

## **PROSEA Reveals the Green Treasury of South-East Asia**

*by Edu Boer*

### **1 Mission**

The objectives of the PROSEA (Plant Resources of South-East Asia) Programme are:

- to compile, review and summarize the existing wealth of information on the plant resources of South-East Asia for education, extension, research, and industry;
- to build and maintain a computerized Databank on the plant resources of South-East Asia;
- to publish the information on the plant resources in an illustrated, multi-volume Handbook;
- to support additional activities that enhance the dissemination of the information published in the PROSEA Handbook or compiled in the Databank.

PROSEA is an international programme covering the fields of agriculture, forestry, horticulture, and botany. The programme was conceptualized in 1985 bearing in mind that available handbooks on plant resources were at least 50 years old, outdated and confined to particular geographical entities. Therefore, the scope was geographically widened to include all useful plants of South-East Asia, including Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Moreover, all aspects of plant resources are described and not only uses and botanical aspects as was done in the older handbooks.

### **2 Organization**

The PROSEA activities are implemented by two major offices: the PROSEA Network Office in Bogor, Indonesia, and the PROSEA Publication Office in Wageningen, the Netherlands. The Network Office in Bogor coordinates the six PROSEA Country Offices in South-East Asia. The Publication Office in Wageningen organizes the publication of the Handbook and coordinates authors and editors from all over the world. The Network Office, Publication Office and the six Country Offices are all closely linked to one institution in the respective countries, in PROSEA jargon the Participating Institutions. They are:

- Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI);
- Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM);
- Papua New Guinea University of Technology (UNITECH);
- Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD);
- Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research (TISTR);
- Vietnam Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR);
- Wageningen Agricultural University (WAU), the Netherlands.

PROSEA is governed by an international Board of Trustees consisting of representatives of all participating institutions in the Programme and upon invitation other officials, e.g. representatives of donor agencies.

The main donors of the PROSEA Programme are the Netherlands Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture & Science, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management & Fisheries), the European Union, ITTO and DIDC (Department for International Development Cooperation, Finland).

### **3 Description of the PROSEA Programme**

The products of the PROSEA Programme are the following:

- PROSEA Databank, including a database of less-accessible literature references;
- PROSEA Publications (Handbook, Bibliographies, CD-ROM's);
- dissemination material (translations of the Handbook into national languages, development of education and extension materials);
- training courses, eg for information personnel and sensitization of potential users.

To effectively tackle the problem of dealing with an estimated 7000 useful plant species these have been subdivided into 20 Commodity Groups. The PROSEA 'Basic list of species and commodity grouping' indicates which species is treated in which Commodity Group. For every Commodity Group an editorial team is selected to organize and guide the publication of the respective volume of the Handbook. The manuscripts to be included in each volume of the Handbook are prepared by experts often affiliated to universities and research institutions in South-East Asia. The high scientific level of the presented information is guaranteed by the international editorial team with expertise in all fields relevant to the Commodity Group in question. For the publication of 'PROSEA 5(3). Timber trees: Lesser-known timbers', for instance, a total of 104 persons have been involved of which 79 are working in South-East Asia.

Volumes 1 - 11 of the PROSEA Handbook have already been published. Moreover, electronic versions on CD-ROM are also available for most of the Commodity Groups published and PROSEA is participating in the development of the 'Electronic Forestry Compendium' together with CABI and CIFOR.

#### **4 PROSEA and tropical forest research**

The most important forest-related Commodity Groups are:

- PROSEA 2. Edible fruits and nuts;
- PROSEA 3. Dye and tannin-producing plants;
- PROSEA 5(1). Timber trees: Major commercial timbers;
- PROSEA 5(2). Timber trees: Minor commercial timbers;
- PROSEA 5(3). Timber trees: Lesser-known timbers;
- PROSEA 6. Rattans;
- PROSEA 7. Bamboos;
- PROSEA 11. Auxiliary plants;
- PROSEA 12. Medicinal plants;
- PROSEA 18. Plants producing exudates;
- PROSEA 20. Ornamental plants.

For all species treated not only botanical aspects are covered (taxonomy, description, distribution, cytology, ecology) but also accounts are given of the uses of the plant, its cultivation (propagation, planting, husbandry, pests and diseases, harvesting, yield, handling after harvest), its importance in international trade, germplasm collections and genetic resources, selection and breeding and its prospects for future use in South-East Asia.

The PROSEA Handbook presents a unique survey of the plant resources of South-East Asia and will most likely serve as a basic reference work for many years to come. PROSEA is mainly concerned with information on lesser-known plant species as this information tends to be lost due to the increasing tendency to focus on a small number of well-known plants. To realize its objectives, PROSEA is well-established with its Network in South-East Asia and its links with all major research organizations in the region. Special attention is given to the screening of 'grey literature' in South-East Asia; the sources of this literature are integrated in the PROSEA Databank and published in PROSEA's Bibliographies.

The development of local or national dissemination material is a very strong asset of the PROSEA Network: the information in the PROSEA Databank and Handbook is translated and/or adapted to the local needs of extension workers, farmers, teachers, students, the local industry and occasionally even reshaped into educational material for school children.

The basic information generated by PROSEA is essential for the development of sustainable land use systems. Sustainable forest management which increasingly requires information on timber species which were previously not marketed will surely benefit from the compilation of wood properties data and the complete set of wood anatomical descriptions of all timber trees in South-East Asia. The electronic CD-ROM publication of the three volumes on 'Timber trees' will further facilitate use of the presented information and enhance search possibilities in this large Commodity Group.

For more information, please contact:  
 Edu Boer, PROSEA Publication Office  
 Tel. +31 317 484587  
 Fax +31 317 482206  
 e-mail: [elly.fokkema@pros.agro.wau.nl](mailto:elly.fokkema@pros.agro.wau.nl)  
<http://www.bib.wau.nl/prosea/home.html>

---

## **IUFRO's Special Programme For Developing Countries**

*by the SPDC team*

### **Historical Background**

IUFRO's Special Programme for Developing Countries (IUFRO-SPDC) was created as a follow-up initiative of the XVII IUFRO World Congress in Kyoto, Japan, where the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) was formally requested in the Congress Declaration to undertake activity in "...strengthening research related to forest resources in developing countries".

### **SPDC - Part of IUFRO's Global Network<sup>1</sup>**

As part of IUFRO's global network of forestry research institutions, IUFRO-SPDC has a comparative advantage in bringing target-country scientists into collaborative research planning, training, and information exchange with their counterparts in other countries. IUFRO-SPDC uses its unique position within IUFRO to undertake its mission *to expand and foster forestry research capacity in developing and economically disadvantaged countries* and seeks to foster and assist the activities of IUFRO through special-purpose projects and activities in collaboration with forestry research and donor agencies of the international community.

### **New Challenges**

With evolving world needs and the establishment of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the incorporation of the International Center for Research on Agroforestry (ICRAF) within the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), as well as the creation of the Forestry Research Support Programme for Asia and the Pacific (FORSPA), the challenges facing IUFRO-SPDC have changed. IUFRO-SPDC remains committed to addressing the concerns that originally resulted in its establishment, but, as a result of the above initiatives, has re-evaluated its programmes in order to more effectively meet its mandate. Accordingly, IUFRO-SPDC works to attain the following goals: