



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions
for the Sustainable Management
of Natural Resources”

**Food Security, Income Generation and Natural Resource
Management of Afro-colombian Communities from the Colombian
Pacific Region through Access to Markets: The Case of Peach Palm
(*Bactris gasipaes* K.)**

FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ¹, SOPHIE GRAEFE¹, ANDRES GIRALDO¹, DOMINIQUE DUFOUR^{2,1},
ALONSO GONZALEZ¹

¹*International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Colombia*

²*Agricultural Research for Developing Countries (CIRAD), UMR Qualisud, France*

Abstract

Peach palm (*Bactris gasipaes* K.) is a palm tree native to humid Neotropical forests providing nutrient rich fruits, which are usually consumed after being boiled in water. Preliminary nutrient analysis of 46 cultivars resulted in starch (70%), lipids (11.5%), protein (6.2%), crude fiber (4.7%), total sugars (3.3%), and ash (2.7%), with an average dry matter content of 48.7%. Peach palm is cultivated throughout Colombia in regions with a per-humid climate at altitudes of less than 1500 m asl. One important area of cultivation is the Colombian pacific region, which is mainly inhabited by Afro-Colombian communities, who cultivate the fruit in small-scale agroforestry systems. Apart of playing and important role as food in its original area of cultivation, it is also highly demanded in urban centres such as the provincial capital Cali. It is estimated that more than 2000 women street vendors in Cali earn their livelihoods by selling peach palm fruits. However, there is evidence of deficits in crop management, harvest methods and product quality as well as in market chain inequalities, whose improvements could increase the economic well-being of the people involved in this activity. Likewise not much is known about management practices and the flow of farm resources within this cultivation system. To address these issues CIAT is conducting a project in five villages in the municipality of Buenaventura on the Colombian Pacific coast. It aims to analyse peach palm production systems from a socio-economic as well as an ecological point of view, in order to quantify farm inputs and outputs as well as ecosystem services generated within this type of land use. The project further supports the formation of farmer research teams, with the aim to strengthen the capacities of farmers to address important issues such as secure harvesting methods, better cooking protocols, reducing post-harvest losses and a better access to the market in relation with consumer preferences and consumption patterns. A stable income from peach palm agroforestry systems is seen to have a strong potential to reduce poverty as well as the pressure to cultivate illicit crops in this remote area.

Keywords: Agroforestry, *Bactris gasipaes*, Colombia, consumer preferences, market chain, peach palm