

The future of Robusta coffee: investing in the INERA coffee collection in Yangambi (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

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Introduction

- The Congo Basin houses important coffee genetic resources with **12 native coffee species**, including *Coffea canephora*.
- The Congo Basin has a **potential for Robusta coffee production** which can be a tool for development in the rural areas and contribute to the UN **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- In the 1950's the **INERA Yangambi** was a **leading research station for Robusta coffee**
- Since 2017: Meise Botanic Garden is helping to **revive the research station**.

Methods

1. Rehabilitation of coffee collection infrastructure,
2. Inventorying & collecting genetic resources in the RD Congo,
3. Capacity building,
4. Multidisciplinary research on Robusta Coffee.

Preliminary results

- Rehabilitated infrastructure for propagation & post harvest processing
 - Trained staff
 - Inventoried collection
 - Genetic characterized collection
 - Gene flow between the collections' cultivated and wild
- Robusta coffees is assessed
- An inventory of wild coffees in the DR Congo and identification of valuable sites within the DRC for future sampling.
 - > 250 new accession of wild and locally cultivated coffee.



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Conclusion

The project illustrates that in a diversity rich country facing instability, insufficient infrastructure and limited resources, Coffee genetic resources can be conserved and local capacity can be built up if the stakeholders collaborate on the basis of sound scientific knowledge, long standing relations and a good network. In the context of the Convention of Biodiversity, it is essential to support and involve countries housing important genetic diversity in research and conservation programs. Long term sustainable funding is essential but remains challenging.



Perspectives

By rehabilitating and enriching the coffee collection we pave the way to involve the DR Congo, which holds important genetic resources of coffee, again in international coffee conservation and research programs. The newly signed Public Private Partnership between INERA, CIFOR & R&SD is a solid frame work for investments in coffee research and production.

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References: Stoffelen P., BGJournal 16(2), 2019, 5 pp.

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