

TUNISIA
HERBAL AND MEDICINAL PLANTS PROJECT (HMPP)

Trip Report
24-31 August 2003

1. A mission, comprising Msrs. Hoceine Khatteli, Director General of the *Institut des Régions Arides* (IRA) Mohamed Neffati, HMPP Manager and Director of Research and Training at IRA, and Scott Christiansen, International Program Leader, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), visited the USDA-ARS Natural Products Utilization Research Laboratory and the University of Mississippi's National Center for Natural Products Research at the Thad Cochran Research Center in Oxford, Mississippi.
2. The Tunisian colleagues express their appreciation to the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), namely, Joyann Binsley and Lev Kuchevski (Cochran Fellowship Program), Abdelkarim Sma, (Agricultural Specialist from the U.S. Embassy in Tunis), Carol Kramer-LeBlanc, David Kincaid and Kara Laney (Research and Scientific Exchange Division); Mohamed El-Mourid (ICARDA) for arranging travel and Scott Christiansen, Steve Duke, and Ibrahim Shaqir (USDA-ARS) for preparing the program.
3. The mission met with Charles Hufford, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Programs and Professor of Pharmacognosy at the University of Mississippi and Ikhlas Khan, David Pasco and staff at the National Center for Natural Products Research with whom they discussed the potential for future partnerships and exchanges. As a first step, it was agreed that Steve Duke and Ikhlas Khan travel to Tunisia during 22-27 September 2003 to meet with relevant Tunisian stakeholders with the objective of assessing scientific infrastructure, capacity building needs and the priority chemistries that should be introduced into IRA laboratories. A desired outcome would be to identify and select one or two qualified Tunisian scientists who could carry out a 3-month study tour at the Thad Cochran Research Center cooperating with the USDA-ARS and University of Mississippi teams who are working on natural products research and development. The Tunisians expressed interest in identifying partial funding for a follow-up visit to Mississippi from the Cochran Fellowship Program. The goal is to prepare the short- and long-term training request that would enter into the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project plan.
4. The group appreciated the time allocated by Dwayne Buxton, ARS Deputy Administrator in charge of National Programs, Allen Dedrick, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems, Arlyne Meyers, Acting Director for the Office of International Research Programs and Mark Wertz, National Program Leader for Hydrology and Remote Sensing. The mission toured the Beltsville Area Research Center, paid a visit to the National Germplasm Resources Lab (hosted by Ned Garvey) and greatly enjoyed a visit to the home of Dave Kincaid and the herbal and medicinal plant garden of ex-ARS scientist James Duke in Fulton, Maryland.
5. It was agreed that the project would benefit from a decision-support modeling system such as the USDA-ARS Great Plains Framework for Agricultural Resource Management (GPFARM), a computer simulation model which allows farmers to evaluate the effects of changing management practices on the computer before they are practiced in the field. It could lead to better decisions -- economically, as well as environmentally -- about the way that herbal and medicinal plants could be introduced to help improve the farming system in southern Tunisia.
6. **Contacts and addresses:** Appendix 1.

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