

April 2009

This email newsletter highlights the latest additions to the site Knowledge for Development.

Developments**Points of view: Saving African soils: grounds for hope?**

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8922>

At the recent launch in Nairobi of a new digital map showing soil depletion in Africa, soil scientists decried poor rates of fertiliser application in the continent. Five hundred million hectares of Africa's agricultural land is moderately or severely mined of life, it was reported, yet farmers apply only ten percent of the required soil nutrients to support food production. Soil scientists in Africa and beyond are now convinced that investments focusing on depleted soils are vital to achieve a turn-around in agricultural productivity. (Source: New Agriculturist, February 2009)

Africa: Food security requires increased fertiliser use

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8966>

A mix of organic and inorganic fertilisers, together with good seed could help Africa to replenish depleted soils and to grow more food in the fight against hunger and food insufficiency. A study by U.S.-based International Center For Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development indicates that fertiliser use in Africa is on average less than ten percent of that in Asia, offering one explanation for why production of important food crops such as cereals, tubers and legumes has stagnated or declined. (Source: Wambi Michael, IPS, 6 March 2009)

Farming without soil

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8968>

A handful of Cape Verdean farmers are growing their vegetables without soil, and say their method could increase food production and reduce the country's malnutrition problem. Hydroponics, from the Greek words for water and labour, swaps soil for a nutrient solution. It would appear to be the perfect solution for a country where less than ten per cent of the land is cultivatable — yet few people carry out hydroponics professionally. (Source: Scidev.net, 6 March 2009)

Bahamas-China agricultural agreement to boost local food production

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8942>

A Memorandum of Understanding on Agricultural Cooperation has been signed between the Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and China's Ministry of the Agriculture to boost the production of fruits, vegetables, poultry and marine resources in the country. Understanding, scientific techniques and information in these fields would be available by way of bilateral exchange mechanisms such as exchange of technical teams, organisation of seminars, workshops and technical training courses, and exchange of policies and regulations, successful experiences and other relevant information. (Source: Lindsay Thompson, Caribbean Net News, 23 February 2009)

Cuba plants first genetically modified corn crops

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8954>

Genetically modified corn is being grown for the first time in Cuba as a part of an experiment aimed at obtaining high-yield varieties. Three hectares of genetically modified corn have been planted as part of an experiment on transgenic corn FR-Bt1 carried out by the National Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB). (Source: Cuba Headlines, 3 March 2009)

Saving wheat crops worldwide

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8956>

CSIRO Plant Industry scientists and international collaborators have discovered the key to overcoming three major cereal diseases, which in epidemic years cost wheat growers worldwide in excess of AUS\$7.8 billion. In the prestigious journal Science, scientists from CSIRO Plant Industry, the University of Zurich and the International Maize and

Wheat Improvement Center have identified a wheat gene sequence which provides protection against leaf rust, stripe rust and powdery mildew. (Source: ScienceDaily 3 March 2009)

African forests prove valuable carbon sink

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8946>

African forests are adding to their mass each year by an amount equivalent to a small car per hectare, researchers have found. The finding has surprised researchers and confirms the forests' status as one of the world's substantial carbon sinks. (Source: Nature, 25 February 2009)

Introducing cactus-based agro-forestry practices to the drylands

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9084>

The drylands of Ethiopia have poor vegetation cover and have a high evapo-transpiration that exceeds precipitation. The identification of suitable plant species that can thrive and produce yields and contribute to farming practices and to resilience. One such plant species is the cactus pear, *Opuntia ficus-indica* (L.) Mill. This plant has many possible uses and benefits, from fresh fruits and stem segments as vegetables or livestock feed over jam and pigments to sugar or ethanol extraction. One likely option for cultivation would be the introduction of cactus into farmlands as hedges or intercrops with an additional advantage in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Mekelle research centre conducted an observation on an orchard of 11 cactus pear cultivars intercropped with beans that yielded a significantly higher biomass in addition to increasing the vegetation cover. Cactus-based agro forestry practice can therefore be considered as an adaptation option to climate change in the drylands.

Is Quality Declared Seed production an effective and sustainable way to address seed and food security in Africa?

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9087>

It is known that small scale farmers in Africa use 90 – 95 % farmer-saved seed for their crop production. The gap for additional use of certified seed cannot be solved by the seed trade only. Quality Declared Seed (QDS) sold locally in small quantities, where certified seed is not used or sold, is a good way to minimize this gap and to improve the seed trade and food production in Africa. A QDS production system has been successfully introduced by the government in Tanzania. By means of QDS, a market-oriented local seed trade delivering quality seed has been built up. This is the foundation of the future certified seed market and QDS should be seen as assisting in this process and contributing to a more secure food production (sourceFAO, 2006. Plant Production and Protection Paper, no.185)

A helping hand for higher education

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8978>

Donors are increasingly recognising that they have a key role to play in strengthening higher education in developing countries. But how should aid be delivered? And which areas need most support? With higher education returning to the aid agenda, SciDev.Net examines the successes, challenges and lessons to be learnt (Source: SciDev.net 11 March 2009).

Nigeria: 'Super Cassava' to enter field trials

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8936>

An ambitious attempt to bioengineer cassava into a "complete meal" took a step forward last week with the approval of field trials for the plant by Nigeria's National Biosafety Committee. The genetically modified cassava contains 30 times as much beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A, as its normal counterpart. Ultimately it is hoped the cassava will contain increased levels of iron, protein, zinc and vitamin E that will meet the minimum daily allowance in a 500 gram meal. Some 250 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa - and 800 million people globally - rely on cassava as their main source of energy. But it is low in nutrients, vulnerable to plant viruses, and it lasts only two days without processing. (Source: All Africa, 19 February 2009)

Poor communities get help with climate adaptation

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8944>

A new global initiative will generate and share knowhow on strategies to help the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change. The initiative will support an online platform, Community Based Adaptation Exchange, where stakeholders can share experiences and information about the kind of adaptation strategies that work best — and could be replicated and scaled-up elsewhere. They will also hold a number of conferences to share best practice, with the first in Tanzania in September 2009. (Source: T. V. Padma, SciDev.net, 25 February 2009)

Only serious changes will take Guyana sugar industry forward

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8958>

The year 2008 was a difficult period for Guyana's sugar industry as it experienced a decline in production as a result of the heavy rainfall period, coupled with Government's concerns about the management of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuco). Production targets which were estimated at 315,000 tonnes had dropped to 200,026 tonnes. Therefore, investment has been made in the Skeldon Factory, designed to be one of the most technologically advanced sugar factories in this part of the world, built with a capacity to produce 110,000 tonnes of sugar per year and with plans for a distillery, refinery and the use of sugar as a source of bio-diesel to be in place when production increases. (Source: Caribbean Net News, 4 March 2009)

Uganda plans to preserve seeds in Iceland

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8960>

Scientists at the Plant Genetic Resources Centre (PGRC) at Entebbe plan to take sorghum and millet indigenous seeds to a genetic resources centre in Iceland this year. The move is part of the back-up process which helps the country to store its seeds for over 50 years. "We keep seeds for as long as 50 years, but after five years, we replant some of them in the field to maintain their viability," said John Mulumba a principal research officer at the Uganda National Gene Bank located at Entebbe Botanical Gardens. (Source: The New Vision, 4 March 2009)

Guyana: Region's legislators meet on climate change and energy access

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8982>

Growing concerns about climate change and its disastrous effects have dictated that small island developing states such as those in the Caribbean quickly turn to alternative means of generation to satisfy growing demand for energy and protect their fragile economies. Community heads of government have agreed to pool resources to deal with the fallout from the widening global economic and financial crises, and are to tap additional funds to aid the cushioning of the impact on the people of the region. Agreement on the strategy was reached at the two-day CARICOM 20th Inter-Sessional summit in Belize, which ended 13th of March, and heads also endorsed Guyana's position on promoting the preservation of forests, and on carbon credit for the region. (Source: Guyana Chronicle, 15 March 2009)

Tuna spawning grounds can help Coral Triangle nations such as Solomon Islands

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8984>

"With climate change threatening to alter habitats in the region, it is even more critical to manage marine ecosystems for the ongoing food security of the region and for the survival of many species that depend on the Coral Triangle's unique marine environment," said Dr Pet Soede. The Coral Triangle is the most diverse marine region on the planet, matched in its importance to life on Earth only by the Amazon rainforest and the Congo basin. Defined by marine areas containing more than 500 species of reef-building coral, it covers 5.4 million square kilometres of ocean across six countries in the Indo-Pacific – Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste. World Wide Fund (WWF) is urging tuna fishing nations in the Asia Pacific to use the region's essential ecosystem services to negotiate better prices and fairer fishing arrangements with foreign fishing nations. (Solomon Star, 15 March 2009)

World leaders call for sustainable development of water

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8991>

World leaders signed a water consensus on the 16th of March at the 5th World Water Forum, underlining the importance of sustainable development of water. The leaders met during the forum, which appealed for concrete action of governments around the world to highlight the role water plays in development and society. The forum, which aimed to facilitate solutions to the world's water problems and promote cooperation among states and organizations, began on the 16th of March in the largest Turkish city of Istanbul with the theme of "Bridging Divides for Water." (Source: ChinaView, 17 March 2009)

Selected publications

Workshop Report CTA/USP Regional Workshop on "Reshaping Tertiary Education to meet the Global Challenges"

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9092>

By David Hunter, Mary Taylor, and Pa'olelei Luteru, reviewed by Judith Francis, December 2008.
Co-organized by Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU (CTA) and the University of the South Pacific (USP), a regional workshop on Reshaping

Tertiary Education to meet the Global Challenges was held from 10 – 12 September 2008 at USP Alafua Campus, Samoa. The workshop led to a consensus that the universities and colleges should strengthen linkages and cooperation amongst themselves, and restructure and update their academic programmes, research and outreach activities, to enable them to contribute to improving agricultural performance and enhancing food security in the Pacific region, in view of the national, regional and global challenges. This document reports on the discussions held during the workshop and highlights the key messages and action points to be taken forward.

Events

NEPAD – Tertiary institutions dialogue: a concept note

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9080>

Dates: June 2009

Location: Legon, Ghana

NEPAD, in collaboration with the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education (ANAFE), the Regional Forum for Agricultural Capacity building (RUFORUM), the African Technology Policy Studies (ATPS), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the University of Ghana, the Maseno University of Kenya, the University of Malawi and CTA, is organizing a workshop on April 16 - 17, 2009 at the University of Ghana, Legon. One of NEPAD's sectoral priorities is 'Bridging the Education Gap' with four objectives which include "to promote networks of specialized research and higher education institutions" toward ensuring their relevance to Africa's development agenda. Therefore, NEPAD has been engaging with Tertiary Education institutions in Africa to achieve the needed capacity through building a critical mass of scientists and policy-makers. This workshop addresses the need to open up this platform to all other disciplines and sectors as represented in African institutions including universities and research.

Leading the way: Indigenous peoples global summit on climate change

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/8930>

Dates: 20-24 April 2009

Location: Anchorage, Alaska

Indigenous peoples from all regions of the world depend upon the natural environment. Their rich and detailed traditional knowledge reflects and embodies a cultural and spiritual relationship with the land, ocean and wildlife. However, human activity is changing the world's climate and altering the natural environment to which Indigenous Peoples are so closely attached and on which they so heavily rely. (Source: NativeTimes.com, 17 February 2009)

Jobs for ACP scientists

Lecturer in Animal Science (University of South Pacific)

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9023>

(Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE), School of Agriculture & Food Technology)
The appointee will teach a variety of courses in Pig and Poultry Production and allied subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, both on-campus and by extension (distance) mode. He/she will also be required to supervise students' research projects at all levels, conduct and coordinate research, develop new courses and review existing ones as appropriate. All applications must be submitted on-line. Applications close 10 April 2009.

NARI program directors

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9094>

NARI is the lead research organization, conducting and fostering applied, adaptive and development oriented research in the agriculture and rural development sectors in Papua New Guinea. NARI is seeking creative, self-motivated and innovative minded candidates for senior positions of Program Directors to provide an intellectual leadership to three programmes: 1. Information Management and Knowledge Sharing; 2. Influencing Enabling Environment; 3. Crop and Livestock Improvement. The positions are open for both PNG and Non-PNG Citizens. Applications should include a detailed CV, names and contact details of three referees. Closing date 20th April 2009.

Fellowships and Grants

Fund for the Improvement and Adoption of African Crops (FIAAC)

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9031>

The Program for Africa's Seed System (PASS) funds crop breeding in Africa to improve African crop varieties and promote their distribution and adoption by small holder farmers. This grant should result in the development of 200 new improved crop

varieties in five years. Total project cost: \$43 million, of which Rockefeller contribution will be \$14.3 million.

Collaborative PhD Program in International Development Studies (IDS), University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9043>

IDS at Guelph offers a new PhD program that is a first of its kind in Canada. Based on the successful model of the Collaborative Master's program, IDS links together discipline-based PhD programs to provide a focal point for advanced research on international development issues. The program focuses on issues arising in international political economy, food security, environment and development, migration, participatory development, and other interdisciplinary cutting-edge areas in the development field that reflect the interests of faculty from across the Guelph campus participating in the collaborative IDS program. Closing date: 25 June 2009.

Postdoctoral Fellow/Research Fellow Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS)

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9047>

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks a qualified candidate to serve as a Postdoctoral Fellow /Research Fellow within its Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS) program in Malawi for a two year, fixed-term, renewable appointment. The position will be based in Lilongwe, Malawi and reports to the Director of IFPRI's Development Strategy and Governance Division. The final grade level will be determined by demonstrated experience and track record of publications.

Biosafety fellowship at ICGEB

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9051>

The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) is currently offering a biosafety fellowship in the framework of its current capacity building initiative focused on sub-Saharan Africa. The ICGEB is an international, intergovernmental organisation conceived as a centre of excellence for research and training in genetic engineering and biotechnology with special regard to the needs of the developing world and has developed a comprehensive programme on biosafety, centered on capacity building and dissemination of scientific information. A completed application form - download the form - must be submitted on or before 29 May 2009.

Youth Education Scheme (YES) granting of a scholarship

<http://knowledge.cta.int/en/content/view/full/9063>

The "Youth Education Scheme (YES)" is one of the cornerstones of the ITU-D "Children and Youth" Special Initiative, in support of needy and deserving young people, from Least Developed Countries (LDCs), developing countries and countries in transition who wish to complete their tertiary education in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and related fields. The objective is to enable motivated young people to contribute to the development of their communities, country and region using their achieved ICT knowledge and skills.

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