

ECOAGRICULTURE PARTNER UPDATE
September 2003

Dear Ecoagriculture Partners,

So much is happening right now with Ecoagriculture Partners, and there are a lot of opportunities for you to get involved (for details, see below):

1. International Ecoagriculture Conference and Practitioners' Fair in Nairobi, Kenya, September 27-October 1, 2004
2. Our new Website: www.ecoagriculturepartners.org
3. World Parks Congress activities, September 8-17, 2003
4. New Equator Initiative-Ecoagriculture Partners project to document ecoagriculture
5. Upcoming Ecoagriculture Partners Meetings: Washington, D.C. (October 2); Nairobi, Kenya (October 29; November 6)
6. Ecoagriculture Research Assessment—Proposed Workplan (please comment)
7. Join an Ecoagriculture Partners Task Force or Working Group!

1. SAVE THE DATE: Ecoagriculture Conference and Practitioners Fair, October 27-November 1, 2004

We are excited to announce the first International Ecoagriculture Conference and Practitioners Fair, October 27-November 1, 2004. The purpose of this event is to bring together, for the first time, leading ecoagriculture innovators from around the world to share their knowledge and experience. Its objectives are:

- 1) To advance understanding of ecoagriculture principles and strategies for improving and developing new ecoagriculture systems.
- 2) To promote and strengthen knowledge-sharing and collaborative partnerships amongst farmers, conservationists, researchers, leaders in rural development, entrepreneurs and policymakers worldwide.
- 3) To develop an Ecoagriculture Strategy and Action Plan to promote more widespread adoption of ecoagriculture, through targeted scientific research, supportive policies and practitioner innovation.

The major activities will include: plenary, symposia and poster sessions; a “Community Shamba (Farm)”, Field visits to diverse ecoagriculture sites in Kenya, self-organized Working Group, and dialogues with policymakers.

So far, the Sponsors include: Equator Initiative, Future Harvest Foundation, ICRAF, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Conservation Union (IUCN), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). We are actively seeking other co-sponsors. Participants may register beginning later this year on the Ecoagriculture Partners website: www.ecoagriculturepartners.org. The site will also provide Program details and announce Calls for Papers and Posters, and regional planning meetings.

This Conference is being organized to serve the Partners. So please let us know if there are any topics, activities or working groups you would like to propose. We will be calling on you soon, as we form diverse planning committees.

2. Our new Website: www.ecoagriculturepartners.org

I am happy to report that our website is now on-line, thanks to the hard work and creativity of Ben Dappen, our webmaster. We have only just begun, but we have ambitious plans to turn the website into a premier source of useful information on ecoagriculture and an effective communication tool for the Partner. Please write with your comments and suggestions about website design and content to BDappen@yahoo.com, and cc to me at SScherr@futureharvest.org.

If you would like to suggest information publications, tools, upcoming meetings, etc. on the website, please send that information to Claire Rhodes (CRhodes@stakeholderforum.org). Thanks so much to Claire and to Stakeholder Forum for contributing 25% of per time for several months to supporting Ecoagriculture Partners' outreach and planning activities.

3. World Parks Congress activities, September 8-17, 2003

The Fifth World Parks Congress took place in Durban, South Africa, September 8-17, 2003. Many Ecoagriculture Partners were among the 3000+ participants in this diverse and exciting meeting organized by IUCN. The WPC website <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/> is a rich source to explore for data, contacts, and resources relevant to ecoagriculture. You may also wish to review the many recommendations and other inputs of the Congress. We were surprised and encouraged by the emphasis in the Congress on community-driven conservation strategies, landscape-scale conservation strategies, poverty reduction as a core element of protected area strategies, and the need to build alliances with local people including farmers, herders, fishers and forest managers. Ecoagriculture is, or could be, an important component in these strategies.

There were several ecoagriculture activities at the Congress:

- * Presentation by Sara Scherr on "Farming and Protected Areas: Towards a New Relationships" in Workshop Stream on Building new Alliances for Protected Areas;
- * Discussion session by Sara Scherr and Claire Rhodes with participants in the Community Park on community priorities for the Ecoagriculture Conference;
- * Breakfast meeting of Ecoagriculture Partners, with a Panel including: Jeff McNeely, Mohamed Bakarr, ??? and Sara Scherr;
- * Planning meeting for the International Ecoagriculture Conference and Practitioners' Fair with IUCN, Future Harvest, Stakeholder Forum and others.

4. New Equator Initiative-Ecoagriculture Partners Project to Document Ecoagriculture

Ecoagriculture Partners has just begun a collaborative project with the Equator Initiative (www.equatorinitiative.org) to document successful ecoagriculture systems and practices. The **Equator Initiative** was created by UNDP in partnership with BrasilConnects, the Government of Canada, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), IUCN - The World Conservation Union, Television Trust for the Environment (TVE), and the United Nations Foundation to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Equatorial belt by identifying and strengthening innovative community partnerships. It was designed recognizing that the world's greatest concentration of both human poverty and biological wealth is found in tropical developing countries where the loss of biodiversity is accelerating as poverty is increasing. However, there are many creative and effective ways through which indigenous and other local communities are rising to these challenges. Whether for food, medicine, shelter or income generation, these groups are using their biological resources in a sustainable way to improve their livelihoods -yet their innovations remain largely unknown. One of their initiatives is to recognize local achievements through the 'Innovative Partnership Awards for Sustainable Development in Tropical Ecosystems'. In August 2002, at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 27 winners and finalists for this award were named. They were chosen from a pool of 420 candidate communities, many of whom are involved in ecoagriculture.

The Equator Initiative and Ecoagriculture Partners have jointly appointed Christian Isely (CIsely@futureharvest.org) for three months at the Ecoagriculture Partners office in Washington, D.C., to review all 420 submissions, and identify those with ecoagriculture. He will then seek to document these practices more fully, using the draft template that has been developed (by the Task Force on Documenting Ecoagriculture) to prepare a short Ecoagriculture Profile. The results should be written up in early 2004. After the template is tested with this sample, it will be revised for use by other Ecoagriculture Partners, to develop a global ecoagriculture database. Christian and I are also contributing to the development of the databases that will be used by the Equator Initiative to characterize the community nominations for the 2004 prizes, and by the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Program.

5. Upcoming Ecoagriculture Partners Meetings:

* October 2, 2003, Washington, D.C., Meeting of D.C. Ecoagriculture Partners, Future Harvest Foundation office

* October 29, 2003, Nairobi, Kenya, CGIAR Annual General Meeting, lunchtime seminar on "Moving Towards a Science of Ecoagriculture"

* November 6, 2003, Nairobi, Kenya, Meeting of East Africa Ecoagriculture Partners, ICRAF House, 12:30 pm seminar; 2:00 strategic planning meeting

6. Ecoagriculture Research Assessment—Proposed Workplan

At the Ecoagriculture Partners strategic planning workshop last February in Gland, the Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (SANREM) Collaborative Research Support Program agreed to lead an international research assessment on ecoagriculture, and sought input and collaboration from the Partners. A workplan was then developed by SANREM, which was recently approved. Three papers will be prepared to assess current research on ecoagriculture. The overall goal of the assessment will be to define the state of our knowledge on: 1) agricultural land use systems that increase biodiversity, and 2) the ability of researchers to influence biodiversity conservation in agricultural ecosystems. The assessment will seek to highlight research efforts that combine, interpret and communicate knowledge from different disciplines. The assessment will be done in order to identify ecoagriculture-related research priorities. The assessments will encompass agriculture- and conservation-related research to highlight both the wealth and gaps of present knowledge. The assessments will underscore the most important drivers, constraints and opportunities for a large-scale adoption of ecoagriculture practices, and the degree to which systematic knowledge on those topics is available. Although the main thrust is on research, extension and education implications will also be defined. National and international research groups will be invited to participate in the preparation of the assessments under the leadership of SANREM.

Please contact Carlos Perez (cperez@arches.uga.edu) or Sara Scherr (SJScherr@aol.com) with your comments on the Workplan outlined at the end of this note. Please let Carlos know if you are willing to join the Task Force undertaking this important research assessment, or are willing to consult with the papers' authors or supply research materials.

7. Join an Ecoagriculture Partners Task Force or Working Group

There are many opportunities for you to join in the work of Ecoagriculture Partners. Participation in a Task Force or Working Group is one of the few obligations of those who are official Partners, but is also open to non-members. Please contact Claire Rhodes (crhodes@stakeholderforum.org) or Sara Scherr (Sjscherr@aol.com) to volunteer. Present opportunities include:

- a) Join Ecoagriculture Partners as an official institutional or individual member (see the website to sign up, or contact Sara). Institutional members will have a web link on our new website, and will select the Steering Committee for the partnership early next year.

- b) 2004 Ecoagriculture Conference: We are looking for volunteers to help with every aspect of the September Conference, from logistics to programming, to organization of field trips, to publication of results, and design of media event.
- c) Ecoagriculture Database Task Force: Help us to test our draft Template for documenting ecoagriculture systems and practices, by documenting your own work or that of your partners. Preliminary results will be compiled next year for analysis and presentation to the International Conference in September.
- d) Review of Ecoagriculture Training Materials: Helps us to identify and evaluate existing training materials from diverse groups for potential use in promoting and educating about ecoagriculture. Results of the review will be presented at the Ecoagriculture Conference, and meetings will be held with potential users of training materials to identify next steps in developing targeted training materials.
- e) Ecoagriculture Research Assessment: Help us to identify relevant research from diverse disciplines that can be used in understanding and developing crop, livestock, fisheries and forest production systems that also enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services. Results will be presented at the Conference as input to identify future research priorities.
- f) Organize a local Working Group: Ecoagriculture Partners in various places (London; Washington, D.C.; Nairobi, Kenya; and Cornell University) are organizing Ecoagriculture Working Groups to address ecoagriculture issues and form partnerships that are important to them. If you are involved in such a group, thanks for letting us know. We have not yet figured out a system for local “chapters” of Ecoagriculture Partners, but that topic will be on the Agenda for the Steering Committee once it is formed next year.

Best regards,

Sara

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PROPOSED SANREM-CRSP WORKPLAN- Selecting Priorities and Opportunities in Ecoagriculture (August 2003)

Please send your comments to : CPerez@arches.uga.edu; sjscherr@aol.com

PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

A broad coalition of researchers and practitioners (Ecoagriculture Partners) met in Geneva (Switzerland) in Feb 2003 in a workshop to share an understanding of concepts of “ecoagriculture,” define constraints and opportunities for expanding ecoagriculture, and begin planning an “International Conference of Ecoagriculture Innovators”, which will be convened in Sept 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. “Ecoagriculture” encompasses sustainable agriculture and associated natural resource management systems that embrace and simultaneously enhance productivity, sustainability of production, rural livelihoods, ecosystem services and wild biodiversity conservation. Distinctive features of ecoagriculture are its focus on landscape-scale as well as farm-scale design and management of production systems. Participants in the Switzerland workshop identified the need to undertake an international inventory of ecoagricultural practices and systems, as well as an assessment of the status of research on ecoagriculture. They concluded that the development of ecoagriculture systems would require accelerated investment in basic, applied and adaptive research targeted to particular ecosystems and farming systems.

The activity proposed in this work plan will support this effort by carrying out a comprehensive survey and critical synthesis of the current research on the opportunities to enhance both agricultural development and biodiversity conservation (including wild biodiversity) and on the capacity of researchers to influence biodiversity conservation in agricultural ecosystems. The assessment will define the state of our knowledge and research capacity to develop an integrated understanding of the long-term interactions, risks, driving forces and promises in the agriculture and biodiversity linkages. It will also take stock of the scientists’ ability to present to decision-makers alternative future scenarios solidly based on integrated natural and social science perspectives of sustainability.

There are several major challenges to overcome in a quest for a holistic understanding and widespread promotion of ecoagriculture’s potential for sustainable development. In order to overcome them it is proposed that:

1. The assessment needs to take stock of both disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research approaches, and underscore mechanisms for effective ecoagriculture knowledge integration across disciplines. The vast majority of the current research on the ecoagriculture linkages follows traditional disciplinary divisions and is published in discipline-specific journals. The separation among scientists in different disciplines and approaches reduces communications among scientists and prevents the development of holistic understandings of the interaction of natural and social phenomena that supports or undermines biodiversity conservation in agriculture. As a result, for instance, most watershed management research does not include biodiversity conservation concerns (e.g. preserving and possibly improving wildlife habitats) or make reference to conservation biology research. The adoption of “ecosystem management” and “landscape management” paradigms have begun to integrate agriculture and biodiversity, yet wild biodiversity concerns are still minimally included. Likewise, a great deal of conservation research and programs do not include agricultural concerns, do not

- explicitly seek to yield significant economic (as well as environmental) benefits for producers, nor do they take into account farmers' needs, interests and possibilities.
2. The assessment needs to address conceptual frameworks, methods, approaches, models and scales that researchers use to integrate knowledge. A major challenge that researchers face pertains to the relative current crudeness and dearth of methodologies to integrate natural and social knowledge about ecoagriculture, as well as data gathering at different scales. There is a separation among scientists, application modelers and software interface designers. This situation makes it hard to understand the linkages between agriculture, poverty and biodiversity at the farm-, watershed-, provincial- and national levels. Likewise, it hinders the understanding of the types of incentives that are required to get poor farmers to practice more sustainable agriculture and NRM, including wild biodiversity conservation, from the perspective of each of those different levels.
 3. The assessment should highlight both how stakeholders (their values and goals) are included in the research design, and how complex scientific information is comprehensively integrated into communication messages, channels and tools that decision-makers can understand and act upon. Increased scientific knowledge on ecoagriculture does not automatically contribute to the development and adoption of improved behaviors, technologies or policies that support biodiversity conservation. There is often a divide between scientists and decision makers, as well as between scientists and communities. These divides are translated into curiosity-driven approaches focused on providing complex system descriptions and prescriptions that decision makers rarely use. A problem-focused research, based on the specific needs and demand of stakeholders, and to address specific sustainability issues is more conducive for science-informed decision-making. Policy- and decision-making relevant ecoagriculture research is most effective when done in an interdisciplinary approach, and when scientific models can be converted into practical application packages without diluting or oversimplifying their scientific content.

The assessment of research related to ecoagriculture will be a key contribution to the promotion of crop and livestock productivity in intensified and more sustainable farming systems that promote sustainable livelihood and biodiversity conservation. It will also be a critical element in the International Ecoagriculture Conference, as part of the set of commissioned papers that will inform the congress.

OVERALL ACTIVITY GOAL

The overall goal of this activity is to assess the current knowledge and gaps on and future research priorities for ecoagriculture in developing countries to promote awareness among producers, policymakers, conservation and development organizations of the potential of ecoagriculture to increase food security and farmers' income while conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.

Assess the current state of natural and social science research on the management of agricultural land use systems to support biodiversity conservation, and document efforts that show the ability of scientists to combine, interpret and communicate their research results to decision-makers and influence changes in practice or policies that enhance biodiversity conservation.

Plan

An advisory group will be organized which will include SANREM and non-SANREM researchers linked to the Ecoagriculture Partners network. The advisory group will ensure that the breadth of the assessments encompasses the most important current topics in ecoagriculture. The advisory group will define specific terms of reference, timelines and strategies to accomplish the assessments. The advisory group will also contribute to identify teams of leading researchers with considerable expertise in ecoagriculture from the viewpoint of biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and/or agricultural development.

Three teams will be organized, each one composed of one professor and one Ph.D. level student. The teams will represent, respectively, agricultural sciences, landscape ecology and conservation biology. Funding is requested only for the Ph.D. students. The teams will be asked to evaluate available documentation on ecoagriculture-related issues that are available in the main research journals and books, covering agriculture, conservation of protected areas and landscape ecology from social and natural science perspectives. The teams will guide their in-depth assessment through interviews with a wide range of researchers and stakeholders.

The broad basis of the assessments will be the six strategies to maintain and enhance wild biodiversity that Jeffrey McNeely and Sara Scherr identified in their book Ecoagriculture: Strategies to Feed the World and Save Wild Biodiversity (Jeffrey McNeely and Sara Scherr, 2003. Ecoagriculture. Strategies to Feed the World and Save Biodiversity. Island Press, Washington, DC.). Three of those strategies make space for wildlife within agricultural landscapes in high quality natural or semi-natural habitats. The remaining three strategies enhance the habitat value of productive farmlands.”

Objective 2.

Widely share the results of the research assessments with a broad, international community of researchers and practitioners of, and investors in, ecoagriculture.

Plan

The assessment papers will be foundation documents used at the International Conference of Ecoagriculture Innovators and will be distributed through the Ecoagriculture Partners network (listserv and Website). The prominent presentation and discussion of the conclusions of the research assessment papers will be one of the main plenary activities of the Conference. The International Conference of Ecoagriculture Innovators (originally proposed for early 2004) will be convened in Sept 2004 in Kenya. The 5-day Conference will be structured to facilitate sharing of lessons learned, to identify ecoagriculture research and policy priorities, and to encourage collaborative

partnerships. The Conference venue will allow field trips to visit a variety of ecoagriculture systems. The Conference will include large numbers of ecoagriculture innovators from the farming, conservation, research, business and policy communities from diverse ecosystems around the globe.

The conference will address four integrated objectives:

1. To advance understanding of ecoagricultural principles and strategies;
2. To critically evaluate the present limitations, key information gaps and research priorities for ecoagriculture;
3. To prepare a strategy and action plan for promoting and scaling up ecoagriculture systems in biodiversity “hotspots,” and biologically degraded areas upon which low-income farmers, herders, fishers and foresters depend; and
4. To promote awareness among policymakers, scientists, conservationists, agriculturalists, farmers and the general public of the potential of ecoagriculture to increase food supply, conserve wild biodiversity and raise farmer incomes.

The assessment papers will be distributed via the Ecoagriculture network, which includes close to 100 organizations throughout the world including the Future Harvest, Rainforest Alliance, ETC-Ecoculture, ILEIA, World Agroforestry Center, CIAT, ICARDA, ICRISAT, ILRI, IWMI, the Nature Conservancy, CIRAD, African Pollinator Initiative, IUCN, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Forest Trends, Institute of Agricultural Trade Policy, BioNET International, World Association for Soil and Water Conservation, UNDP, Winrock International and SANREM.

KEY HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This activity is a scholarly, scientific assessment of the current state of Ecoagriculture research among many mutually dependent, disciplines. The overall goal of this activity is to assess the current knowledge and gaps on and future research priorities for ecoagriculture in developing countries to promote awareness among producers, policymakers, conservation and development organizations of the potential of ecoagriculture to increase food security and farmers’ income while conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

Research questions include the following:

Which disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research approaches have been used in ecoagriculture research? Are there effective mechanisms for effective ecoagriculture knowledge integration across disciplines? Which conceptual frameworks, methods, approaches, models and scales do researchers use to integrate knowledge? How are stakeholders (their values and goals) included in the research design? How is complex scientific information comprehensively integrated into communication messages, channels and tools that decision-makers can understand and act upon?

Key hypotheses are listed below:

1. There is relatively little communications among scientists across disciplines on the relationship and mutual influence between agriculture and biodiversity conservation.
2. A narrow disciplinary focus prevents the development of holistic understandings of the interaction of natural and social phenomena that supports or undermines biodiversity conservation in agriculture.
3. The integration of natural and social knowledge about ecoagriculture, as well as the data gathering at different scales is hampered by the current crudeness and dearth of integrative methodologies.
4. The successful development of integration methodologies depends on closer collaboration among scientists, application modelers and software interface designers.
5. A great deal of current research in ecoagriculture is curiosity-driven (i.e. seeking complex system descriptions and rarely used prescriptions for users) rather than problem-focused (i.e. based on the specific needs and demand of stakeholders, and to address specific sustainability issues).
6. Policy- and decision-making relevant ecoagriculture research is most effective when done in an interdisciplinary approach.
7. Policy- and decision-making relevant ecoagriculture research is most effective when scientific models can be converted into practical application packages without diluting or oversimplifying their scientific content.

RESEARCH APPROACH, METHODS, AND DATA THAT WILL BE USED

The strategies identified in Sara Scherr and Jeff McNeely's book, *Ecoagriculture: Strategies to Feed the World and Save Wild Biodiversity* are used to form the broad basis of the assessment. These six strategies are broken down into ones that focus on improving the space for biodiversity conservation and ones emphasizing modified farming practices:

Natural Areas – Landscape level
 A. Create biodiversity reserves that also benefit local farming communities
 B. Develop habitat networks by using unfarmed areas
 C. Reduce or reverse conversion of wild lands to agriculture by increasing agricultural productivity
 Farm Area Practices
 D. Minimize agricultural pollution
 E. Modify management of soil, water, and vegetation resources to enhance habitat quality on/near farms
 F. Modify farming systems to mimic natural vegetative structures and ecological functions to increase on-farm habitat.

The extent and availability of ecoagriculture-related research and information will be assessed in a range of natural and social science fields. Most of these disciplines are not mentioned explicitly in the above strategies, but are critical to understanding and implementing the approaches that underpin ecoagriculture. These fields include: (this list is not exhaustive)

A. ecology
 B. agronomy (incorporating relevant plant and soil sciences)
 C. conservation biology
 D. anthropology – cultural influences on conservation and agricultural practices
 E. education and the spread of information on farming practices and technological

innovation F. market impacts and drivers G. economics – impacts of subsidies, valuation of ecosystem services, etc. H. policies and laws I. institutional issues, impacts and drivers – e.g. decision-making frameworks.

In order to adequately evaluate the extent and availability of information and research on eco-agriculture, the assessment will also consider the different scales relevant to the above fields. Levels range from individual farmer and community through to regional, national and international. It is also important to capture the interactions and interrelationships across scales.

The assessment methodology can be represented as a three-dimensional matrix. On one axis are the six strategies; on another axis are the research disciplines that are necessary to better inform each of these strategies. And on the third axis are the scales at which these topics have been analyzed and presented in existing research/information.

A broad range of literature types will be reviewed, from peer-reviewed academic works, policy reports, practitioners' handbooks, training manuals, extension guides, legal treatises, integrated case studies, web sites, grey literature, etc. This will be the material that reviewed to populate the individual cells. By taking such a comprehensive approach and casting a wide net, the assessment can demonstrate what information does or does not exist and whether that information is available for different stakeholders/audiences. For example, the effects of agriculture on wild biodiversity are rather well documented in many regions of the world; however, the impacts of wild biodiversity on agriculture are not so always well understood.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH PLAN

As described above, the assessment papers proposed will be foundation documents used at the International Conference of Ecoagriculture Innovators and will be distributed through the Ecoagriculture Partners network (listserv and Website).

INDICATORS OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

Two process indicators will be used. The first one is related to the successful completion of terms of reference for the assessments that incorporate the perspectives of both agriculture and conservation research. The second indicator will be the completion of the assessments in ways that incorporate the latest research thrusts and results, and highlight gaps in research and understanding.