

## **Welcome address to the TACCDA workshop**

**by**

**Willemine Brinkman,  
ETFRN coordinator**

Dear colleagues, I feel honoured to welcome you to this beautiful workshop venue in the Finnish forest, where we will speak about tropical forests in Sub-Saharan Africa. I would like to thank all the people in VITRI and Helsinki University who made it possible to hold this workshop here, despite a very late change of venue, due to unforeseeable circumstances.

Speaking about the rehabilitation of dry African forests in the middle of this rather moist Finnish forest seems to be becoming a tradition, judging from the history of Finnish involvement in dry tropical forest research just presented by Mr Pauli Mustonen. Still, I do regret missing the opportunity to hold this workshop in Kenya, where it was originally planned to be held, and where KEFRI and ICRAF had teamed up to organise the workshop venue and field visit. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to KEFRI and ICRAF for their efforts to help organize this workshop, and to all of you for coming to Finland. Your presence will certainly contribute to one of the aims of the European Tropical Forest Research Network, which is to link EU-based researchers with their colleagues in developing countries. Interestingly, we found that there are also many African researchers who are based in Europe, and working on this theme.

I would now like to say a few words, first on the history of this workshop, and then present some thoughts on the way forward.

The idea for a workshop on Trees, Agroforestry and Climate Change in Dryland Africa (TACCDA) was first developed by Gerry Lawson, who was then working at CEH in Edinburgh – this was at least two years ago. Gerry further developed the proposal, sought EC funding, and requested ETFRN support and endorsement, through Olavi Luukkanen. After much correspondence between Gerry, the European Commission's DG Research, and ETFRN, the funding was approved and it was agreed to organize this as an ETFRN workshop. Unfortunately, Gerry was not able to continue his involvement, as he was changing jobs, however, we owe this workshop to him and I regret that he is not able to join us here. Fortunately, we managed to transfer the funding and organisation for the workshop to VITRI, and after some intensive last minute negotiation, Olavi agreed to take on the EC contract negotiation for TACCDA, and Nicole Riveill of the EC Directorate for research kindly agreed to transfer the EC contract from CEH to VITRI. We have not yet come to the end of the list of people and organizations involved. The IUFRO/SPDC GFIS Africa project was involved in

the E-conference preceding this workshop. It also provided the travel funds and tickets for quite a few of the participants here. Quite early in the whole process, the IUFRO/SPDC coordinator had agreed that it would make sense to pool resources, as the IUFRO/SPDC GFIS Africa project had also identified the rehabilitation of degraded forest lands in Africa as a priority topic. Still, the actual collaboration between VITRI, EFRN and the IUFRO SPDC GFIS Africa project required much more negotiation and time than we had all anticipated, and this has increased our satisfaction that we have succeeded. One can truly say that this workshop is the result of European and African cooperation.

As I mentioned earlier, this is an EFRN workshop. This means that we wish to move the issue forward, by teasing out researchable constraints in, and policy advice for, the sustainable management and rehabilitation of degraded forest lands in Africa, mainly in the drylands, but we shall also pay some attention to the humid and sub-humid areas, based on the work and E-discussion exchange by the GFIS Africa group. We should aim to develop a very short and specific list of issues requiring further research; issues where research can really make a difference. This is quite important, as we know that a good output from this workshop may be used by the European Commission in developing the next call for proposals under the INCODEV programme, which is expected to focus on arid and semiarid ecosystems. We should also identify other ways forward. I expect that this will include a recommendation to create more effective links with research in other fields, such as agriculture and climate change research, which we have not yet managed to include as much here as we had hoped. I also anticipate that we shall want to work on links with policy, including recommendations which may be used by the EC in their next INCODEV call for proposals, and work which is of use to the secretariat of the Convention on Combating Desertification. It is also planned to present selected results of this workshop at the Savannah Conference in Edinburgh in September of this year (2003). Finally, particularly for the humid and subhumid areas, I would like to draw attention to the current INCODEV call for proposals which focuses on sustainable management and rehabilitation of humid and subhumid ecosystems. The call closes early in September this year.

I would like to close by thanking everyone who made this workshop possible, especially the VITRI staff and students who have worked very hard these last few weeks to welcome us here. I wish all of us inspiration for a successful workshop.