



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

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Czech Development Assistance Project on Soqotra: Support of Small-Scale Farmers and Agricultural Education on the Soqotra Island

HANA HABROVÁ, PETR NEMEC

*Mendel University in Brno, Dept. of Forest Botany, Dendrology and Geobiocoenology, Czech Republic*

### Abstract

Landscape of Soqotra Island is a typical example of long-term impacts of cattle grazing. Local people are dependent on cattle, fishing, import of rice, flour and beans from the Yemeni mainland. Cultivation of food-plants, ornamental species or close-to-extinction plants are the key objectives of various projects. Mendel University has been working on the island since 1999. Currently, the project of Czech Development Assistance called “Support of small-scale farmers and agricultural education on the Soqotra Island” came into its third year of implementation. The objective of the project is to support the island population in an effort to improve their food safety and nutritional quality of the food, and to increase food self-sufficiency of local communities through educational activities in the field. Project activities continue mostly in extension of results of previous Czech projects realised on the island. More than 100 interested families were encouraged to establish or expand their home gardens. Nurseries producing seedlings of agricultural crops and endemic trees were supported; seven bigger agroforestry objects were established and serve as practice examples and training centres. Another activity, new on the island, was added. Twenty three schools suitable for school gardens construction or expansion, were selected. Pupils and students led by trained teachers take care of gardens during lessons or in extracurricular activities. Students are tended to cultivate the soil from their childhood, get the consciousness about producing food plants and disperse their knowledge in their families. An inherent benefit of the project is the increased awareness of the target groups of the necessity of a nutritionally balanced diet for overall health condition, as well as the cultivation and subsequent processing of staple crops. This was achieved by implementing a number of trainings focused on human nutrition, cooking from crops grown (including distribution of simple cookbook created within the project) and basic agronomic methods and management practices in home gardens. Czech activities on Soqotra Island are welcome by the community and the cooperation with local people is pleasant and fruitful thanks to its long history and success.

**Keywords:** Agricultural education, arid tropics agriculture, homegardens, schoolgardens, Soqotra