

PRESS RELEASE

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Edible aroids network – a successful first year

The European Union (EU) has contributed €3 million over five years to the *International Network for Edible Aroids* (INEA). INEA is a consortium of scientists and growers from all over the world who are using edible aroids (taros) as a model to improve clonally propagated crops of the tropics. The project began in April 2011.

The countries participating in INEA are: Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Cuba, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Samoa, Slovenia, South Africa and Vanuatu. Also participating are two regional organisations, SPC and CARDI (Trinidad), and two international agricultural research organisations, CIRAD, (Vanuatu and France) and Bioversity International (Italy).

The first year of the project has seen enormous activity. SPC's Centre for Pacific Crops and Trees has sent 50 improved clones – many of them resistant to taro leaf blight – to each partner. The clones are from the Samoa and Papua New Guinea breeding programmes. In all, 6526 plants have been distributed. These taro are now in the field ready for the next phase: evaluations and eventual crossing with local varieties. In addition, nearly 200 plants have been sent to European research institutes for drought and virus studies.

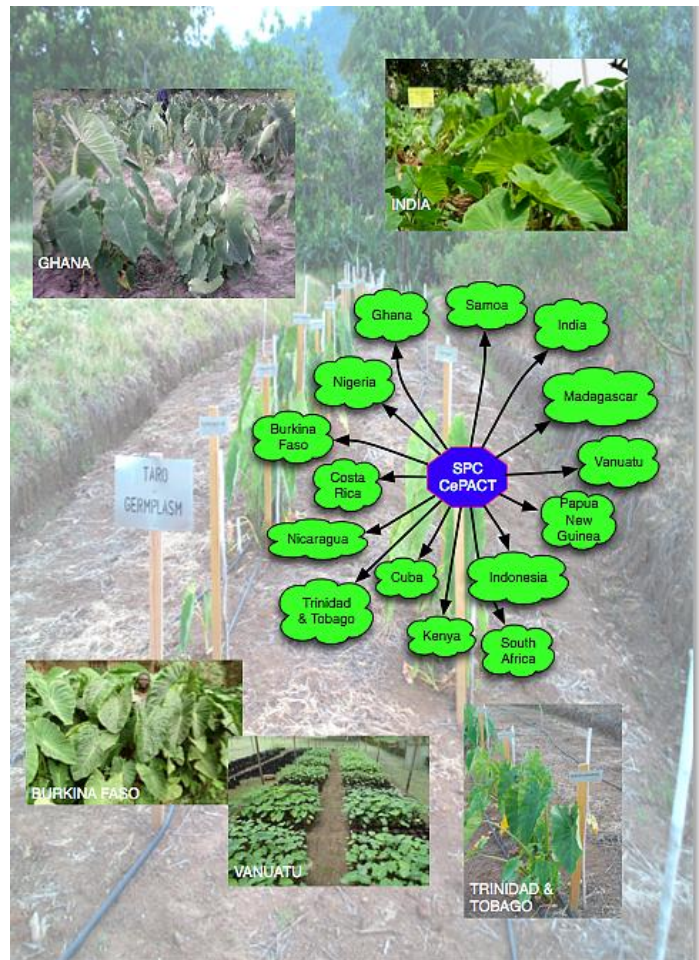
Apart from the partners, four other countries have requested germplasm: Haiti, Guadeloupe, DR Congo and Cameroon, and will be supplied soon. The Cameroon has been devastated by taro leaf blight in the last three years.

The Scientific Coordinator, Vincent Lebot, remarked recently: "As far as I know, there are not many germplasm centres on this planet which can achieve such a fantastic job in such a short time (approx. 6 months)".

In addition, DNA analysis of the Network's taro has begun at CIRAD, France, with a scientist from Burkina Faso using the study for a Ph.D. All in all, a very successful beginning!

A very successful beginning to the edible aroids initiative.

For more information, please contact the LRD Helpdesk: lrhelpdesk@spc.int.



A project implemented SPC in collaboration with CIRAD

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The European Commission is the EU's executive body.

"The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".