



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Promoting the Use of Baobab (*Adansonia digitata* L.) in Rural Communities in Eastern Africa

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Abstract

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata* L.) is a majestic tree that occurs naturally throughout the drier parts of sub-Saharan Africa. This multipurpose species with an exceptionally nutritious fruit has the potential to play an important role in family nutrition and food security in marginalised rural communities. Following initiatives by PhytoTrade Africa that led to the acceptance of baobab dried fruit pulp as a novel food ingredient in the EU and the US in 2008, further opportunities for cash income generation potentially arise from growing international demand for baobab.

The vast majority of recent research activities on baobab have mainly focused on Southern and Western Africa, but little is known about East Africa, particularly Kenya and Sudan. To explore the potential of baobab to improve food security, nutritional health and rural poverty, a research consortium has been formed bringing together research institutions and the private sector in Kenya, Sudan, Malawi, UK and Germany. Stakeholder workshops and field visits were conducted in Germany and Kenya to exchange the available information and identify knowledge gaps.

The results of the workshops can be summarised as follows:

- To ensure a sufficient supply of baobab products, there is the urgent need to (i) investigate the current contribution of baobab products to local diets, food security and income

generation; (ii) assess the ecology, distribution and abundance of baobab and potential future changes; (iii) analyse the potential of new processing technologies for maintaining nutrients during storage; (iv) assess markets, supply chains, consumer preferences and industry requirements for baobab products; and (iv) build capacities of local communities, particularly women, on value addition and raise their awareness on the value of baobab products for family nutrition.

- Future research should address the improvement of the long-term food security and nutrition of local communities in the target regions by (i) ensuring the availability of and access to baobab products with high nutritional value, (ii) increasing the use of baobab products in daily diets, and (iii) raising incomes from selling raw and processed baobab products of high nutritional value.

Keywords: Food security, fruit tree, Kenya, neglected species, nutrition, sudan, value chain, workshop