Global Forum on Agricultural Research
New Innovative Research Partnership

A. Summary

1. Title: PROTA (Plant Resources of Tropical Africa/Ressources Végétales de l’Afrique Tropicale)


3. Objectives: Synthesis and wide distribution of the existing but dispersed information on the estimated 7,000 useful plants of Tropical Africa.

4. Activities: The PROTA partnership (scientific institutions in Africa and Europe now being identified) intends to establish an Information Base on the estimated 7,000 useful plants of Tropical Africa, by compiling, critically evaluating, summarizing, publishing and widely distributing the existing but dispersed information, in order to contribute to an equitable access to knowledge, which is essential to achieve food security and sustainable development.

PROTA mimics the successful PROSEA (Plant Resources of South-East Asia) programme (1987-2002), but will in methodology profit from the advances in ICT.

5. Innovative aspects:
   • Reference tool to avoid duplication of research efforts as well as loss of knowledge on useful plants.
   • Direct beneficiaries are also the major contributors of information. Optimal involvement of the continent’s scientific community is the best guarantee for local relevance of the PROTA information and for a lasting impact of the programme.
   • The compilation process will be (much more than in PROSEA) interactive through Internet, and should allow easier and cheaper production of printed (books) and off-line electronic products (CD-ROMs).

6. Area:
   • Genetic Resource Management and Biotechnology.
   • Natural Resource Management and Agro-ecology.
   • Commodity chains.

7. Region: Tropical Africa (Sub-Saharan Africa).

B. Stakeholders

1. Targeted beneficiaries:
   • Direct beneficiaries are officials in Tropical Africa working in agricultural, silvicultural and botanical education, in the agricultural extension service, in agricultural and industrial research, and in agricultural, horticultural, silvicultural and industrial production (hundreds of thousands of officials).
• Indirect beneficiaries are those in Tropical Africa depending directly on the plant resources, mainly farmers, but also workers in cottage industries, among them many women (tens of millions of individuals).

2. Research partners:
• Formal network of PROTA Offices, embedded in host institutions, that will be involved in all core aspects of the programme: information gathering, publication and distribution of core output. The PROTA Offices in Africa will in addition bear responsibility for the transformation of core output into derived materials and training (this in close cooperation with specialized national agencies):
  - Africa: institutions being identified.
  - Europe: Wageningen University, Netherlands; Agropolis, France; Kew Botanic Gardens, UK; others still being identified.
• Informal network of cooperating editors/authors from all over the world.

• Implementation Phase 2003-2010: EUR (?) 1,200,000 annually.

C. Expected Results and Impact

1. Main results: PROTA Information Base on an estimated 7,000 useful plants, available as Internet product, 16-volume Handbook, CD-ROMs, and derived education/extension materials: up-to-date tools for policy makers, researchers, extension and educational workers, and industry.

PROTA Network: a long-term, if not permanent, structure for exchange of information and for production of demand-driven products on minor plant resources in particular.

2. Dissemination of results:
• Direct beneficiaries: through core output at continent level (Internet, handbooks, bibliographies, directories, CD-ROMs).
• Indirect beneficiaries: through derived output at national level (translations handbook, brochures, leaflets, training manuals, training workshops).

3. Impact assessment methodology:
• Monitoring the distribution/sales of core and derived products, and Internet utilization.
• Quotation surveys (how, where and when do non-PROTA education/extension products refer to PROTA as basic source of information).
D. Partnership

1. Roles of stakeholders:

   Project design/implementation/management/core output production and its
distribution will be under control of representatives of the cooperating scientific
partners (Multilateral Steering Committee). Tools for obtaining advice from target
stakeholders will be International Workshops with the programme itself as subject.

   Transformation of core output into derived education/extension materials for indirect
beneficiaries will be decided at the national level. Hereto the national PROTA
nodes must cooperate with national specialist agencies familiar with the target
groups. Tools will be National Workshops on prioritization.

2. Expected added-value of partnership:

   The combination of the formal network of European and African institutions
guarantees good and instant access to international and to ’grey’ sources of
information.

   The combination in the informal network of editors/authors from various parts of the
world and from various disciplines allows fruitful exchange of views and
information.

E. Conclusion

   The PROSEA experience has shown that the proposed PROTA set-up allows in a
reasonable period of time the establishment of a high-quality Information Base of
scientific information on 7,000 useful plants, which trickles down very well to
indirect users via a wide array of derived products.

   PROTA will contribute substantially to an equitable access to information which is
considered essential to achieve food security and sustainable development.