

The new biofuel battleground

Western companies are seeking vast stretches of African land to meet the world's biofuel needs. Local farmers and governments are being showered with promises. But who gains and what will be the consequences for food production?

Biofuel production becomes profitable when crude oil prices exceed \$100 per barrel—as they have since February this year. Expanding North American demand for corn for biofuel production over the last year was a major factor pushing global grain prices up, with severe impacts on poor consumers worldwide.



Jatropha curcas

Oil farming companies are now in a virtual gold rush to secure large tracts of land in Africa, attractive because of its underused land, low land prices, ownership that is often unclear, and regimes capable of being influenced.

In Tanzania the British firm Sun Biofuels has gained a 99-year lease for 9,000 hectares of sparsely populated farmland to produce biodiesel from *Jatropha curcas*, a plant with a high oil content.

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Prokon, a German company, also expects to have 200,000 ha of *Jatropha* under cultivation in Tanzania soon. In Ghana, the Norwegian firm Biofuel Africa has obtained farming rights for 38,000 hectares and foreign investors are

eyeing 11 million hectares in Mozambique to grow energy crops—more than one-seventh of the country's total area.

The needs of local residents don't always have high priority in the optimistic rush to invest. Promises to build new schools and roads and create thousands of jobs during previous African coffee and gold mining booms didn't always work out in practice.

Food production may also suffer. In a recent study on the "Biofuel Industry in Tanzania," by the University of Dar es Salaam, journalist Khoti Kamanga warns it is very likely that ethanol

production will affect food prices in Tanzania, and increase the country's dependence on food imports.

The Tanzanian government recognizes the boom also comes with problems. "Energy plants cannot be an alternative to food production," said President Jakaya Kikwete, responding to widespread resentment over high food prices.

Increasing local competition for land and limited input resources may make the balance

between food and fuel production in Africa a much bigger issue in the future.

Der Spiegel: Green Gold Rush - Africa Becoming a Biofuel Battleground, by Horand Knaup.

www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,576548,00.html

5 Sept. 08

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...from the Crucifers SDI Bulletin

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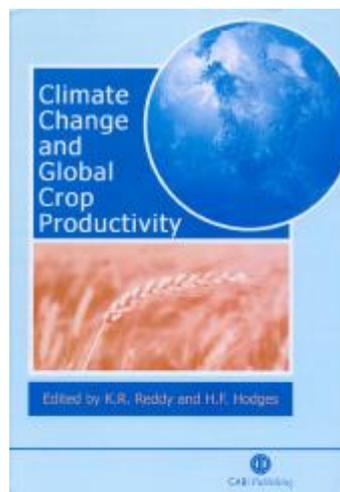
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... from Center staff

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... New book available



Reddy, K.R., Hodges, H.F., (2000). Climate change and global crop productivity. Wallingford: CABI Publishing. xvi, 472 pp.

Here is one useful article from this book:

Crop ecosystem responses to climatic change: soybean, by L.H. Allen & K.J. Boote. p.133-160.

— Fang-chin Chen, Editorial and Library

FOCUS: SOLOMON ISLANDS

Project office opened in Solomon Islands



Smallholder vegetable growers in the Solomon Islands were highlighted during the official opening of the Center's new project office on 25th August in Honiara. The project to develop integrated crop management packages for sustainable smallholder gardens in the Solomon Islands is funded by the Australian Centre for International Research (ACIAR).

The opening was attended by officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), the Center's national and regional partners, and staff from AVRDC headquarters.

"The government is committed to this project and the establishment



Dr. Ravindra C. Joshi,
Site Coordinator

of this office will be a great opportunity for our local farmers to gain skills on crop management, marketing, and also access to training," said guest speaker Mr. Henry Pika, MAL Permanent Secretary. Mr. Jimi Saelea, MAL Research Director, stated that the "AVRDC project office in the Solomon Islands would assist in providing vital information to local people about issues related to

farming, particularly smallholder vegetable farming."

The newly opened office has three staff: Dr. R.C. Joshi, Site Coordinator; Ms. Doreen Suimae, a locally hired Liaison Officer; and Ms. Nathalie Baxter, a volunteer from Australian Volunteers International. Project Manager Dr. M.C. Palada is based at AVRDC headquarters in Taiwan.



Ribbon cutting by Mr. Henry Pika,
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of
Agriculture and Livestock,
Solomon Islands

PEOPLE

Thank you from LM Engle



To the staff of AVRDC:

"I am happy and grateful that I am now back home in the Philippines enjoying

rambutan and vegetables from my garden. But, I have not forgotten AVRDC. My sincere thanks to everyone there for making each day of the 17 years I was at AVRDC something to be grateful for.

I reiterate my invitation for you to visit me in the Philippines."

Dr. L M Engle's new contact information:

Home address:
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Bay, Laguna 4033, Philippines
Tel.: +63-49-5730048 (landline)
Mobile: +63-908-5332924
E-mail: bing_engle@yahoo.com

SKETCH



Name: Roseline Marealle

Home: Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

Position: Research Assistant, Nutritionist

What do you do?

I was always interested in Nutrition and therefore I went to university and got a BSc. in Home Economics & Human Nutrition at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Morogoro, Tanzania. I was then involved in different nutrition research activities with other organizations before coming to AVRDC.

What do you do in AVRDC?

I joined the Regional Center for Africa (RCA) in Arusha in October

2006 as an intern when I was doing research with a PhD student, Gudrun Keding who was then at AVRDC. I was working as an enumerator in 3 districts mainly studying the links between agrobiodiversity and nutritional security. Then I was employed as a research assistant mainly dealing with data collection and designing input sheets for data entry and data analysis.

As a nutritionist I normally train farmers in short courses: I teach them nutrition, food hygiene and sanitation. I also improve recipes for indigenous vegetable and conduct organoleptic taste tests.

I also support RCA as a temporary secretary when our secretary is on leave. The other part of my job is also to prepare workshops

What next?

I would like to pursue my MSc. in Human nutrition/Public health and become a professional nutritionist.

I plan to improve recipes for indigenous vegetables, and to train farmers in other countries. One of

my dreams would be to have a laboratory at RCA for doing micronutrient analyses.

Favorite AVRDC experience

I really enjoyed participating in, and organizing the EU project workshop on Indigenous Vegetables that was held in September 2007 at Arusha, and was hosted by AVRDC-RCA. That workshop allowed me to meet different people and learn new things. It was an unforgettable experience. I also found it rewarding to work with Dr. Germain Pichop who was my supervisor at the Center, as well as other research assistants and staff.

Favorite vegetables

Amaranth with nightshade mixed together with groundnuts, tomato, carrots and onions. It is healthy, has a great aroma and it is easy to prepare.

CORNUCOPIA

Removing virus-checking message tags from your e-mail

Most Center computers have now installed the NOD32 anti-virus software to improve our system security. The software automatically tags a message from ESET NOD32 to the end of each e-mail you send or receive, and these can get very long and distracting after a string of messages have been sent back and forth.

To remove the message from your e-mails, just do the following:

- γ Click **ALL PROGRAMS** from your **START** button, then click **ESET NOD32 ANTIVIRUS**
- γ In **SET UP**, click **ADVANCED MODE**
- γ Click **ANTIVIRUS** and **ANTISPYWARE**

- γ Click **CONFIGURATION** under the **EMAIL PROTECTION**
- γ To remove the message tags choose either the options: **NEVER** or **TO INFECTED MAIL ONLY** under the **NOTIFICATIONS** heading.

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