

BRAZIL

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Description of Activity:

PLEC's demonstration method of "farmers learning from expert farmers" is an innovative and realistic approach to furthering the conservation of economically important biodiversity while enhancing the livelihoods of rural people. A combination of household surveys, following farmers in their daily activities, and other in-field activities have helped the PLEC-Brazil team to identify a group of exceptional "expert farmers", i.e., those who use biodiversity-enhancing and economically-rewarding production and management technologies. PLEC-Brazil team members identified, selected and built partnerships with several "expert farmers" at sites established in the floodplains of the Amazon River in Amapá, Santarém and Ilha Marajo. A great diversity of agriculture, agroforestry and forestry systems and techniques have been identified and demonstrated by expert farmers in villages at PLEC sites. Many agricultural systems feature interplanting of many species and crop varieties on sand and silt bars. The processes of exchange of knowledge between expert farmers and participant farmers have been thoroughly documented by members of the team. Agroforestry systems such as "banana emcapoeirada" that allow farmers to produce bananas despite the ravages of moko disease is one of several production systems that help farmers not only to increase biodiversity in their fields but also solve problems of disease and pests. Forest management systems that enrich fallows with timbers, fruits and other valuable species have also been demonstrated by expert farmers. Conservation practices such as the restoration of riparian forests by farm families in Amapá sites have greatly increased populations of shrimp and fish and increased household incomes. Similarly, the establishment of lake reserves near the city of Santarém has improved the livelihoods of villages located in the PLEC sites. The establishment of protected palm forests on Marajo Island resulted in the

increase of the production of "acai" fruits and other important economic products. These in turn have boosted household incomes.

PLEC-Brazil has also made major advances in quantifying the agrobiodiversity, fish diversity and other forms of biological diversity found in the landholdings of farmers as well as in village lake and forest reserves. PLEC work in Amazonia has made important contributions in documenting and promoting locally-developed technologies that are biodiversity friendly and economic rewarding. Technological diversity is an important and valuable resource for rural Brazilian society in its quest to achieve sustainable development. PLEC-Brazil will continue identifying, testing and promoting locally-developed technologies in the next phase of PLEC. Demonstration activities will be conducted for rural extension agents and technicians working in development and conservation programs. PLEC-Brazil will also aim to influence people who are making decisions on development and conservation.

We recommend a visit to PLEC homepage at <http://www.unu.edu/env/plec/> and offer more information in the following articles published in PN&V by the PLEC-Brazil team:

- 1) Sustainable management of an Amazonian forest for timber production: a myth or reality? PN&V 12:20-28
- 2) Biodiversity as a product of smallholder' strategies for overcoming changes in their natural and social landscapes. PN&V 15: 9-19
- 3) Smallholder agriculture along the lower Amazon floodplain, Brazil. PN&V 16: 34-42