

April 2003



COMMITTEE ON COMMODITY PROBLEMS

JOINT MEETING OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON HARD FIBRES AND THE THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL GROUP ON JUTE, KENAF AND ALLIED FIBRES

Salvador, Brazil, 8-11 July 2003

DIRECTORY OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON NATURAL FIBRES

1. At its 31st Session in 1997 the IGG on Jute, Kenaf and Allied Fibres considered a compilation of information on research into new diversified uses of jute in document CCP: JU 97/5. It recommended that the Secretariat establish a system for the regular collection and dissemination of information on these activities, as this would lead to the more effective use of limited research resources and perhaps assist in mobilising additional funding for research. More recently, at the International Coir Convention in Sri Lanka in June 2002 participants expressed a need for a source of information on research on coir.

2. The Secretariat has recently been able to make arrangements for the development of a system for the collection and dissemination of information about research into jute, hard fibres and potentially other entities as well, incorporated into the large ECOPORT database system. ECOPORT is a public resource on the internet, operating under the auspices of the University of Florida, FAO, and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. It houses a wide range of information on various aspects of biodiversity, including not only crop production, plant pathogens, etc. but also economic, geographic, sociological and anthropological information. ECOPORT may be found at: <http://www.ecoport.org>.

3. The sharing of this information should be of value in ensuring that results of research into natural fibres can be utilised by those who need them, while assisting in the planning and execution of research. It is hoped that it might promote communication and cooperation between research organizations and individuals in various countries. It is expected to be helpful in identifying areas where additional research is required and areas where duplication might occur, ensuring that research in one location is able to build on achievements made elsewhere in the

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world. In facilitating interaction between researchers and the market it could improve the market orientation of research efforts. This information should therefore lead to more effective use of the limited research resources and perhaps assist in mobilizing additional funding for research.

4. Once the framework of the data base has been established, information will need to be collected to be entered into it. It is hoped that organisations undertaking research into fibres, as well as those involved in funding and in promoting research, will provide information to the Secretariat for inclusion in the data base. At a later stage, arrangements can be made for co-operators in institutions around the world to input information directly to the system.

5. The intention is that there would be an entry in the data-base for each research project on any aspect of production, processing, manufacturing, marketing, trade, etc, associated with any natural, non-apparel fibre, and would include ongoing as well as completed projects. Entries would include information on the nature of the research and, if completed, on the results, including where possible the full text of a published report. It would include contact details of the people and institutions, along with other information including details of funding agencies.

6. While ECOPORT is primarily accessible through the internet, the material can also be made available on CD-ROM for use by those who do not have ready access to the internet.

7. It is expected that at the time of the Joint Meeting the Secretariat will be able to provide more up-to-date information on progress in establishing this new information system. The Group may wish to review this reporting system for the collection and dissemination of information on research activities in this area. It might wish to suggest modifications to the design of the system, and to encourage institutions and individuals engaged in research to provide information to the Secretariat for inclusion.