

## CONTENTS

Agrodiversity: scales and values <i>Miguel Pinedo-Vasquez</i>	1
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## PAPERS

Indigenous knowledge and rural livelihoods <i>F.B.S.Kaihura</i>	3
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## REPORTS

Ongoing activities in Guinée <i>AK Barry, A Diallo and I Boiro</i>	10
---	----

Evaluating agrodiversity adoption in Uganda <i>Joy Tumuhairwe and Charles Nkwine</i>	12
---	----

## REVIEWS AND NEWS

Land rotational agriculture in Yunnan: a book review <i>H Brookfield</i>	16
---	----

The ancient significance of tree crops <i>H Brookfield</i>	18
---	----

Prolinnova: new initiatives in smallholder natural resource management	19
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Useful resources	20
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## Agrodiversity: scales and values

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As members of PLEC we tend to hear complaints from most smallholder farmers that currently it is hard to make a living by producing crops. Farmers mention that these days what they produce buys less and less sugar, salt, medicines and other household goods. Data collected by PLEC members in the last five years demonstrate that farmers' crops are falling in value; they are not producing less. PLEC-Peru researchers, for instance, have found that in 1995 the families of the Muyuy Sector could buy two kilograms of sugar, a litre of cooking oil and a kilogram of salt with what they gained from selling a bunch of plantain. In December 2003, the same families needed to sell three bunches of plantain to buy the same amount of sugar, cooking oil and salt. These are just some of the data that PLEC can provide to the experts and policy makers who design and implement development and conservation programs. Based on PLEC results we believe that the fundamental challenge for developing countries is not only to increase food production but also to protect the value of what poor farmers are producing. How can agriculture be economically attractive for smallholders? How can the livelihoods of the rural poor improve and ecological vulnerability be reduced in developing countries when industrially produced and cheap grains and other staples are increasingly supplying markets? Are most rural development experts looking at the problem in the best way?

During the last year PLEC members have participated in a series of international, national and regional events that were organized to find the answers to these questions. Most of what was discussed in the meetings was related to increasing food production. We brought to these meetings the complaints of smallholder farmers from twelve countries about the decline in the value of their products, and the dismissal of their production technologies as incapable of meeting



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