unit, CDCS. De Boelelaan 1115, 1085 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Fax: +31 20 444 90 95 E-mail: CAE.de_Groot@dienst.vu.nl

The future in deep water?

■ Water is increasingly scarce on our planet. Different stakeholders have different needs, and even fight over it. That is logical, now that water is often seen as an economic good and not as free common property (see *Spore* 74). To develop a sound policy for the sustainable use of water resources, the concept of integrated water resources management (IWRM) is gaining ground worldwide. In *The Blue Revolution*, Ian Calder argues that IWRM can be a useful tool but it truly "must accommodate means of obtaining progressive commitments from stakeholders to new developments and initiatives". Water cannot be managed by implementing technological solutions alone. They must be blended with methods dealing

with human dimensions, like economic and social development or land use planning. For Calder, this is the essence of what



he calls the "blue revolution". His book brings together the latest insights in land-water relations,

illustrated with cases from around the world. He discusses new ways of calculating evaporation in different types of vegetation. And he unmasks myths such as "felling highland forests might not always be the main reason for floods in lower regions". The book succeeds in its purpose of providing new information and tools so that the people who are involved in and are affected by water resource management can make the best decisions.

The Blue Revolution. IR Calder. Earthscan Publications. 1999. 192 pp. ISBN 1 85383 634 6. £15.95 • €26.15 Earthscan Publications. 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, UK. Fax: +44 171 837 6348 Email: orders@ltsltd.co.uk

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It all begins with a seed



Good quality seeds are essential to successful vegetable production. This book focuses on the continuing interest and activities related to vegetable seed production programmes.

Vegetable Seed Production (second edition). R A T George. CABI. 1999. 336 pp. ISBN 0851993362. CTA number 962. 40 credit points.

Key Questions for Decision-makers: Protection of Plant Varieties under the WTO Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights

International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI). 1999. 23 pp. ISBN 92 9043 420 1. Free of charge. (See earlier IPGRI reference for address)

Safe crop protection products

■ This book reports the results of a 7-year research programme on the safest and most effective use of crop protection products by farmers. It focuses on India, Mexico, and Zimbabwe, but the book is useful for other countries as well.

Safe and Effective Use of Crop Protection Products in Developing Countries. Edited by J Atkin (Novartis Crop Protection Sector) and K M Leisinger (Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development), Switzerland. 1999. 192 pp. ISBN 0851994717. £35 • €57.40 (See earlier CABI reference for address)

Between the trees

■ These conference proceedings report on inter-rotation management. The phase between tree harvesting and replanting is characterised by risks like soil degradation as well as opportunities offered by new technologies for long-term management of plantation soils.

Site Management and Productivity in Tropical Forest Plantations. A Tiarks, EKS Nambiar, C Cossalter. Workshop proceedings, 16-20 February 1998, South Africa. CIFOR. Occasional Paper No. 16. 1999. 76 pp. ISBN 979 8764 331. J Manangkil, CIFOR Communications Unit, PO Box 6596 JKPWB, Jakarta 10065, Indonesia. Fax: +62 251 622 100 Email: j.manangkil@cgifor.org Website: www.cgifor.org/cifor/publications/publications_list.html

Mailbox

As well as the regular mail from readers, we are now receiving comments on the Millennium supplement to *Spore* (published with *Spore* 84). Your letters, by mail, fax or email, are always welcome at the addresses on the right, whether they are about your day-to-day ideas and wishes, or your vision on Scenarios for ACP Agriculture. By publishing readers' letters, *Spore* does not necessarily agree with or support the views or information given.



Spore, could you be loved?

"*Spore* dearest, enthuses **Oswald Ndhlovu of Murombedzi**, Zimbabwe. You are so nice and glossy, but you're so small dear. Your words are so sweet, reading you is eating a well-ripened banana which I do not like to finish, so I always carry you in my bag. And if I find myself without something to read, I take you out and caress your smooth covers and read you all over, again and again..."

More airtime for rural radio

Responding to the Viewpoint in *Spore* 84 on rural radio, **Samuel Zelehe** of Gambella, Ethiopia, stresses that "Radio is the cheapest media to establish and to use than other ICTs like TV and the Internet. It is rather suitable as a communication technology especially to serve rural people who are far away from ICT services in most ACP States. Although many ACP States use this medium for broadcasting to rural people, the airtime allowed on rural issues is rather short. It is difficult to say that rural radio stations are providing the latest agricultural information with this brief time. It is therefore important to allow more airtime, so that rural radio stations will achieve their goals."

Is poverty reduction possible?

Writing from Tanzania, **I Thuwein** kicks us off with a warning: "War, malaria, AIDS and hunger are part of Africa's life and they are the source of poverty, not forgetting drought and floods. Poor communications, marketing facilities and malnutrition face many Africans, bearing in mind that environmental degradation and population are increasing tremendously.

Corruption is a common sound everywhere, everyday and every minute whereas natural resources like water, forests and wild animals are destroyed every second. But African leaders are always attending seminars, workshops, tours and other gatherings in Europe, spending millions of foreign money which is the produce of the poor people. Is poverty reduction possible? I doubt it very much, but I wish every success to those struggling against it."



Reader G. Michael Tilahun (photo), an assistant vet from Amaro, Ethiopia writes to express concern about the sale of veterinary medicines by illegal retailers and farmers (see *Spore* 84). "It threatens the (income of) vets in practice, and young vets fear they may not engage in the sector, because of fears for their living conditions."

New acaricide recipe

A new formula for an acaricide for cattle, sheep, goats and pigs is offered by **A Lanwo**, Principal Animal Health Technologist, Veterinary Clinic, PO Box 620, Ondo, Nigeria. "Two years ago, due to the very high cost and non-availability of effective parasiticides in my clinic to treat mange infestations, I tried to develop a simple alternative which turned out to be very effective and cheap. The recipe comprises: 1 litre of diesel oil, or PK or GN oil; 15 grams of camphor (about ten small balls) and 2 to 3 ml of Diazinon or Asuntol solution. The method: grind the camphor to a smooth powder, and add to the oil and Diazinon. Shake well, then paint the solution on the affected parts with a painting brush. There is no need for scrubbing as the camphor is a good rubefacient. I encourage *Spore* readers to use the formula and to send me feedback."

From the point of view of the VEWs

More about attending courses, this time from **Peter Ifeanyi Duru**, of Orlu, Nigeria who asks: "Can't CTA organise or extend its seminars to village extension workers (VEWs) and, considering their financial status, extend its benevolence to sponsoring them to go to seminars, workshops and conferences? VEWs are indispensable in ensuring that innovations reach the rural farmers, but their work has been hi-jacked by political sycophants and those at the top of extension stratum."

Under its seminar support programme, CTA supports the cost of attendance of almost 300 professionals, including extension workers, at international meetings each year. It also regularly organises study visits for field specialists, such as the visits to agro-pisciculture programmes in Malawi described in "In Brief", and through its partnership programmes with national partners, it encourages more attention to this crucial stratum of the extension profession.

Cover trees for fruit trees?

Richard Funyep, of the CAPA-DL group, BP 54, Makénéne, Province du Centre, Cameroon, asks readers for advice on selecting a cover tree. "We work in a humid forest zone with an equatorial climate characterised by two dry seasons: a short one from July to mid-August, and a long one from 15 November to 16 March. We are looking for seeds and information about a leguminous plant with perennially dense leaves that would give year-round shade and cover to fruit crops. They would obviously grow more quickly than the latter during the first three years."

Millennium: Food for thought



Your comments on the Millennium supplement, **Scenarios for ACP agriculture: Joining the circles of life**, have started to arrive at the *Spore* offices. Among the first, lengthy reflections was one from **Ms Thiam Traoré Djenebou**, Director of SUD'AGORA, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire including on "the linkages between innovation and traditions. I fully support the idea that the innovations of today are the traditions of tomorrow. In other words, our traditions today were the innovations made by our forebears. Sustainable development should be seen above all as an attitude, without which it cannot be attained: the changes which are essential for moving towards sustainability, the new traditions, should not hide the knowledge and the know-how which were innovations in days gone by and are now our prevailing values."

New leadership at CTA

At the beginning of March, Mr Carl B Greenidge (photo right) took over the Directorship of CTA from Dr R D Cooke, who had held the post since 1995 (see "Viewpoint", p. 16). Mr Greenidge, who trained as an economist with a specialisation in agricultural economics, is the third person to lead the organisation. Prior to taking up his new assignment, he was Deputy Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the ACP Group of States in Brussels, a position he held since 1992.



In his native Guyana, Mr Greenidge first lectured in agricultural economics and subsequently served as Minister of Finance for almost a decade. As architect of the country's Structural Adjustment Programme, he is credited with helping to rescue Guyana from a long period of economic decline. His professional interests have been in agricultural planning, with particular reference to the effect of agricultural innovations on rural incomes in Africa, the role of rural markets in development and the management of fisheries resources. His book on

land settlement schemes in Guyana, which deals with the empowerment of the peasantry, is about to be published.

Mr Greenidge comes to CTA well versed in ACP-EU affairs having experienced the negotiation of many ACP-EU cooperation agreements at first-hand, including the protracted negotiations to establish a successor agreement to Lomé IV. His earlier responsibilities in these negotiations have included trade in general, and agricultural commodity protocols in particular.

Salute to Marie-Josée

Marie-Josée Jehl, who is known personally to a great many *Spore* readers, is leaving CTA after more than eleven years service. She joined the Centre in 1988 from the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and worked first as assistant librarian. After the massive task of cataloguing CTA's library, and various information dissemination roles, she became increasingly involved in training workshops with CTA partners – a role that was formalised in 1996 with a new post in charge of training, as part of her job as Deputy Head of the Information and Capacity Development Department. By 1999 the training portfolio had grown to 17 workshops a year, on subjects ranging from the design of websites to writing annual reports.

Her energy level always enabled her to thrive on the intense work, clear results



P.R.

and friendships from such events, which took her to 24 ACP countries. That 'buzz' is what she will miss most from her time at CTA, now that she is going to live and work in Rome. Doubtless she will keep in touch by email – she was one of the first CTA staff members to see its value. She now chuckles about the days in the late 1980s before CTA used computers widely and in the early 1990s, bringing, almost smuggling, emails into the office each morning from her computer at home. She's a real Cyber Stork – the stork, which, like her, flies to Africa each winter, is the symbol of her native Alsace. Very fitting.



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Dr Rodney Cooke was Director of CTA until March 2000 (see page 14). A biochemist by training, his career as a scientist, administrator, and manager included postings in Latin America, Asia, and Africa before he became Deputy Director in 1989 of the Natural Resources Institute, UK, a post he held until he joined CTA in mid-1995.

Change management

What rates of change are needed?

Before leaving CTA in late March 2000 to take up his new post as Head of the Technical Advisory Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development in Rome, Italy, Dr Cooke shared some insights into institutions and change with *Spore*.

You are devoting much of your life to agriculture and development, but the words are strikingly absent from the agendas of today's international community.

Not exactly. The preferred terms today are not agriculture and food security, but poverty reduction and rural development. In international negotiations many developed countries assume that ACP agriculture equates with developed country agriculture, with a very small slice of the GDP and a small share of employment. When I met with the development group of the European Parliament, they were genuinely surprised to hear the figures that we know well: agriculture means 30-60% of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa and 70% of jobs, of which 70% are held by women.

So the challenge is to ensure that the roles of agriculture are duly recognised in poverty reduction. Then the topic is on the agenda, but through that and other terms like poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, impact on equity, or the role of women, and not through agriculture and productivity and the classic banners of 20 years ago.

These new terms are often applied in the context of domestic development, rather than that of a major player in the world agricultural economy. One of CTA's priority themes has been conquering regional and the global markets ...

... but also domestic. This is a fundamental difficulty. It's very difficult to get into global markets without having organised a national market: what are you going to trade? There is a supposition that some of the poorer countries can rapidly follow Asian models, forgetting that in almost all cases they went through an agro-industrial development process, generating the wealth to support education and to develop human capital. You can't leapfrog from essentially subsistence agriculture to a semi-industrialised economy unless you discover oil or diamonds, or you're fortunate with tourism.

It's a process, and here the challenge for CTA is ensuring that institutional change takes place. All our ACP partners are in a very tough position, coping with economic and political change, decentralisation, technical change, and we're adding on to that "PS: communicate better with your farmers, your decision takers, and your users". It's easy to underestimate the barriers to that.

If you've been working in a research centre on oil palm in plantations, it requires considerable change to worry about women subsistence farmers in semi-arid zones. It requires changes in incentive, leadership, and organisation, moving from being supply-driven to responsive, and there are political, social and cultural constraints.

What sort of timeframe are you talking about, and how do you recognise that change has taken place?

Well, CTA has a 5-year plan by virtue of being part of the Lomé Convention. For ACP partners the timescale must be longer. This is reflected in the switch away from project or even programme approaches to sectoral approaches. Very long-term processes must be confronted: democratisation and decentralisation, the promotion of sustainable organisations servicing the poor, the development of human capital. And the hardest of all: encompassing sustainable natural resource management with its trade-offs between short- and long-term gains. So we're talking about a long timeframe, but also about getting institutional imperatives correct, sooner rather than later. The results will take years.

Our constituency has changed too. Ten years ago if you looked at a CTA annual report, it was all ministries of agriculture and the public sector. Now, we talk about our constituency being public and private. Regrettably there has been a lot of hesitation from some ACP governments. It's very difficult to get them to send a delegation to a meeting that isn't entirely public sec-

tor. To be fair, sometimes we suggest including women or NGO or private sector representatives but even when we have had the green light to invite a woman—or have shortlisted a woman for a staff post—she will often decline at the last minute for personal reasons.

Change is happening faster in another field: information and communication technologies. One in nine Spore readers now has an email address ...

This is a regular debate at our Advisory Committee, to what extent should we move our funds away from more traditional areas like video and rural radio to electronic on- and off-line techniques. We have tried to meet the clear needs of many partners who claim that they do not get neutral advice on these topics. We've been going too slowly for some countries, and too fast for others. Everyone wants the maximum benefit from ICTs but they don't want us to stop doing any of the rest either.

"The whole process of change is a tricky one."

How can you encourage change?

The whole process of change is a tricky one. Even within the small world of CTA, we have undergone considerable change. Some people feel that we changed too much, more than necessary to satisfy our stakeholders. That is correct if our stakeholders are interpreted as diplomats representing the EU or ACP in Europe; it's not correct if, as I hold, our stakeholders are the subsistence farmers in the poorer sectors of the poorer countries.

ACP needs and priorities continue to change, further consultations and seminars are in train to respond to that, and I wish Carl Greenidge all the best in continuing to confront the high rate of change required to do the best for the farmers in the developing world.