



Lunuwila, Sri Lanka, 16th July 2014

Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-1 Strengthening COGENT

**The International
Coconut Genetic
Resources Network**

*COGENT's goal
is to strengthen
international
collaboration
in conservation
and use of coconut
genetic resources,
to improve
coconut production
on a sustainable basis
and to enhance
livelihoods
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of coconut
stakeholders
in developing countries.*

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From 14th to 16th July 2014, the International Coconut Genetic Resources Network (COGENT) organized its 17th Steering Committee Meeting at the CRI, Lunuwila, Sri Lanka. The Steering Committee has endorsed the following international recommendation.

Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014,
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years,
- the need to reinforce the capacity of the COGENT Secretariat to support the Network in implementing the Strategy,
- the need for more transparency and equity regarding the total and operational budget,

COGENT recommends that:

- Bioversity International involves the COGENT Steering Committee in the choice of the COGENT coordinator. The COGENT coordinator should be a senior researcher with at least 10-years experience in coconut research and preferably working in the field of conservation and breeding of genetic resources. The Coordinator should be appointed as a full time position, ideally should be supported by a full time assistant and a full time research officer.
- a fundraising strategy and process be developed by the Secretariat and the country-members, via a fundraising taskforce to increase capacity for securing funds from the CGIAR research programs (CRPs) through Bioversity International and from other donors, funding agencies, and governments,
- the COGENT Secretariat mobilize Bioversity International's Resource Mobilization Unit to support fund-raising activities. This should include lobbying for greater and more equitable funding from CRPs including CRP FTA, and lobbying for an endowment fund from the Global Crop Diversity Trust,
- COGENT promotes more collaboration between research institutes from member-countries (e.g. Labex system in Brazil),
- collaboration between COGENT and APCC be reinforced and remain complementary,
- the head of Bioversity's Commodities programme or theme leader for genetic resources (on which COGENT coordination depends) and the Global Crop Diversity Trust to systematically participate to the crucial biennial SC Meeting.

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- APCC support COGENT to evolve, to review its legal status and to improve and strengthen its links with international and regional organizations. This ideally should be in possible conjunction with the CGIAR, Bioversity International, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, the Treaty,
 - annual workplan and budget with financial reporting be prepared during the SC meeting,
 - certain elements of its coconut research and networking be re-positioned within an integrated coconut farming systems context, rather than continuing to work from its current crop-specific perspective. This could be reviewed within the ITAGs.



The COGENT Interim Coordinator,
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COGENT Chairman (2012-2014)
Dr George Thomas,
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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-2 Strengthening COGENT's link with APCC

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Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014,
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next decade,
- the need to reinforce the capacity of the COGENT Secretariat to support the Network in implementing the Strategy,

COGENT recommends that:

- links with APCC be reinforced through the APCC working group,
- collaboration between COGENT and APCC be reinforced and remain complementary,
- a role for APCC be articulated within appropriate ITAGs, and particular staff nominated for particular ITAG membership,
- as part of a (3-member) task force, COGENT and APCC facilitate constructive dialogue with appropriate governments (e.g. those hosting existing and potential ICGs),
- APCC supports COGENT in promoting and coordinating regional breeding programmes, particularly with regard to understanding regional demand and market contexts,
- APCC supports COGENT in its aim to develop more autonomy and stronger support for full-time coordinator,
- the status of APCC within COGENT evolve and APCC first become a voting member of the COGENT Steering Committee.
- the COGENT SC meeting be integrated partially in the APCC COCOTECH meeting. The COGENT SC meeting should preferably be held before the APCC COCOTECH meeting, except one session to be included in the COCOTECH meeting on germplasm conservation, breeding and planting material.

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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-3 Reviewing roles and responsibilities of ICGs

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Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014,
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years,
- the challenges and lack of resources currently available to the ICGs,

COGENT recommends:

- reviewing with the Treaty and those governments hosting the five ICGs of their responsibilities regarding germplasm management and exchange and especially in case of emergency, the need to liaise with FAO as stated in article 2G) of the genebank Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), (Côte d'Ivoire threatened by urbanization pressure, PNG threatened by disease),
- completing building a project to transfer the PNG collection (funds from the Trust, CRP FTA, government and others),
- it offers support in increasing the number of ICGs according to current and projected needs including the possible candidature of Sri Lanka, and the Philippines (referring also to the case of Fiji and Samoa),
- reviewing the status of the ICGs and their MoAs, with help from an expert task force (including legal experts from Bioversity International, the TRUST, the Treaty, and CIRAD, and any from the ICGs involved) and the APCC.

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Official Recommendation Letter n°2014-4 Prioritizing the 10 recommendations of the Strategy

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Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014,
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years,
- that the SC members attending the meeting have individually and collectively prioritized the recommendations,

COGENT recommends the following prioritization of the Strategy Recommendations:

1. Reinforce COGENT as a sustainable, powerful and effective platform for the collaborative conception, coordination and implementation of priority projects in the field of coconut genetic resources,
2. Strengthen **local, national and international commitment** to identify, collect, conserve, document and better use coconut genetic resources,
3. Revisit and **optimize the present organization of the COGENT coconut collections** in close collaboration with other partners,
4. Develop the mechanisms and procedures, skills, knowledge, capacity, laboratories and other resources required for safe and well-facilitated international germplasm movements,
5. Identify **critical genetic and geographical gaps** in existing *ex situ* collections, prioritize and build up missions aiming both to collect germplasm, boost *in situ* and *ex situ* local conservation and strengthen their interface,
6. Develop and improve national and global coconut germplasm databases and sharing of technical information regarding germplasm and planting material,
7. **Secure** the conservation of existing *ex situ* coconut genetic resources and their distribution,
8. Prepare the field of coconut genomics which will become a crucial tool for conservation and use of coconut genetic resources. This will be conducted by seeking and establishing 'strategic alliances' with already existing genomic research teams and set-ups,
9. Strengthen the use of coconut genetic resources by enhancing germplasm characterization and evaluation, dissemination of breeding results and marketing of improved varieties,

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10. Promote and strengthen *in situ* conservation of landraces and dissemination by local stakeholders of good planting material in a sustainable and equitable manner. This will integrate a gender approach.



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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-5 Prioritizing the 10 recommendations of 2012 SC Meeting

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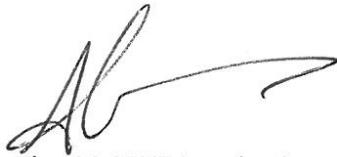
Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years.
- that the SC members attending the meeting have individually and collectively prioritized the recommendations

COGENT recommends the following prioritization of the 10 recommendations of 2012 SC Meeting:

1. An international initiative for sequencing the coconut genome and assessing the uses of genomics tools for coconut breeding and conservation,
2. Understanding and addressing the constraint of the new lethal disease threatening the International Coconut Genebank for the South Pacific based in Papua New Guinea,
3. Improvement and standardization of the controlled pollination technique for rejuvenation of coconut genebanks and urgent duplication of ageing coconut accessions,
4. Developing *in vitro* culture and cryopreservation of embryogenic calluses and zygotic embryos as alternative coconut conservation strategies,
5. Strengthening coconut genetic research, conservation and specific uses of traditional varieties in the Pacific Region,
6. Assessment and improvement of farmers' technical knowledge regarding coconut biology, in order to increase farmers' autonomy for production of good planting material,

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7. Collecting, conserving and breeding Dwarf coconut varieties from across the world within Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa,
 8. Strengthening coconut research in Madagascar: characterization and conservation of traditional varieties in the context of earliest contact between the main two coconut gene pools,
 9. Establishing an international multilocation coconut breeding experiment in Asia,
 10. Strengthening communication on coconut research conservation and use by producing video guidelines and other tools.



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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-6 Endorsing the new Global Strategy for more effective conservation and use of coconut genetic resources

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Considering:

- that a new Global Strategy for the effective conservation and better use of coconut genetic resources (the Strategy) will be released in 2014,
- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years,
- that feedback from the international reviewers for the Strategy has been reviewed within the SC meeting (some issues addressed by consensus, see attachments),
- that the detailed workplan for the next decade needs to be articulated after section 3 (Where we want to be) has been finalized,

COGENT recommends:

- immediate endorsement of those issues agreed upon with consensus,
- that where agreement is yet to be reached, the issues should be circulated to the COGENT Members through the remote voting process (details will be provided in an attachment),
- establishing target numbers of collection accession be addressed by remote voting among the COGENT country representatives, at the national level and at the global level (options will be provided),
- that questions concerning the triplication/duplication be addressed by remote voting among the COGENT country representatives,
- that the draft workplan and budget be released to the ITAG leaders for development and eventual endorsement,
- that the workplan and budget be published as a separate document to the Strategy, with a summary of this to be included in the Strategy, according to the results of remote voting (attachment provided).

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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-7 Coconut germplasm certification / quality control

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Considering:

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- the need to implement the Strategy at the global level over the next 10 years,
- the many constraints facing safe and effective production and exchange of coconut germplasm,

COGENT recommends:

- conducting a study of the feasibility, benefit and process for a kind of certification label for coconut germplasm exchange (CIRAD may help in implementing such a scheme, with inputs also from the genebank curators and national plant health inspectorates where appropriate). Such a study needs also to address how to manage poor quality control,
- defining criteria (such as quality of conservation and willingness for sharing) that could be the basis for creating a “manual of best practices in germplasm exchanges” along with a simple system to ensure that the genebanks adhere to best practices and protocols. This will increase trust within and between the genebanks and consequently will facilitate effective exchanges,
- promoting a comprehensive capacity building programme to support safe and effective germplasm exchange,
- reviewing the possibilities to introduce incentives for good practices (quality of conservation and willingness for sharing).

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Official Recommendation Letter No. 2014-8

Coconut germplasm safe movement (with intracellular pathogens)

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- the constraints facing safe and effective production and exchange of coconut germplasm,
- even the current status of epidemiological knowledge (studies already conducted in several countries have shown little risk of infection),

COGENT recommends:

- researching the safe movement of embryo to check if the pathogen (phytoplasma) can be transmitted through germplasm exchange,
- in the absence of guarantees for such 100% safe transfer, implementing the safest means of transferring germplasm, according to the guidelines in the Strategy (e.g. transferring seednuts or embryos from a risk-free zone and enforcing more comprehensive adoption of quarantine, conducting pest-risk assessments, border controls, etc.),
- reviewing effectiveness for different means of germplasm transfer and including that of germplasm transfer by *in vitro* cultured plantlets and producing a revised safe movement guidelines (within the CRP FTA framework).

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