

A Global Strategy

for the conservation and use
of Coconut Genetic Resources

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3.6.1. Policies for international germplasm transfers

The legal situation regarding access to coconut genetic resources needs to be assessed, clarified and influenced by improving awareness on COGENT activities and by disseminating information regarding benefit-sharing and dedicated legislation. This will facilitate the involvement of decision-makers in formalizing arrangements for germplasm movements. It will also improve their political understanding of the interest of conservation and use of coconut genetic resources towards supporting the development of a sustainable coconut industry in their country.

Linking legal expert groups to various initiatives like pest and disease monitoring projects in coconut fields in EMBRAPA Brazil for instance, the IPM network from APCC at the regional scale, and international groups such as the International Plant Protection Convention³⁴ (IPPC) and (FAO), is crucial to get the most accurate and updated information. COGENT will engage with the IPPC and its Regional Plant Protection Organizations to ensure that updated guidelines for safe movement of coconut germplasm will be widely available to those responsible for the phytosanitary systems in coconut producing countries. Another important field of collaboration is risk analysis and policy making for avoiding spreading pests and diseases via stakeholders from other countries or regions (Zu et al. 2010).

For collecting missions, an important step is to secure the administrative authorization necessary before any collecting trip. When the permits for germplasm collection are obtained from the authority concerned in a given country, the aims and objectives of the project will be explained to the local populations using language that they can understand. Missions should no longer be devoted only to collecting germplasm; they must contribute to strengthening conservation at local level. Local farmers associations and NGOs might be important links in facilitating such meaningful communication.

The COGENT ITAGs on Phytopathology and coconut germplasm movements should have opportunity to meet in order to update the guidelines as new information becomes available on coconut pests and diseases and integrate new technologies as they become available. The guidelines should be formally reviewed every two years. If new information become available in the meantime, e.g. on the spread of a particular pest, then the guidelines will be updated accordingly.

This will ensure the most effective means of raising awareness and communicating the importance of safe germplasm movement to the coconut community. Without this understanding, there is the danger that illicit movement of coconut plant material will spread pests and diseases.

³⁴ The IPPC works with Convention contracting parties, to develop phytosanitary measures that underpin the parties' ability to manage pest risks and the environmental, economic and social impacts of plant pests. Its Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) meets annually to review the state of plant protection, identifies action to control the spread of pests into new areas, develops and adopts international standards and establishes procedures for the sharing of phytosanitary information. The IPPC works with Regional Plant Protection Organizations and international organizations to build phytosanitary capacity, to identify and address risks that cross national borders.