

ACTIVITY REPORT

Activity: Brazil nut packaging and cracking tests at Alalapadu
Financed by: Organization of American States
Focal group: Indigenous Communities of Southern Suriname, from the village of Alalapadu
Execution: The Amazon Conservation Team (ACT), USA; President: Mark Plotkin; ACT Suriname Program Director: Gwendolyn Emanuels-Smith
Counterparts: the Trio indigenous communities
Date: February 8-11, 2006; March 27-April 6, 2006.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the activities at Alalapadu were to test the installed nutcrackers; to determine the optimal conditions for easily cracking the nuts; and to train the indigenous nut processors to properly pack the nuts (hygiene, labeling, weight etc.).

COORDINATION

Activities at Alalapadu were coordinated by the ACT Biodiversity Program Coordinator Angela Monorath.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants at Alalapadu were the local community and the head captain Jitashe Shedde

March 9-11, 2006

Participants: Local communities, harvesters, captain Shedde, the Alalapadu contact person and translator Maurisie, Nicolaas Padoe (Brazil nut recordkeeper and accounting point person), and Ms. Monorath.

- On March 9th, 478 kg of nuts were transported from Alalapadu to Paramaribo and were sold to the Combe market.
- Captain Shedde expressed his great satisfaction with the visit, and was happy that the focus of the visit was on cracking and packaging of nuts. He wanted to know on what level ACT like to work with Alalapadu, and whether ACT would consider participating in an effort to establish a traditional medicine clinic school for children. He is seeking work for his community, and would like to find means to extend the Brazil nut project and related work through the entire year.
- Ms. Monorath stated that the processing and sale of new products should be considered; that costs needed to be calculated; and that questionnaires should be produced and then filled out by shopkeepers to determine levels of interest.
- The various processing issues were explained: cracking, packaging, and weighing of nuts; environmental sanitation procedures and personal hygiene; risk factors and loss prevention factors such as temperature, moisture, ventilation, contamination, self-heating, health hazards, shortage and shrinkage, and insect infestation; taste tests of fried nuts; determination of “good” and “bad” (misshapen, discolored, inedible) nuts; and separation of this year’s nuts from the previous year’s to prevent rancidity.
- Traditionally nut cracking was observed and attempted, and quality issues were discussed in this context. The villagers formerly fried unshelled nuts before cracking, but because of their high oil content, Brazil nuts have a strong tendency to become rancid. Additionally, fat decomposition in Brazil nuts leads to the risk of self-heating.

CHALLENGES

The villagers are in need of an extra camp beyond the facility where nut processing (drying, storage, cracking and packaging) activities take place, so that they can work further from the village and conduct detailed field research.

FOLLOW UP

- The villagers will commence polling with a questionnaire in several markets to determine whether there is interest in selling the new packaged products. There are already several supermarkets (Zinnia and Best Mart) interested in the fried (24 bags/100gram/bag) and cracked kernels (24 bags/100 gram bags); some of them are interested only in unshelled nuts in 25 kg polysacks.
- A volunteer will be placed at Alalapadu to conduct further research in the field on drying, cracking, packing and storage of nuts under ideal conditions. The work will be carried out in collaboration with a food sciences consultant in order to determine proper expiration dates, preservation methods, and loss and contamination prevention.
- Installation of drying and washing facilities.

PHOTOS



Brazil nut processing house at Alalapadu



Testing of nutcrackers by villagers



Environmental sanitation and basic hygiene



Documentation of processing activities is required; handwashing and personal hygiene facilities



Villagers cook dried unshelled nuts before cracking; a nutcracker is installed and tested by the villagers



Nuts are selected qualitatively for packing or frying with oil and salt



With assistants, Nicolaas Padoe fills and weighs the shelled nuts in plastic



Filled packages are sealed with candle heat



Brazil nuts fried with oil and salt



Nuts prepared for sale: white seed kernel; fried nuts; unshelled nuts in nets and in 25 kg polysacks



Alalapadu indigenous Brazil nut processors and head captain Shedde