

Editorial

Dear reader

Hello, hoorah... Let the show begin! I've been ready!

Excuse me for this rather unacademic opener, borrowing from (of all 'performers') Alice Cooper, but... you are now looking at the first completely virtual issue of Afrika Focus. This special number is devoted to agroforestry, and consists of several papers that were presented at the 2012 Yaoundé conference organized by ICRAF, the World Agroforestry Centre (www.worldagroforestrycentre.org) and its Agroforestry Tree Products for Africa project (AFTP4A). The latter project contributed to helping poor farmers become more actively involved in agroforestry tree-product value-chains and markets, which in turn helps them increase and diversify their incomes. The project followed the value-chain approach, involving all economic actors who contribute directly to the production, processing, transport and commercialisation of agroforestry products up to the consumption stage.

Towards the end of the AFTP4A project, an International Symposium, 'Tree Product Value Chains in Africa: Sharing Innovations that Work for Smallholders', was organized and held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 26 to 28 November 2012. The main conference themes focused on Production, Harvest and Post-Harvest Techniques (theme 1), Collective Actions (theme 2), Policies and institutions (theme 3) and Green markets (theme 4).

This issue of Afrika Focus has 3 contributions on what might be termed domestication and propagation of lesser known tree species from Central Africa. *Gnetum africanum* is a rich source of leaves that has become somewhat overharvested and is therefore threatened in its natural distribution environment. *Dacryodes* is an interesting fruit species that can easily be integrated into existing agroforestry systems in order to make the latter more resilient, and also provide a richer source of vitamins and proteins. *Garcinia* has medicinal value and is thus a profitable source of income for those farmers who grow it. A fourth article deals with the socio-economics of land tenure in a largely agricultural area in Cameroon. Recent economic development is exerting pressure on the people and their production environment, thus making secure rights over land a critical issue.

These contributions are a valuable addition to the growing body of scientific evidence showing that agroforests, as we have come to name them, can make important contributions to food safety and nutrition. The latter has been acknowledged by international organisations such as the FAO, which brought the theme to the fore during an international conference held in May 2013. Moreover, the IUFRO is currently preparing a white paper on Forests and Food Security through a high-level panel of global forestry experts, and it is expected that the latter will attract substantial amounts of donor money to finance research and development on the role of trees and forests for nutrition and food.

So, enough food for thought... By the way, Alice Cooper goes on to sing:

*Ready as this audience that's coming here to dream
Loving every second, every moment, every scream
I've been waiting so long to sing my song...*

So, I hope you will indeed like the 'tune' of this first-ever fully digital issue of Afrika Focus – we will be interested to hear your comments!

Patrick Van Damme
Editor-in-Chief