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## Conservation and Use of Wild Populations of *Coffea arabica* in the Montane Rainforests of Ethiopia: From Research to Action

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### Abstract

*Coffea arabica* originates from Southwest Ethiopia, where its wild populations naturally occur in the understory of the montane rainforests at altitudes between 1,000 and 2,100 m. Wild Arabica coffee is not only consumed by local people, but it is also a cash crop for the local as well as the international speciality market. Above all, it is a unique gene pool for national and international coffee breeding due to its high genetic diversity. As forest land is increasingly converted to agricultural land, the wild coffee populations and their habitat, the montane rainforest, are highly threatened.

To bridge the gap between research during 2002 to 2008 and practice, the NGO “Environment and Coffee Forest Forum (ECFF)” was founded. Based on the research findings, ECFF and its German partners work on (1) the establishment of a protected area for wild coffee and its forest habitat, (2) the development of guidelines for the use of wild coffee and the coffee forests, (3) the establishment of an in-situ gene bank for the conservation of wild coffee genetic resources, and (4) concepts for environmental and conservation education and raising public awareness. The way from basic research to implementation-oriented and participatory activities will be described and discussed with the aim of establishing an UNESCO-MAB biosphere reserve at Yaya/Southwest Ethiopia.

**Keywords:** Coffee forest forum, Ethiopia, NGOs, wild coffee