

NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS

10/Rev.1

Tropical palms

2010 revision



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FOREWORD

Tropical palms, originally published in 1998, has been updated in 2010 by the author to include the most recent information and developments regarding the conservation status and use of various tropical palm species. The deteriorating conservation status of several tropical palm species, particularly in the rattan group, as well as recent developments regarding the use of palm products in the food, bioenergy and fibre processing industries, for example, required a thorough review of the first edition.

For the reader's comfort, as well as to make it easy to identify where updates took place, the revised edition follows the same format and chapter sequence as in the original publication, including by following as much as possible the same order of tables, graphs and illustrations and by adding new ones where applicable.

Palms are among the most common plants in tropical countries, where they often dominate the rural landscape. An example is the massive expansion of industrial oil-palm plantations for food or bioenergy in the past 10 years in Southeast Asian countries.

Palms belong to the Arecaceae family, which comprises some 2 450 species, distributed mainly throughout the tropics and subtropics. The palm family is highly variable and exhibits a tremendous morphological diversity. Palms are found in a wide range of tropical and subtropical ecological zones, but they are most common in the understory of tropical humid forests.

Since ancient times, humankind has derived an impressive assortment of products from palms for food, construction, fibre and fuel. Given their frequent occurrence in tropical forests and the vast array of products derived from them, increased attention to the conservation or re-introduction of palms is warranted in the design and implementation of forest management or reforestation plans.

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