

Collection and *ex situ* Conservation of Coffee Landraces in Ethiopia – The Example of Harerge

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SUMMARY

The south-western highlands of Ethiopia are recognized as the primary centre of diversity of *Coffea arabica* L. However, relatively little is known about the situation of coffee genetic resources collected and conserved *ex situ* within Ethiopia. In 2005, we started compiling an electronic database of coffee genetic resources conserved at the Jimma Agricultural Research Centre (JARC). Since 1967, 48 campaigns of collections have been undertaken by the Ethiopian research organization, with the main objectives to capture the genetic diversity and search for genotypes tolerant to coffee berry disease. To date (July 2006), 4731 distinct accessions are presently conserved and evaluated by JARC in field gene-banks at Jimma-Melko centre and at 9 sub-centres located in the main coffee growing areas. In Harerge, a coffee zone in the East of the country, coffee is produced in highly diversified farming systems adapted to different ecological niches. Harerge fetches premium prices in the world market but this resource is under threat of erosion. Out of 30 Harerge *woredas* (districts) with significant coffee production, JARC has collected coffee landraces in 20 *woredas*. In all, a total number of 1952 Harerge accessions are conserved in JARC field gene-banks at the Jimma-Melko centre and Mechara sub-centre. They are assessed regularly for yield, disease tolerance, and quality.