Health-Related Topics

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Artemisia for malaria treatment.

Putting the treatment of malaria in the hands of the poor is a powerful way to combat this devastating and deadly disease. Danny Blank says, “I saw [this] firsthand in Mozambique, where artemisia plants were grown to provide the valuable tea for treating malaria.” EDN 95 provides a very thorough review of this remarkable plant, providing the how-to’s of getting started, obtaining seeds of the high-artemisinin cultivar, growing the plants, and making the medicinal teas.

Aflatoxin.

Aflatoxin is a toxin produced by fungi from several species of the genus Aspergillus. Aflatoxin is a serious health risk, especially in countries that do not have the means to monitor and limit exposure. Human ingestion of aflatoxin can have both chronic long-term effects and acute short-term effects. Animals are also adversely affected by aflatoxins. Crops containing high levels of aflatoxin are often deemed unsuitable for export, especially to countries with ever-stricter allowable limits. See EDN 87-1 for information, including prevention, detection and minimization of aflatoxin.

Leaf Protein Concentrate (LPC) for treatment of severe malnutrition.

How does one achieve a balanced diet with plenty of protein where animal protein sources or even peanut or other legume seeds are too expensive? Leaf protein concentrate that can be easily made from leaves of plants is an outstanding source of quality protein and vitamins. It can be made with very little cost, even from some plants whose leaves are not normally eaten by people. It is a fairly simple process. Harvest and wash fresh leaves, grind them to a pulp, press juice from the pulp, bring the juice to a near boil,separate out the curds which form in the heated juice, and press the liquid out of the curd. The solid portion of the mildflavored curd is the leaf protein concentrate (with protein amounts in the dried form around 50% or higher), which can be added to traditional recipes fresh or preserved in various forms. Leaf for Life shares a lot of experience and technical details on the technique, choice of plants, recipes, etc on its website at www.leafforlife.org/. (http://www.leafforlife.org/) See also EDN 80 and AZ 264.

Moringa high density planting for leaf powder.



Since Lowell Fuglie with Church World Service in Senegal began promoting moringa leaf powder in nutrition centers, its use has skyrocketed around the world. Moringa does very well in high density plantings (e.g. 30 cm between plants or even less), from which great quantities of leaf biomass can be continually harvested for fresh or drying purposes, both at home and on a commercial level. One of several ECHO TN's on moringa contains a great pictorial guide on the production of leaf powder.

Indoor air pollution.

The majority of people in developing countries cook over open fires. The smoke that results can lead to severe health problems. For an overview of the dangers, as well as some potential ways to reduce smoke from cooking fires, see EDN 85-1. A special workshop on cook stove design principles will be offered the day following the ECHO Agriculture Conference in December 2008.

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