

pro-heart milk product fortified with omega-3 fats, which is said to be 98% fat-free.

Ahamed Ibrahim (NIN) presented the nutritional and regulatory aspects of trans-fatty acids (TFA) unsaturated fatty acids with at least one double in the trans configuration. The major sources of TFA are partially hydrogenated vegetable oils; vanaspati in India. Vanaspati is the major cooking medium for preparation of deep-fried fast foods and bakery products. The

TFA content of vanaspati ranges from 10 to 40%.

Ibrahim stressed that consumption of TFA results in potential harm. Hence avoiding TFA consumption is necessary to refrain from the adverse effects on CHD risk. The industry has a few challenges to reduce the TFA levels in vanaspati. These include improvement in the hydrogenation process and using vegetable oils containing low PUFA such as palm oil for hydrogenation. Modern

technologies to produce zero trans fat or to fix the TFA content of vanaspati to less than 10% will prove beneficial.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks from Niranjana Shah (NSI, Mumbai Chapter).

Parul R. Sheth (*S. Ramaseshan Fellow*), E-705/706 Kalp Nagri, Vaishali Nagar, Mulund (West), Mumbai 400 080, India. e-mail: parulrsheth@gmail.com

MEETING REPORT

Restoration of coastal habitats*

A two-day conference on 'Restoration of Coastal Habitats' was held recently. This was part of the United Nation's post-tsunami response under their coastal environment programme.

C. K. Shreedharan (The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of Tamil Nadu) delivered the keynote address at the conference which was attended by scientists and agencies involved in ecological restoration and research from across the country and abroad. The deliberation identified challenges in restoration of coastal habitats, with a focus on the Coromandel coast. Learnings from practitioners and scientists into the roles of these habitats and strategies for their restoration and conservation were discussed. The participants identified four major areas of intervention:

(1) The use of technology for documenting and sharing information on coastal zone management, including information from the scientific community into working and management plans.

(2) Policy-level interventions to raise levels of awareness about the need for environmental flows along with the immediate formulation of joint proposals for completing detailed baselines of existing systems as part of a long-term monitoring framework.

(3) The need for scientific baselines and frameworks to monitor the status and health of coastal habitats.

(4) The need for strategies to bring existing fragments of coastal habitats under suitable protective frameworks.

Among the papers presented were the results of a baseline survey on the status of coastal habitats outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Department. The presentations highlighted the loss of tropical dry evergreen forests along the Coromandel coast and the failure of existing institutions to protect coastal habitats.

Andrew Baird (James Cook University) reviewed available data on the relationship between various environmental factors and the distance to the tsunami

run-up. He concluded that topography was the key variable in explaining inundation, whereas the presence of vegetation did not play a significant role. A discussion on this ensued, and it was suggested that interplanting the casuarina bio-shields with native species would be a way to enhance their ecological value.

S. Aurofilio (Pondicherry Coastal Action Network) made a compelling case for soft instead of hard options in controlling beach erosion. His presentation on coastal erosion around Puducherry illustrated the damage done to both people and coastal ecology by hard erosion control measures. Various officers from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department shared their experiences and challenges faced in restoring and conserving coastal habitats.

Presentations, selected photographs and details of the conference have been hosted on the website: <http://www.feralindia.org/?q=node/297>. The proceedings will soon be made available at the website.

R. S. Bhalla, Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning, Post Box 28, Puducherry 605 001, India. e-mail: bhalla@feralindia.org

*A report on the two-day conference on 'Restoration of Coastal Habitats' held on 20 and 21 August 2008 at Mahabalipuram and organized by the Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning, Puducherry along with the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, and the United Nations Development Programme.