

# CONSERVATION AND EVALUATION OF GENETIC RESOURCES OF RUBBER

## TREE<sup>1</sup>

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The considerable genetic variability of the wild rubber trees represents an important resource for plant breeders in their attempts to select for valuable traits in cultivation. In the Brazilian Amazon -- geographical center of diversity for the genus Hevea -- innumerable local populations of rubber trees with their invaluable genetic potential are, however, now being cut down or flooded as a consequence of agricultural expansion and the construction of huge hydropower dams. Furthermore, plant breeders have historically preserved only those stocks of immediate interest to their traditional improvement goals while other clones and seedlings considered undesirable, yet collected at great expense, have been abandoned. In view of these facts, an Active Germplasm Bank (AGB) has been created by EMBRAPA to serve Brazil's genetic improvement program by providing the largest possible range of genetic variability. In this work the author analyses the importance of creating this AGB and describes methodologies for collection, preservation, evaluation, documentation and utilization of these genetic resources.

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