

An overhaul for the EU import system

■ In Europe, the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) is designed to allow countries of the South to export their products to the EU with lower customs tariffs than those usually applied. The total benefit should, in theory, be in the region of €80 billion. However, in practice, only half the products exported actually benefit from this system. A revision of the rules was clearly needed, so at the end of 2004, the European Commission proposed simplifying the system by keeping the "Everything But Arms" scheme for products exported by least-developed countries, extending the GSP to include around 300 supplementary products, introducing more flexible rules of origin, a clearer, fairer and more simple graduation process and, finally, establishing a mechanism to encourage sustainable development practices.

Floriculture flourishes in Fiji

■ Floriculture is blooming in Fiji, where rural women are being taught how to grow and market cut flowers as a new way of boosting their incomes. Floriculture holds good potential for Fiji's farmers, both for sale to the island's hotels and for export to Hawaii and New Zealand. Cut flowers including anthuriums, orchids, ginger and heliconias are already proving big sellers, with training being given for the cultivation of new species, such as sunflowers. CTA has supported one such project, helping smallholder women to grow and sell cut flowers and preparing training manuals as well as organising workshops to ensure high quality production.

A brighter future for breadfruit farmers

■ Breadfruit farmers on Samoa have been given the green light to export their produce to New Zealand, thanks to the installation of a heat treatment plant. All fresh exports to this important overseas market have to be treated for fruit flies through a high temperature forced air system. Meanwhile, Fiji's Ministry of Agriculture has announced that the demand for breadfruit in export markets is growing rapidly and predicted a "brighter future" for the island's breadfruit farmers. Fiji exported 9.5 t of the fruit in 2003, compared with 8.5 t in 2002. In the first three months of 2004, exports soared to 7.7 tonnes, compared with just 5.7 tonnes for the same period of the previous year.

African cashew nut producers rally together



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■ African cashew nut producers are worried about the new phytosanitary standards for food products imported into the EU that came into force in January 2005. From the trees to the consumers' plates, these procedures must all be followed to the letter and cover areas including the use of fertilisers and pesticides, the cleanliness of the factory and the hygiene practices of the staff (see *Spore* 113). Faced with such strict measures, India — which buys 98% of the raw nuts from Africa

before reselling them, shelled and processed, to Europe — has announced that it no longer wants to buy from the African market. Asian countries are already well positioned in the global market, with large plantations in Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia which produce outputs of 2 t/ha as opposed to African plantations, which produce only 500 kg/ha.

In a bid to resolve this problem, an international seminar was held in September 2004 in

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It was organised by PROMEXA (Côte d'Ivoire's non-traditional agricultural export promotion association), ARECA (the regulatory authority of Côte d'Ivoire for cotton and cashew nuts) and APCAM (Mali's permanent assembly of chambers of agriculture), with the financial support of PROINVEST, the EU-ACP partnership programme.

Major results of the seminar included the adoption of an industrial processing development plan for cashew nuts in Africa and the creation of an association that brings together the major players in the African sector. Still in its preparatory stage, this grouping will develop the sector under the name of ADEFICA (Association for the Development of the African Cashew Network).

In Senegal and Guinea-Bissau, Enterprise Works, an American non-profit organisation, is developing processing mechanisms and helping to train local business people in production and marketing skills.

Turning back to traditional trees

■ Pacific Islanders were once among the most self-sufficient and well-nourished peoples in the world, building their agricultural systems around a diverse base of local tree species. But as traditional trees were cut down and replaced with cash crops, much of the valuable knowledge was lost and there is now a critical shortage of information about local tree species and their roles in resource conservation and food security.

The Traditional Tree Initiative, launched by the NGO Agroforestry Net, aims to reverse the trend, recognising that time-honoured indigenous tree species are essential for sustainable agriculture and economic development in the islands. The project offers a unique educational resource for anyone interested in learning about traditional trees, and provides essential information about their cultivation, as well as their uses and by-products.

The goal is to foster the planting and conservation of native trees across the landscape, whose benefits — aside from the valu-



Photo: © Craig Elevitch

In the Pacific islands, it is vital that knowledge of traditional tree species does not disappear

able crops and timber they yield — include soil conservation, crop shade, use as windbreaks,

and protecting wildlife habitat. The first step in the Traditional Tree Initiative is the launch of a series of fact sheets covering 50 of the most important species in the region. Each one offers detailed, practical information on products, uses, interplanting applications, environmental requirements, and propagation methods. The fact sheets will be freely available on the internet, and will also be distributed as a searchable CD, with live internet links, to 200 agricultural offices, libraries, and schools in the region.

An important target will be extension agents, often forced, through a lack of information, to turn to newly introduced exotic species whose applications and products are well-documented in international literature. Many of these exotics are untested in the region, unfamiliar to local growers, and pose a potential threat to Pacific Island ecosystems through the introduction of potentially invasive plants.

Website: <http://agroforestry.net/project/tradtree.html>