

Newsletter 5<sup>th</sup> Edition March 2010

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## **From the Secretariat**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the fifth issue of our newsletter, showcasing stories on the use and sustainable management of agrobiodiversity by communities around the world.

The articles in this issue highlight the potential of agricultural biodiversity in making significant contribution to livelihood security in communities that inhabit difficult environments with unique resources. They also show the importance of the role of played by different organizations and communities in promoting the sustainable use and conservation of agrobiodiversity.

We hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and feel inspired by the energy and commitment of the growing community of agrobiodiversity researchers and stakeholders the Platform supports.

Please send us your feedback, comments, contributions and continue to keep us informed of interesting activities, projects and/or initiatives you wish to feature in our newsletter or website!

Best wishes  
The Platform Team

## Articles



European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity

### Veronica Mikos

The European Learning Network on Functional AgroBiodiversity (ELN-FAB) project aims to accumulate knowledge on how biodiversity can be mobilized to increase sustainable agricultural production, to provide a platform for exchange of knowledge and practical experiences between farmers, policymakers and scientists to enable fast and effective implementation of best practices and to promote sustainable agriculture in the 27 Member States of the EU, and in Norway and Switzerland....>> [Read more](#)

For more information contact [ECNC's Communication Officer](#) or [Veronica Mikos](#)

### [Agri-environment Measures for Conservation in Wider Europe](#)

#### Tomasz Pezold

The policies of the European Union (EU) have a large impact on biodiversity both within and beyond the Union's borders. In Western Europe the intensification of agricultural practices, promoted by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the EU, has led to widespread habitat loss and fragmentation. Although reforms are currently underway to the CAP and more funds are being allocated to rural development, further work is required to integrate biodiversity conservation into agriculture policy and practice. In Eastern Europe, ....>> [Read more](#)



Photo: Tomasz Pezold (IUCN)

For more information about the project, please contact [Tomasz Pezold](#), IUCN Programme Office for South-Eastern Europe.

### [Cross-regional, Participatory Audio-visual Exchanges on Agrobiodiversity and Traditional Rights](#)

### **Dr Dario Novellino**

Through a grant from The Christensen Fund “Linking Networks on Pastoralism and Mobile production systems”, the Centre for Biocultural Diversity (CBCD) of the University of Kent, England has facilitated the establishment of solidarity links between communities of pastoralists and mobile swidden cultivators inhabiting rich agrobiodiversity regions. Such exchanges promotes the sharing of experiences as a way of fostering reflection and joint actions through the establishment of strategic alliances and addressing common problems and experiences regarding indigenous knowledge of animal breeds and landraces, with a particular focus on traditional rights over ancestral homelands and cultural landscapes. The envisaged goal is to enable the production of jointly produced video materials that could be used to exert pressure at a national and international policy levels. The project has facilitated linkages between the indigenous communities of Palawan (Philippines) and those of Madre de Dios (Peru)...> [Read more](#)

To learn more about the project, please contact [Dr. Dario Novellino](#). For more information about [the Center for Biocultural Diversity \(CBCD\)](#).

### **[Kam Local Knowledge and Sustainable Resource Management in Guizhou and Guangxi Provinces, China](#)**

#### **Amy Eisenberg PhD, John Amato RN and Dengtao**

This is a UNESCO-LINKS/UNDESA research article about the Kam people of China. It discusses how they are sustainably managing and utilizing their natural resources using their traditional knowledge. The project aims to increase awareness of Kam Ethnic Minority traditional knowledge and promote conservation and sustainable management of the cultural and natural resources within their region. It is a pilot study which aims at building dialogue among traditional knowledge holders, researchers, resource managers and decision-makers to enhance biodiversity conservation and to secure the active and equitable role of local communities in resource governance.

For more information contact [Dr. Amy Eisenberg](#) or visit the website [www.pbase.com/jamato8](http://www.pbase.com/jamato8).

### **[Hmoob Xyoob Dej Kab Kev-Hmong Bamboo Culture](#)**

#### **Maid Wux, Mao Jiayan and Amy Eisenberg PhD**

In their long history in China, the Hmong developed a unique culture through adaptability, wisdom and resourcefulness. The everyday traditional life of the Hmong people, bamboo plays a very important role. The Hmong regard bamboo as a sacred plant, because it serves the people in myriad ways and has been indispensable for their very existence and cultural survival. The Hmong have utilized bamboo for hunting, and as protection against their aggressors.....[Read more](#)

To learn more, please contact [Mao Jiayan](#).

### **[The Biodiversity Information for Palm Oil](#)**

## **Sophie Persey**

The rapid and ongoing expansion of oil palm plantations is recognized as a serious threat to biodiversity and has received much media attention. Although comparatively little scientific research has been conducted to quantify this impact, studies of various taxa have clearly shown that the biodiversity value of oil palm plantations is severely depleted in comparison to the natural habitats they frequently replace. Efforts to mitigate the impact of palm oil production on biodiversity are urgently needed and the results of existing and future scientific research on this topic could provide important insights into how this can be achieved effectively. However, this research is often published in academic journals in which the majority of those involved in deciding how oil palm plantations are managed do not have access. In order to bridge the gap between science and practice we have recently launched the 'Biodiversity *Information for Oil Palm*' website ([www.oilpalm-biodiversity.info](http://www.oilpalm-biodiversity.info)). This website is in both English and Bahasa Indonesia. It contains a library with details and summaries of published scientific research, as well as key resources that can assist to reduce the environmental impact of palm oil production.

For more information please visit [www.oilpalm-biodiversity.info](http://www.oilpalm-biodiversity.info) or contact [Sophie Persey](#).

## **[Why Practice Farming that is Friendly to Biodiversity?](#)**

### **Shawn Banack and Glen Hvenegaard**

The reasons why rural landowners engage in biodiversity-friendly practices are not well known. In a recently completed study, we wanted to determine what motivates landowners to take part in biodiversity conservation practices, using a case study from the Central Parkland Region of Alberta, Canada. Based on semi-structured interviews with farming landowners (13-35 minutes each) in March 2009, we found that they took part in fifteen different practices. The most common farming practices were direct seeding, rotational grazing, nesting projects, reduced use of pesticides and fertilizers and crop rotation. All landowners wanted to engage in more biodiversity-friendly practices on their properties. Why ? ...>>[Read more](#)

For more information contact [Glen Hvenegaard](#).

## **[Sustainable Use of Indigenous Trees in New Zealand: the Northland Totara Working Group](#)**

### **Paul Quinlan**

Prolific natural regeneration of one of New Zealand's important indigenous tree species, totara (*Podocarpus totara*), provides a unique opportunity to enhance farmland in Northland, New Zealand. Based on landowners' observations of its weed-like attributes and research by Dr David Bergin of the Crown Research Institute Scion, the Northland Totara Working Group (NTWG) was formed in 2005 to explore the timber production potential of this emerging resource. Compatibility with livestock grazing and its ability to naturally regenerate on marginal hill country are key attributes of this interesting project....>>[Read more](#)

For more information, please contact [Helen Moodie](#), Northland Regional Co-ordinator or visit [www.landcare.org.nz](http://www.landcare.org.nz)

## **[Protecting Crop Wild Relatives – adapting to climate change](#)**

## **Sue Stolton and Nigel Dudley**

According to the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC), if average temperature increase exceeds 1-3° C, our potential for food production is likely to decrease. Although there is still uncertainty about the impacts, they are likely to include a reduction in global food security. Agriculture will need to adapt to rapidly changing conditions and perhaps to increased plant diseases; impacts will be determined in part by crop adaptability. Some of the genetic material used in crop breeding comes from crop wild relatives (CWR). However, modeling suggests that 97% of some CWR groups could experience a reduction in range size and 16-22% might be threatened by extinction under climate change. *In situ* conservation and management protecting natural CWR habitats is thus greatly needed....>>[Read more](#)

For more information contact [Sue Stolton](#) and [Nigel Dudley](#) or visit [www.EquilibriumResearch.com](http://www.EquilibriumResearch.com).

## **Palawan Agrobiodiversity Hot Spots under Threat**

### **Dr Dario Novellino**

Between July and September 2009, a mission organized by the Centre for Biocultural Diversity (CBCD), University of Kent, England and the Philippines-based Ancestral Land/Domain Watch (ALDAW), through the support of The Christensen Fund, traveled to Southern Palawan in the Philippines. The mission was led by Dr. Dario Novellino (CBCD researcher), who has spent over 20 years on the island. Palawan is part of the UNESCO “Man and Biosphere Reserve” program and hosts 49 animals and 56 botanical species found in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. ... >>[Read more](#)



The Palawan IP settlement of Besey Beses  
Photo: Dario Novellino (Centre for Biocultural Diversity / CBCD).

For more information, contact [Dr Dario Novellino](#).

## **Recognizing and enhancing local innovation in managing agricultural biodiversity**

**Fetien Abay, Edson Gandarillas, Pratap Shrestha, Ann Waters-Bayer and Mariana Wongtschowski**

[PROLINNOVA](#) recently published an article on the current innovativeness of local people in managing agrobiodiversity. The article looks at the role of people, fisher folk and other local resource users play in conserving natural resources and agricultural biodiversity. It highlights the efforts made by local people to make new uses of and enrich genetic resources. For example, how farmers are exploring new ways of using biodiversity in a sustainable way with a view to spreading risks, enhancing food security and improving their livelihoods. This is common with poorer farmers who are adopting innovative ways in biodiversity management in order to increase their options to cope with variable environmental conditions and to exploit micro-environments (“niches”) in their agro-ecosystems...>>[Read more](#)

For more information contact [Ms Shreeram Neopane](#) visit [www.prolinnova.net](http://www.prolinnova.net)

### [High Nature Value Agri-environment Project for Serbia](#)

#### **Mark Redman and Tomasz Pezold**

The project about promoting the development of agri-environment support schemes for the conservation of High Nature Value (HNV) farming<sup>1</sup> in Serbia has entered its second and final phase of implementation. The HNV farming concept is highly relevant to biodiversity conservation in Serbia, both inside and outside of protected areas. The project aims to raise awareness amongst policy-makers and other key stakeholders of the importance of maintaining HNV farming systems, including the grazing of semi-natural vegetation with locally-adapted livestock breeds. Local experts are taking the first steps towards identifying the characteristics of these farming systems ... >>[Read more](#)

For further information contact [Mark Redman \(Team Leader\)](#) or [Tomasz Pezold \(National Co-ordinator\)](#)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efnecp.org/high-nature-value-farmland/>

## [Agrobiodiversity for Livelihood Security: a case study of agroforestry technologies in Mexico](#)

Krishnamurthy, P.K. and Krishnamurthy, L.

The article examines the livelihood benefits associated with agrobiodiversity in Veracruz, Mexico. Citrus-based agriculture is the principal economic activity in the agricultural sector of the state of Veracruz...>>[Read more](#)

For more information about the research, contact [L.Krishnamurthy](#)



Risk minimization as a result of increased agrobiodiversity. The photographs show two different banana plantations following Hurricane Dean on coast of Mexico, 20 August 2007. The mono-crop plantation (left) was completely devastated whereas the citrus — banana system (right) was minimally affected. This is an illustrative example of the role of agrobiodiversity plays in hazard management.

Photo: L. Krishnamurthy

## **Thailand's Karen rotational farmers seek recognition as stewards of biodiversity**

**T. Paul Cox**

Far inland in the mountains of Thailand, the indigenous Karen people are returning to their unique methods of rotational farming, utilising biodiversity and a library's worth of local knowledge to cultivate food while allowing the forest to flourish. Their system, which balances the clearing and burning of land with long fallows lasting many years has long been maligned as "slash and burn" farming. Now communities are working to revive their identity as stewards of the forest, with help from some new allies. ..>>[Read more](#).



Rotational farming practiced by Karen farmers in Northern Thailand  
Photo; Paul Bordoni (PAR)

See also the PAR's posting to access an interactive map [Rotational Farming: A Knowledge Intensive System to Cope with Climate Change](#)

For more information contact [Prasert Trakansyphakon](#) from [IKAP](#) (Indigenous Knowledge and Peoples Network)

### [On the Roof of the World: fruits from paradise](#)

#### **Frederik van Oudenhoven**

A traditional house in the Pamir Mountains of Afghanistan and Tajikistan has five pillars, one for each of the five members of Ali's family. The most important pillar, the one representing the prophet Mohamed, is made from the wood of the mulberry or apricot tree. These two fruits are so important in the life of Pamiri people and to their survival in times of need that they are often referred to as fruits from paradise! [Bioversity International](#) has worked in the Pamirs since 2006 on a project entitled '*Reviving biocultural heritage*', funded by The Christensen Fund. In 2008, Slow Food International became involved in the work, helping to bring the extraordinary diversity of local fruit trees and culinary traditions to the attention of the wider public...[Read more](#)



Mulberry trees in the Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan  
Photo: Frederik van Oudenhoven (Bioversity International).

For more information, contact [Frederik van Oudenhoven](#) or visit the presidia web site by clicking here [Among the Pamir mountains of Tajikistan, a Presidium is created to protect mulberry production](#)

## Case Study

**Bimal Regmi and Apar Paudyal, LiBird**

[\*\*Climate Change and Agrobiodiversity in Nepal: Opportunities to include agrobiodiversity maintenance to support Nepal's National Adaptation Programme of Action \(NAPA\)\*\*](#)

This study has been commissioned by the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research and FAO and has been carried out by Li-Bird. It deals with agrobiodiversity and the potential contribution it can make in climate change adaptation; the intention is to provide support for the current work undertaken to the Agriculture and Food Security thematic working group of the Nepalese Government.

## Nibbles

### PAR at COP15

The Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research participated in the **Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 15)** held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 7 to 19 December 2009. Below are further details about our participation in various COP 15 events.

## [Building the Global Biodiversity Information Commons for Climate Change Adaptation, Bioversity and GBIF COP 15 Side Event](#)

### [In Copenhagen to Save the Himalayas](#)

After organizing the historic cabinet meeting of Nepali government ministers at the base camp of Mt. Everest, the '[Summiteers Summit to Save the Himalayas](#)' led a march through Copenhagen, Denmark on the occasion of [International Mountain Day](#), 11 December 2009. The Platform supported this awareness raising program aimed to draw the attention of the world leaders and the global community gathered for the [UNFCCC COP 15](#) towards the perils of climate change in the Himalayas. More details can be found at [Save the Himalayas](#).

### [Indigenous Peoples' Day in Copenhagen](#)

The Platform participated in the [Indigenous Peoples' Day](#) during the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\) COP 15](#) in Copenhagen. On 12 December 2009, a series of events and conferences were held at the National Museum. Indigenous People's Day was organised by [IWGIA](#), an independent international membership organisation staffed by specialists and advisers on indigenous affairs, and [Tebtebba](#) with the assistance of the National Museum, with financial support from [DANIDA](#) and the [Christensen Fund](#).

### [Indigenous Peoples Achieve Major Gains in Climate Change Negotiations](#)

Explicit references to indigenous peoples have been included in the negotiating text on Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to REDD. In the 11 December draft text, it included "Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples..." including the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#). "This is the first time in any legally-binding convention that there is reference to human rights. And this has been our main concern from the very beginning," said Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, an indigenous Kankana-ey from the Cordilleras in the Philippines and Executive Director of [Tebtebba](#).

### [Agriculture and Rural Development Day](#)

On 12 December 2009, the Platform also took part in [Agriculture and Rural Development Day](#) held at the Faculty of Life Sciences (LIFE), University of Copenhagen in Copenhagen coinciding with the United Nations Climate Negotiations (UNFCCC COP-15). On behalf of the Platform, Dr. Toby Hodgkin presented on "[Climate Change and Agrobiodiversity: Strengthening adaptability and resilience facilitating adaptation and transition](#)".

### [International Conference on Biodiversity in Relation to Food and Human Security in a Warming Planet](#) in Chennai, India, 15-17 February 2010

### [Fourth International Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change](#)

Although the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research was not physically present in Chennai (see item above listed) nor in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania 21-27 February 2010 we were able to provide materials to raise awareness about agrobiodiversity as an important component for adaptation and coping with climate change. Our following materials were on display and shared with participants:

[Coping with Climate change: The Use of Agrobiodiversity by Indigenous and Rural Communities](#)

[Climate Change and Agrobiodiversity: Strengthening adaptability and resilience facilitating adaptation and transition](#)

[Mapping Adaptation: Agrobiodiversity, Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Change Climate Change Project](#)

[Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research](#)

[IISD Reporting Services](#) provided digital coverage and an [Earth Negotiations Bulletin \(ENB\) summary report](#) of the recently held [4th International Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change](#).

## **Announcements**

### **[Global Photo Contest: Diversity for Life Campaign](#)**

Diversity for Life is pleased to announce the launch of a global photo contest on agricultural biodiversity. Photographers may enter in either the professional or amateur category. The winning entries will be displayed at a prestigious exhibition in Rome during the Festival of Biodiversity in May 2010. Deadline for submission is 16 April 2010. Please visit <http://diversityforlife.org/photo-contest/> for the rules. Feel free to tell your friends and [visit the website](#)

### **[A Call for Nominations for Guardians of Diversity in the Mediterranean: Help us identify and celebrate people who are making a difference](#)**

### **[Nominations for the World Food Prize](#)**

### **Russell E. Train Fellowships for 2010 for Tanzania and Kenya**

Fellows receive financial support for education-related costs for a period of up to two years. Study can be at the masters or doctoral level and can take place anywhere in the world in Effective policy, education, fieldwork, and other conservation initiatives. For details, please send e-mail to [efn@wwfus.org](mailto:efn@wwfus.org)

## Events

**[Sustainable Utilization and Conservation of Forests in the Genomics Era](#)**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 7 - 12 March 2010

**[Enhancing Development Impact from Research: The Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development \(GCARD\)](#)**

Montpellier, France, 28 - 31 March 2010

**[Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#)**

New York, USA, 19 - 30 April 2010

**[Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights](#)**

Cochabamba, Bolivia, 19 - 24 April 2010

**[IAALD XIIIth World Congress: Scientific and Technical Information and Rural Development](#)**: Highlights of Innovative Practices,

Montpellier, France, 26 - 29 April 2010

The Platform will present a paper on "*Local solutions to address global challenges facing farmers and indigenous peoples*". For more information visit <http://iaald2010.agropolis.fr>

**[Annual scientific conference of the Ecological Society of East Africa \(ESEA\)](#)**

Nairobi, Kenya, 19 - 20 May 2010

This year the theme is "*Climate Change and Natural Resource Use in Eastern Africa: Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation*" and the deadline is 15 March 2010. For further details contact [conference@ecsea.org](mailto:conference@ecsea.org).

**[Training Course in Environmental and Natural Resource Economics](#)**

Bangkok, Thailand, 3 - 21 May 2010

**[Fourteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice \(SBSTTA 14\)](#)**

Nairobi, Kenya, 10 - 21 May 2010

The PAR Newsletter is published by the Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research and distributed to **members and other subscribers**.

The Platform for Agrobiodiversity Research (PAR) aims to enhance the sustainable management and use of agrobiodiversity by improving knowledge of all its different aspects. It also seeks to promote research and new research partnerships and to synthesize, mobilize and share research findings on the use and management of agrobiodiversity.

The Secretariat welcomes news, letters and other items of interest from individuals and organizations.

Your ideas and feedback are always welcome. To ensure our newsletter is up-to date and meets your diverse needs, please send your comments, suggestions and keep us informed by email to [platformcoordinator@cgiar.org](mailto:platformcoordinator@cgiar.org) or visit us at [www.agrobiodiversityplatform.org/](http://www.agrobiodiversityplatform.org/).

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