

## Rediscovery of *Musa splendida* A. Chevalier and description of two new species (*Musa viridis* and *Musa lutea*)

An article by Ramon Valmayor, Le Dinh Danh and Markku Hakkinen published in the March 2004 issue of the Philippine Agricultural Scientist (Vol. 87(1):110-118) illustrates the distinguishing characteristics of the newly rediscovered *Musa splendida* and two recently described *Musa* species from Vietnam.

*Musa splendida*, known in Vietnam as 'Chuoï gai', is a very rare species of wild banana that was drifting toward oblivion. Cheesman, who revised the classification of bananas, did not include its description in his monumental series "Critical Notes on Species". Simmonds doubted its status as a valid species and Champion associated it with *Musa sanguinea* and *Musa laterita*. The leading banana taxonomists of the world seemed were prepared to relegate *M. splendida* as *species ignota*.

A comprehensive report on the *Musa* germplasm resources of Vietnam listed banana cultivars, ornamental species and wild relatives but never mentioned *M. splendida*. An illustrated flora of Vietnam showed drawings of indigenous Musaceae, but *M. splendida* was not included. However, some elderly people in Vietnam maintained that 'Chuoï gai' existed between Lao Cai and Sa Pa. Inge Van den Bergh, currently an expert associate at the INIBAP regional office in the Philippines, surveyed the original

home of *M. splendida* and discovered large populations still thriving in the Red River Valley, near Lao Cai. The suspicion that *M. splendida* was a mere synonym of either *M. sanguinea* or *M. laterita* was dismissed with the demonstration of their distinguishing characters.

Recent characterization studies of *Musa* accessions at the Phu Ho Fruit Research Center in Vietnam describe two new species, *Musa viridis* and *Musa lutea*. The former is known locally as 'Chuoï rung hoa sen' and the latter as 'Chuoï rung hoa do'. The word Chuoï, meaning banana, is part of the actual name which is often descriptive. 'Chuoï rung' means jungle banana. 'Chuoï rung hoa sen' means jungle banana with lotus colored flower and 'Chuoï rung hoa do' means jungle banana with red flower.

The article also presents a diagnostic characterization of *M. viridis* and *M. lutea* to differentiate them from *Musa balbisiana*, *Musa acuminata* and *Musa itinerans* and local species such as *M. sanguinea*, *M. splendida* and *M. laterita*. Finally, *M. viridis* and *M. lutea* are differentiated from each other by the color of their fruits and male buds. The Latin terms *viridis* and *lutea* were selected to highlight the difference in colour of the immature fruits, which are silvery green in *M. viridis* and yellow in *M. lutea*.

## Presence of banana bunchy top virus in Angola

Banana bunchy top disease, caused by the Banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), is one of the most serious diseases affecting banana worldwide (Dale 1987). Symptoms include dark green spots along the leaf veins, especially the midrib and petiole, upright leaves with wavy margins, stunted growth and leaves more erect than normal, giving the plant a rosetted, or 'bunchy top', appearance (Robinson 1996, Jones 2000).

Recently, symptoms of bunchy top were observed in the fields of small-scale farmers in Mabuia (48 masl; S09°01', E013°41') and Boa Esperanca (52 masl; S08°57', E013°40') in Bengo Province, South of Luanda, in Angola. The disease was found on plantains (False horn) and the Cavendish cultivar 'Poyo'. It is known that cultivars in the Cavendish subgroup are highly susceptible to bunchy top (Thomas and Iskra-Carwana 2000). This

is the first report of the disease in Angola. Countries in Africa where BBTV has been reported include Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Egypt, Gabon, Malawi and Rwanda (Thomas and Iskra-Caruana 2000). Angola and the DRC share common borders and it is likely that infected planting materials were exchanged. BBTV is transmitted through conventional planting material such as corms, corm pieces that have a growing point and suckers. The vector of BBTV is the banana aphid.

Destroying the infected material is the main way of controlling the disease and the method advocated in Angola.

## References

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## Containing banana xanthomonas wilt

A workshop on "Developing a coherent regional response to the banana xanthomonas wilt epidemic in East and Central Africa", was held in Kampala, Uganda, on 14-18 February 2005. Organized with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP), it brought together regional and national stakeholders from Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, as well as international specialists.

The participants considered priority needs for research, outreach and policy activities to address this regional threat and identified and agreed on the following key issues for short- to medium-term action.

- In advance of the epidemic: to track its spread and prepare for its arrival.
- At the advancing disease front: to slow its advance and mitigate its impact.
- In areas where the disease had become established: to rebuild production systems and improve livelihoods.

- Throughout the region: to coordinate and monitor efforts, exchange information and facilitate policy dialogue.
- The technical core of the disease management campaign, which needs to be developed and implemented using farmer participatory approaches, will involve:
- Debudding (removal of male bud) and field sanitation, reinforced by:
  - statutory measures at national and local levels to slow the spread of disease (quarantine regulations) and containment and control measures (by-laws);
  - awareness raising efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels, directed towards decision-makers and the general public, in order to mobilize the necessary resources and ensure support for the campaign;
  - improved 'seed' systems for supplying clean, high quality planting material; and
  - improved agronomic practices to increase productivity and sustainability, combined with the dissemination of utilization options to improve livelihoods.