Special Issue: History of Banana Domestication

Guest editors:

Tim Denham, Edmond De Langhe and Luc Vrydaghs

History of Banana Domestication

Technical Papers

Regional Multi-disciplinary Papers

Published: July 30, 2009

www.ethnobotanyjournal.org/vol7/i1547-3465-07-163.pdf

It is with great pleasure that I preface this publication entitled *History of Banana Domestication* on behalf of Bioversity International.

For the first time an international multi-disciplinary panel of researchers held a Special Session on the history of the domestication of edible bananas (genus *Musa*), which is one of the most important crops in the world, for subsistence as well as commercial value. Participants included specialists in agronomy, archaeobotany, ethnobotany, genetics, linguistics and phytogeography. The session took place during the Sixth World Archaeological Congress in June-July 2008 at Dublin, and was co-sponsored by Bioversity International in concert with The Society for Phytolith Research. The present publication reports the results of this enterprise.

As is exhibited throughout the volume, the domestication process for edible banana has been extraordinarily complex. It is also becoming clear that bananas bear a unique testimony to the early and deep impact of humans on tropical rainforests. Research on the banana provides new insights for understanding the development of agriculture in the tropics.

Of special interest for Bioversity International are new prospects for the genetic improvement of bananas cultivated today. Prehistoric evidence and reconstructions of the domestication process are helping geneticists to precisely identify intermediary stages and products. This knowledge is of vital importance when it comes to strengthening popular varieties in terms of the resistance and tolerance that they need to cope with new biotic and abiotic stresses.

I am convinced that the multidisciplinary efforts on bananas documented in this volume will be beneficial to a wide range of future research and development activities concerned with subsistence across the tropics.

Emile Frison
Director General
Bioversity International, Rome