Legumes are a critical component of global food and feed systems and are particularly important in the tropics where protein energy malnutrition is associated with millions of deaths each year. Legumes are attractive as a food security and environment-friendly crop because of their symbiotic relationship with soil microbes to fix atmospheric nitrogen, thereby decreasing the reliance on nitrogen fertilizer inputs and leading to improved production system sustainability.

Long used as traditional food and forage, legumes can serve as a source of dietary protein, flour, vegetable oil, a component of animal diets, a source of soil fertility as a green manure or intercrop, and have a myriad of industrial uses. However, many important legumes are not well adapted to tropical environments, and many other tropical legumes as so low yielding that they do not compete well in production priority with higher-yielding grain crops.

To help raise legume production and uses in the tropics, the Tropical Legume Community of ASA provides a forum for advancing and sharing research on all aspects of tropical legumes including breeding, germplasm adaptation, agronomic production, nutrition, and smallholder access to legume seed. This community will assist in bringing together both U.S. and international membership.

Membership

Know Your Community: Tropical Legumes

by Kerry Clark

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Above: A doubled up legume technology with pigeonpea (Cajanus cajan) as an over story crop and peanut (Arachis hypogaea) as the understory. On-farm experiments are under way in Malawi evaluating the competition, impact on resources, and production of fuel wood, fodder, and nutritious food products.

Photo by Sieg Snapp.

Top right: Perennial peanut cover crop in a banana plantation. Photo by Virupax Baligar.

Middle right: Soybean farming in Nigeria. Photo by Akinwale Akinsitan.

Bottom right: Soybean production in Ghana. Photo by Dennis Thompson.

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