

Groundnuts, not tobacco

■ A high-yielding groundnut variety (ICGV-SM 90704) with good resistance against groundnut rosette has come within reach. Rosette is a devastating disease and is always present in the groundnut crop. A low incidence is usually

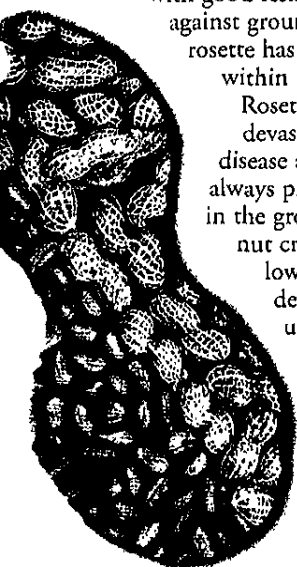


Photo: ICRISAT-Malawi/Matthew Tangay

ages many farmers from growing groundnuts. Now ICRISAT scientists based in Malawi have developed several high-yielding breeding lines with resistance to rosette; in combination with early sowing, and at an optimal plant density, they give promising results. They have been released in Malawi and Uganda and are on their way in Zambia and Mozambique. The breeder seed production takes place at the ICRISAT station in Malawi, and foundation and basic seed production is done at commercial farms for sale to NGOs and farmers. The crop is regarded as a viable alternative to tobacco – a hot topic in the region. It thrives in the same poor soils and agro-climatic conditions and fixes nitrogen in the soil.

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acceptable but in cases of epidemic outbreaks, which occur regularly in sub-Saharan Africa, it destroys the entire crop, causing average losses of US\$ 156 million yearly. This discour-

Do, do, do, do you remember?

■ When you listen to a lecture or a talk on the radio, the average person remembers just 20% of the message. When you see something happen, you recall 30%. When you read a leaflet (and – be honest now – perhaps even *Spore?*) you remember a mere 10%. But when you did something yourself, you recall 90%. This is just one of the striking examples given during a five-day regional seminar held in Trinidad and Tobago in September 2000, about farmer participation in training in ecological crop management, including integrated pest management (IPM). Among the applications current in IPM in the Caribbean are resistant varieties, biological control, cultural control systems, and minimal pesticide use.

"Practice what you preach" was clearly the motto of the week, with the seminar participants being thrown into a series of role-play run-ins, simulations, self-criticism sessions,

group dynamics and field work, as well as a tough programme of study of background papers which provide a detailed picture of agriculture in the region. By learning-by-doing themselves the 45 participants from 12 Caribbean nations got the message alright. They should soon be emailing each other to announce the much-improved rates of 'take-up' of integrated pest management techniques by the farmers with whom they will apply 'participatory methods'.

Not that the seminar thought that it is just a question of farmer 'take-up'. Policy-makers were expected to participate too, by shaping and applying IPM policies which ensure that the farmer is not always tempted by the quick returns offered by chemically-protected harvests.

The seminar was co-organised by CABI Bioscience, CARDI and CTA with additional support from the Swiss Development Cooperation.

Virtual trade in real coffee

■ Online trading is a booming business, although it hasn't yet caught up with conventional marketing. But what if trading partners shift their business and replicate conventional trading online? It has already started.

The partners in the eGreen-Coffee exchange (egreencoffee.com), which was launched in June 2000, include roasters Jobin and Lavazza, the supervisory Société Générale de Surveillance, bankers ABN-AMRO and Sucden. The



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exchange has 200 members who handle over 60% of coffee consumed worldwide, although their current bids and offers on the exchange total only 200,000 tonnes.

Another player is Inter-Commercial Markets Corp (www.intercommercial.com), which was launched in late 2000. It has linked up with the New York Board of Trade, the Swiss Volcafe company and Folgers and Millstone, two major coffee operations of US-based multinational Procter & Gamble.

The aim of these and many other similar initiatives is to reduce the fragmentation of the geographically widespread coffee market and reduce the supply chain costs. By bringing aboard coffee producers, roasters, certifying bodies, insurers and financiers, trading can be streamlined.

The Association of Coffee Producing countries has welcomed online trade as a means of reducing intermediate costs, but argues that the volume is still limited and thus has had no impact on prices yet. In the long run e-commerce will bring about direct links between farmers and roasters and can help farmers if they embrace this technology.

Don't monkey with the forest

■ Guenon monkeys play an important role in the regeneration of the rain forest in southern Cameroon. These small monkeys eat a lot of fruit and excrete the seeds. It turns out that 'monkey-passed' seeds not only get more widely distributed but also germinate much faster and better. The monkey population is under threat due to logging in the area and to the fact that they are popular as bush meat with the local population. The monkey's role will be taken into account in the forest management plan, which is currently being developed for this area.

Ugandan women on the net

■ A good gateway to women and gender issues is run by the Women of Uganda Network (Wougnet): research programmes, women's organisations, conferences, directories and news, including agriculture. Check it out!

Website: www.kabissa.org/wougnet

Gendered worlds

■ One Wougnet partner is running an (actual) international conference on 'Gendered Worlds: an African perspective' in Kampala from 21 to 26 July 2002. The focus includes young voices and genderising women and men.

Women's Worlds 2002
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Development management

■ An intensive 11-week course in development project planning and management is being offered by the Selly Oak College in the UK, from 29 September to 15 December 2001, and again from 27 April to 13 July 2002. It is designed for people working in NGOs, international aid organisations and government departments. Course tuition fees are around £3,500 or €5,000. The organisers can suggest sources of full sponsorship and part-funding.

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