LES ACTIONS DE LA DGCD — DE ACTIVITEITEN VAN DE DGOS

DGDC'S ACTIVITIES — LAS ACTIVIDADES DEL DGCD

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION PRIZE

The Development Cooperation Prize is annual incentive prize - financed by the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGDC) and organized by the Royal Museum for Central Africa - for students and young researchers, from Belgium or developing countries, whatever their discipline. The prize is awarded to scientific works that contribute significantly to knowledge that can be applied to development in the South. Sustainable development is to be their principal aim and poverty alleviation a priority. The prizes are attributed to Bachelor's and Master's theses, postgraduate papers, Ph.D. theses, or publications in scientific journals.

In the course of the years of the prize existence, the fields represented among the participants has remained more or less stable: the majority of files represent the exact sciences - with a very large share originating from the agricultural and applied biological sciences, followed by the human sciences and biomedical and veterinary sciences.

The prize is granted to maximum 14 students and 6 researchers and consists of an award of 1,250 € for students and 2,500 € for young researchers. Since 1998 the awards have been handed over by the Minister for Development Cooperation during a ceremony in the Royal Museum for Central Africa. The laureates from abroad are invited to Belgium especially for this occasion. Many use their stay in Belgium to establish or renew contacts with the Belgian academia in thier fields of interest.

Two abstracts regarding the accomplishment of laureates from Spain and Belgium awarded in 2005 are presented below.

Establishment of a Communal Management Area of Cynegetic Interest as a Management Tool for Fauna in a Forestry Concession in South East Cameroon

Cecilia Julve Larrubia*

This study fits well into the context of biodiversity preservation, particularly at a time when there is an increasing emphasis being placed on allowing and ensuring the sustainable use of this biodiversity, which, in fact, is the second fundamental objective of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). For the past few years those involved in biodiversity have sought to form links with people working in development aid by drawing attention to the economic role – including in relation to food – that biodiversity, particularly wild fauna, plays when it comes to the living conditions of the local populations living in or near the forests.

There are in fact few studies of this type on a dense tropical forest environment, precisely because it is difficult to observe wild fauna. A solid scientific basis is needed, however, in order to be able to judiciously direct management strategies as sustainable and participative as possible. Having established the diagnosis of density/composition of the fauna, having carried out the sampling tests (hunting) and having established the scenarios, this thesis puts forward a concrete proposal for a management system that allows this communal management area of cynegetic interest in south east Cameroon to fulfil its role by reconciling the goal of sustainable conservation of biological diversity with the goal of meeting the food requirements and economic needs of the local population. The study also clearly recognizes the limits of this type of exercise, due to the imperfect nature of the tools, the methods and the data available and to outside factors that may have affected the results in some way. Taking into account these observations, the management proposal is accompanied by a recommendation for thorough follow-up in order to rectify any possible errors and avoid uncertainties.

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This study has been carried out with exactness and realism, making it a truly interesting contribution in the process of identifying co-operation activities aiming to strengthen the interaction between the preservation of biodiversity and the reduction of poverty.

This is a study that will be useful to circulate at future conferences and symposia, especially within the framework of the CBD.

Understanding With-in Season Crop Performance in Maize-Wheat Farming Systems in the Semi-Arid Highlands of Mexico

P. De Corte[**]

The study was conducted in a region where the degree of slope of the land, poor soil cover, the working of the soil and the over-cultivation of maize often give rise to run-off, intensive erosion, poor use of water and low and irregular yields. Some of the foremost ways to bring improvement include crop rotation, reduction in the working of the soil and the management of crop residues, e.g. straw, which can be gathered for fodder or left on the ground as cover.
A technique involving a portable sensor as a tool is used to calculate, as the crops are growing, an index that bears a good relation to the yields. On experimental parcels of land comparing various crop rotations, contrasting methods of working the soil (including zero-tillage or direct seeding) and ways of dealing with crop residues (straw left to cover the soil, all or part of the straw gathered for fodder), this index has been shown to be able to play a part, alongside other indices, in the evaluation of different soil management systems and to enable deficiencies occurring during cultivation to be corrected.
The techniques developed and validated in this region of Mexico can easily be extrapolated to other regions in the world, particularly through the collaboration between international institutes and local partners. This study contributes to the efforts to improve what has become known as conservation agriculture, i.e. the methods that work towards ensuring productivity and profitability of the agricultural systems, and increased sustainability of natural resources, in this case mainly soil conservation and the increase in the fertility of the soil.

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