Official Recommendation Letter n°2012-5

Strengthening coconut research in Madagascar: characterization and conservation of traditional varieties in this context of earliest contact between the main 2 coconut gene pools.

From 8th to 10th July 2012, the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network (COGENT) organized its 16th Steering Committee Meeting at Cochin, India. The Steering Committee and representatives from various stakeholders of the global coconut sector attending the meeting have endorsed the following international recommendation.

Considering that:

- For historical reasons, the genetic diversity of the coconut in Madagascar is unique. Indonesians travellers came to Madagascar more than ten centuries ago, bringing coconut varieties, when they created exceptional mixes between the two main coconut subspecies (Indo-African and Asian-Pacific).
- The coconut industry is facing an important revival and a diversification of coconut products. In the future, some traditional varieties presently disappearing could be vital for developing new products and markets, and for improving farmers’ livelihoods.
- Madagascar could significantly strengthen its role in providing coconut seed-nuts at the sub-regional level, on condition that the phytosanitary situation is adequate and well-documented, and generates income from this activity.

COGENT recommends that:

- The international genebanks in Côte d’Ivoire and India, together with international institutions, organize surveys to safeguard crucial traditional varieties from Madagascar; and conduct ethno-botanical studies to document the unique status of coconut genetic resources.
- The government of Madagascar considers adequate investment in coconut research, creates at least one coconut research team with researchers in breeding and plant protection, and links these national researchers to COGENT and the APCC.
• With the help of the international coconut scientific community, the government of Madagascar defines and implements a strategy for conserving coconut genetic resources (Ex situ and In situ, linked to the coconut industry and ecotourism) and diversifying the planting material available for small farmer

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