

Legumes of economic importance for the Amazon region. 1. Mimosoideae¹

A.L. Mesquita^a and T.C.S. Ribeiro^b

^a Coordinator of Project - Technological University of Amazonai, Management Forest Department, Darcy Vargas Road, 1200 - 69055 Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil

^b Graduate student from Forest Course, Technological University of Amazonia

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that the plant family Leguminosae is widely distributed in the Amazon region and that it includes species of considerable potential as food, timbers, spices, medicinals, oil products, etc. According to Lewis (1989) the Leguminosae may be the most important source of plant proteins that will be needed in large quantities by the population of the world in the near future. One example of the importance of legumes in medicine is the recent discovery of castanospermin from *Castanospermum australe*. This substance has proven effective in the treatment of AIDS (Lewis 1989).

The lack of specialized literature regarding the actual or potential importance of species of Leguminosae for the local population of the Amazon region constitutes an important barrier to their proper utilization. The aim of the proposal which is outlined here is to contribute to the solution of this problem.

Da Silva *et al.* (1989) provide a preliminary list of Amazonia Leguminosae and they cited 23 genera, 288 species, 3 subspecies and 18 varieties of the Leguminosae-Mimosoideae. However no mention is made of their economic potential. Rizzini and Mos (1967) published one of the few available literature sources of information about plant species of economic importance in Brazil.

Based on the scarce literature available, which also includes Fonseca (1922), Cavalcante (1976), Da Silva *et al.* (1977), Loureiro *et al.* (1977) and Jenrich (1989), it is possible to cite the following species of the Leguminosae-Mimosoideae of actual or potential economic importance: barbatimao (*Stryphnodendron coriaceum* Benth.), inga (*Inga* spp.), angelim-pedra (*Dinizia excelsa* Ducke), cedrorana (*Cedrelinga catanaeformis* Ducke) and pracaxi (*Pentaclethra macroloba* (Willd.) Benth.).

It is here proposed to use the list published by Da Silva *et al.* (1989) as the basic reference from which to carry out an extensive herbarium and bibliographic search for information about the legume species of economic importance for Amazonia, and to start this search by looking at species belonging to the subfamily Mimosoideae.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study species of potential economic importance (e.g. food, timber, oil products, spices, medicinals, etc.) in the field, herbarium and library.

¹ Institutional Program of CNPq-UTAM.

2. To establish a database on legumes of economic importance in Amazonia.
3. To list (identify) known uses of legume species.
4. To identify legume genera to be reviewed.
5. To provide an up-dated list of Leguminosae-Mimosoideae from the Amazonia.

REFERENCES

- Cavalcante, P.B. (1976). Frutas comestíveis da Amazonia, ed. 3 (MPEG: Belem.)
- Da Silva, M.F. *et al.* (1989). As Leguminosas da Amazonia Brasileira- Lista Previa. In: Anais do XXXIX Congresso Nacional de Botanica. Vol 2,1.
- Da Silva, M.F., Lisboa, P.L. & Lisboa, R.C.L. (1977). Nomes Vulgares de Plantas Amazonicas. (INPA: Belem.)
- Fonseca, E.T. (1922). Da. Madeiras e Plantas Uteis do Brasil. (Ministerio da Agricultura: Rio de Janeiro.)
- Jenrich, H. (1989). Vegetacao Arborea e Arbustiva dos Altiplanos das Chapadas do Piaui Central. (Teresina Ministerio do Interior.)
- Lewis, G.P. (1989). Legumes of the Ilha de Maraca. (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: London.)
- Loureiro, A.A., Da Silva, M.F. & Aencar, J.C. (1977). Essencias Madeireiras da Amazonia, vol. 2. (Suframa: Belem.)
- Rizzini, C.T. & Mos, W.B. (1967). Botanica Economica Brasileira. (EPU, Ed. da Universidade de Sao Paulo: Sao Paulo.)