

Editorial

Thoughts from the last IBSAR workshop “Legislation and Biodiversity Opportunities: The Costa Rican Experience”

This workshop was a good opportunity for most of us, members of IBSAR, to gain some knowledge about biodiversity legislation, contract negotiations and legal issues. During this workshop we were introduced to the “Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad” (INBio) in Costa Rica. Throughout the discussions, it was very obvious that IBSAR and INBio share many interests and specialties, and commitments, but still differ greatly in many aspects. The major common feature of the two centers is that both are non-profit scientific institutions whose missions are to promote a new awareness of the value of biodiversity to achieve its conservation and use in an effort to improve the quality of life.

In this editorial, I tried to summarize how INBio achieved the level of success they have now, and how IBSAR and Lebanon compare to it. INBio was created in Costa Rica due to a strong national biodiversity commitment which we haven't achieved yet in Lebanon, at least not to the same level. INBio were able to achieve their goals by ensuring the cooperation of government agencies, academic institutions, private sector, scientists, lawyers, managers, and economists from Costa Rica as well as from the USA and other developed countries. The Costa Rican government being committed to biodiversity introduced legislation, supported by earlier international treaties and conventions that established the relationships and protocols for conduct between countries. These policies created the framework for such issues such as:

- 1. Creation of conservation areas,*
- 2. Access to and control of biological resources,*
- 3. Recognized intellectual property rights,*
- 4. Creation of incentives or deterrents to use of resources in the public domain.*
- 5. Environmental protection, and*
- 6. Commercial laws that promote development, conservation, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the sustainable use of biological/genetic resources.*

Such national and international policies created a suitable environment in which biodiversity prospecting was able to develop.

In Lebanon, it is unfortunate that we still lack governmental regulations and policies as well as the proper obvious authority(ies) to enforce these policies once they are issued. There is also the absence of education in the field of biodiversity that is essential in order to implement biodiversity frameworks such as those mentioned above. Before we can go any further trying to attain our scientific objectives, legislation has to be put in place. These policies are of utmost importance since biological resources become protected due to these policies, making major investments easier to attain. The protected status of conservation areas, coupled with effectively enforced laws that regulate ownership of, access to, and use of the biological resources discovered, reduces the risk for potential business investors. However, the efforts that have been made by IBSAR and are still ongoing, concerning legislation (in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Environment), business development and strategic planning, and protection of intellectual property have put us on the right track. Our objectives can only be achieved through collaborations with the public and private sectors and with other academic institutions.

Fadia Homaidan

Meetings, contacts & Seminars

IBSAR meetings. IBSAR meetings are scheduled every 2 weeks starting February 27, 2003.
(*Schedule of speakers on the web*)

Thesis Seminars.

M. Akkari (an Msc student, Major: plant sciences) gave a presentation entitled: "**Screening selected plants against *Tetranychus urticae* and *Liriomyza huidobrensis* with Soil Phase Extraction of *Melia azedarach***".

G. Catacora (a Msc student, Environmental Sciences, Major: Ecosystem Management) gave a presentation entitled: "**Preliminary market assessment of herbal remedies in Lebanon**".

W. El Jouni, (a Msc. Student, Major: Biology) gave a presentation on: "**Characterization of potential Anti-inflammatory Bioactivities in Selected Indigenous Medicinal Plants of Lebanon**".

M. El Sahrif (a MSc. Student, Major: Animal Sciences) gave a presentation entitled: "**In vitro and In vivo Anti microbial Activities of Selected and Indigenous Medicinal Plants of Lebanon**".

V. Sagherian (a Msc. Student, Major: Animal Sciences) gave a presentation entitled: "**Immunopotential and Anti-microbial Activities of Indigenous Medicinal plants of Lebanon**".

Workshop: "Cultivation of wild plants" May 30, 2003

Within the context of the series of workshops related to biodiversity by IBSAR offered a workshop on the cultivation of wild herbs. The lecturer was Mr. Moustapha Sanekli, the general manager and owner of "Sanessences", a Tunisian company that specializes in the production and the processing of aromatic and medicinal plants. Sanessences is an avant-garde project in

its country of origin and has been rewarded by the Tunisian government for its originality and pioneering spirit.

The workshop dealt with numerous issues such as the cultivation protocols of the most commonly exploited herbs in climates similar to that of Lebanon and the documentation and the certification requirements imposed by main importers (EU, US, Arab countries) to allow for export of raw material. Alternative crops for farmers in Lebanon were discussed and the need for ensuring market prior to these new crops was emphasized.

Workshop: "Legislation and Biodiversity Opportunities: The Costa Rican Experience" June 17-18, 2003

In the process leading to the establishment of a draft law on access and benefit sharing of biodiversity for Lebanon to be submitted to the ministry of environment next month, IBSAR in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment invited a Costa Rican delegation to share their experience with Lebanese decision makers through a workshop. The delegation consisted of the president of Earth University, Dr José Zaghoul, a representative of InBio, Mr. Jorge Cabrera (InBio lawyer), and a representative of the ministry of Environment Mrs. Eugenia Wo-Ching. The workshop drew a picture of the social economic and historical background that led to the regulation of a monitored access to Costa Rican biodiversity; it presented the mechanisms that led to the formulation of the access and benefit sharing law of Costa Rica in addition to some of the agreements pertaining to scientific research and product development in relation with biodiversity. Participants had the opportunity to discuss the Lebanese bioprospection potentials with the Costa Rican experts in afternoon discussions. Maitre Nasser, the author of the Lebanese draft law, presented the legal and policy constraints affecting biodiversity opportunities in Lebanon. The day after the workshop allowed for meetings between the delegation, faculty

members and Maitre Nasser. The AUB cafeteria carefully prepared Lebanese meals and the coffee breaks were served by the YMCA who offered traditional dishes and beverages enthusiastically honored by the attendance. Special care was given to the invitations and other handouts which were printed on banana paper directly imported from Costa Rica. Files distributed for the workshop were made out of recycled Lebanese paper.

Fund Raising

Funds received!

R. Talhouk received approval for his project entitled: "Aqueous extracts with anti inflammatory bioactivities from indigenous Lebanese plants: Insights into their mode of action in vivo and in vitro" (Members included: E. Barbour, M. El Sabban and F. Homaidan) from the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research (grant amount: 8,500,000 LL)

N. Saliba received approval for the project entitled: "Extraction and Characterization of Essential oil: A rejuvenated Approach for Agricultural, Economical and Industrial growth in Lebanon" (Members included: K. Bouhadir and S. Talhouk), from the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research (grant amount: 7,000,000 LL)

Proposals Submitted

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For your precious contribution to this invaluable newsletter, including the editorial section contact M. Daouk at me11@aub.edu.lb Submission deadlines 20th of each month.

Publications from IBSAR

M. Akkari, Msc student, Major: plant sciences submitted his thesis on: "**Screening selected plants against *Tetranychus urticae* and *Liriomyza huidobrensis* with Soild Phase Extraction of *Melia azedarach***".

G. Catacora, Msc student, Enviromental Sciences, Major: Ecosystem Management submitted her thesis on: "**Preliminary market assessment of herbal remedies in Lebanon** "

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IBSAR ...

... ACTION!

