

# A Global Strategy

for the conservation and use  
of Coconut Genetic Resources

## 2018-2028

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market conditions. Low prices for copra and oil, and their high market volatility, led to lower interest in replanting coconut even in places where local consumption was crucial for livelihood. The intense development of oil palm plantations has also caused a certain loss of interest in coconut, from both farmers and researchers. Many researchers working on coconut shifted to oil palm, coffee or cocoa. Big companies planting crops on an agro-industrial scale can afford to support larger research budgets unlike the millions of small coconut farmers.



Tender Coconut street seller in Tonga.  
(R. Bourdeix)

Coconut cultivation is actually undergoing a strong revival. In November 2013, delegates from the governments of 13 Asia-Pacific countries, including eight Ministers of Agriculture, participated in a FAO Regional Consultation on Coconut Sector Development in Asia and the Pacific. They concluded that replanting of coconut trees on a massive scale is required if the coconut producing countries of Asia and the Pacific are to meet the world's rapidly growing demand for coconut products. According to Hiroyuki Konuma, the FAO Regional Representative: "Asia and the Pacific's aging coconut trees simply can't keep up with the growing demand.../... Indonesia, the top producer, would need to replant some 450,000 hectares". For instance, Thailand, who has diversified into a variety of export products such as virgin coconut oil and aromatic coconut water, is presently importing coconuts from Indonesia and Vietnam to feed its industry. Thus, the global economic situation seems now more favourable to coconut cultivation.

### 1.1.6 The International Coconut Genetic Resources Network – COGENT

In 2017, COGENT gathers 39 country-members and is organized into 5 regional sub-networks: Africa and the Indian Ocean; Latin America and the Caribbean; South Asia and Middle East; Southeast and East Asia; and the South Pacific. Table 1.1 provides a list of the member countries. COGENT brings together national and international players in both public and private sectors and promotes funding opportunities for conserving and utilizing coconut genetic resources.

Coordinating the global conservation of coconut genetic resources relies largely on COGENT, with support from ACIAR, Bioversity International, CGIAR and CIRAD. The other main institutions which coordinate international coconut research projects are APCC, SPC and ACIAR.

**Table 1.1.** Composition (membership) of COGENT by regional networks in 2017.

South Asia and Middle East	Southeast East Asia	South Pacific	Africa and Indian Ocean	Latin America and Caribbean
Bangladesh	China	Cook Islands	Benin	<i>Brazil</i>
<i>India</i>	<i>Indonesia</i>	Fiji	<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	Colombia
Pakistan	Malaysia	Kiribati	Ghana	Costa Rica
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	Myanmar	<b>Papua New Guinea</b> <sup>19</sup>	<b>Kenya</b>	Cuba
Sultanate of Oman	Philippines	<b>Samoa</b>	Madagascar	Guyana
	Thailand	Solomon Islands	Mozambique	Haiti
	Vietnam	Tonga	Nigeria	Honduras
		Vanuatu	Seychelles	Jamaica
			<b>Tanzania</b>	Mexico
				Trinidad & Tobago

In *Italic*: International Genebanks.

In **Bold**: country members of the COGENT Steering Committee in 2014.

APCC and SPC are mainly involved in research in coconut processing and socio-economics; although SPC has recently tested a new conservation approach in Samoa, based on the *Polymotu* concept, with funding from the Trust, and in collaboration with COGENT, Bioversity International and CIRAD<sup>20</sup>. ACIAR focuses on socio-economics, plant pathology and *in vitro* culture. CIRAD is involved in providing contribution from its researchers to COGENT coordination and in participating in numerous international research projects. CIRAD researchers are working on the whole supply chain, from the production to the consumption or uses of the final coconut products.

COGENT programme priorities and activities are decided by its Steering Committee and reviewed by Bioversity International to enhance complementarity and effectiveness. The COGENT Coordinator and Secretariat coordinate the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of COGENT's programme, projects and activities, and establish linkages with collaborating institutions, programmes and donors.

<sup>19</sup> The ICG in PNG is currently being relocated, and with support from the UK Darwin Initiative is being upgraded and expanded to include new collected material, with satellite genebank sites in Fiji and Samoa. See: <http://www.spc.int/blog/new-project-to-save-diversity-of-coconuts-in-the-pacific-islands/>

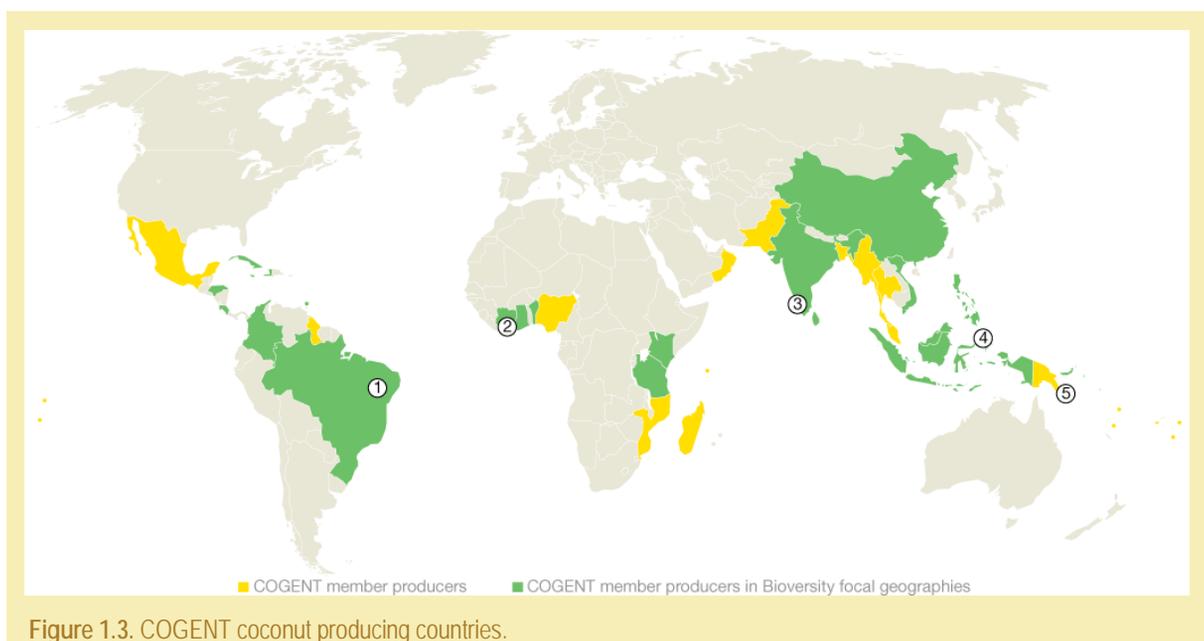
<sup>20</sup> See URL: <https://lrd.spc.int/our-work/genetic-resources/centre-for-pacific-crops-and-trees/polymotu-conserves-special-coconut-varieties-in-the-pacific>.

Upgrading COGENT's organization was initiated in 2012 by conducting two organizational assessments and two participative meetings. The composition and the role of the Steering Committee (SC) was modified in order both to increase its stability and to allow other member-countries to fully participate to decision making. The venue of COGENT meetings was fixed as biennial and linked with the COCOTECH meetings of APCC, in order to reduce costs and increase interactions with stakeholders from the coconut value chain. Other innovations are the creation of six permanent International Thematic Action Groups (ITAGS)<sup>21</sup>, and the possibility of making decision at distance using two distinct processes, remote consensus and remote voting. Further details on COGENT and its recent reorganization, including a study to explore alternative hosting arrangements for the Secretariat are provided in Annex 4 of this document.

COGENT is currently not funded on a sustainable basis, although Bioversity International and CGIAR were until recently allocating a restricted executive budget to support the activities of the COGENT Secretariat. For more information on COGENT, see the website: [www.cogentnetwork.org](http://www.cogentnetwork.org).

#### 1.1.7 The urgent need for a revised Global Strategy

Since 1991 COGENT has played a crucial role in developing the present global coconut conservation system, which is based on 5 international genebanks collaborating with the 24 national genebanks and other coconut stakeholders worldwide.



One of the first internationally agreed priorities for COGENT was the development of a Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Coconut Resources.

<sup>21</sup> See URL: <http://www.cogentnetwork.org/action-groups>