

Tropical News

"Newsletter for
FTZ friends"

December 2024

**FIND IN THIS ISSUE NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR FURTHER COOPERATION WITH THE FACULTY**

Welcome

Dear students, colleagues, alumni, and FTZ friends!

Time flies, and so you are now reading the last issue of our Tropical News of 2024. Even though I hoped in the beginning of the year that this year would be more peaceful, the situation has hardly improved and with the – well not so – new president-elect in the USA it doesn't look as if the global peace situation will improve in the near future. Sigh (yet again).

However, faithful to our vision and mission, and commitments, our faculty continues to research on a wide variety of subjects, and also to base its teaching on often cutting-edge research results. A number of these received prizes, whereas also our contribution to international networking and teaching activities got rewarded as you will read further into the text. If you never heard of pangolins, this is your moment to try and dig into these fascinating species; at one moment, they were suspected of transmitting the Covid-19 virus, as a panel of SARS-CoV-2-related coronaviruses was indeed identified in them. The faculty is actively promoting internationalization, and frequently receives foreign delegations, but also oftentimes links up abroad with research institutes, development projects, and universities. We are proud that so many southern partners want to call us in for collaborative efforts.

I hope you will find this issue an interesting one, and – if you are interested – we could discuss the content over a glass or cup of coffee in our bistro on the ground floor in our faculty building! See you there?!

PROF. DR. IR. PATRICK VAN DAMME

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Alumni Club SIGN IN

- Get up-to-date information on what's going on in your alma mater.
- Find a job, internship or personal mentor.
- Connect not only with CZU alumni and students but also with employers, employees, and supporters of the university (CZU).

Our Successes

Vice Dean Petra Chaloupková Receives ICA Excellence Award

Ing. Petra Chaloupková, Ph.D., dr. h. c., Vice Dean for International Relations at FTZ, has been awarded the prestigious ICA Excellence Award in the Networking category. Presented by the Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA), the award recognizes her outstanding contributions to international networking. The ICA, representing over 70 universities focused on life sciences, celebrates cooperation across agriculture, biotechnology, and related fields. Petra Chaloupková's efforts to advance the ICA network and her innovative approach to international collaboration were key to her recognition.

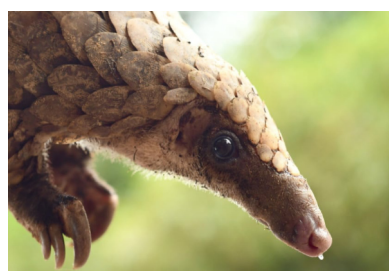
We congratulate Petra Chaloupková on this honor and look forward to her continued contributions to global networking.



SDGs 2024 Awards

At the SDGs 2024 Awards on October 3, 2024, the first prize in the Development Cooperation, Peace, and Partnerships category was awarded to the project Using Mango Pits for Sustainable Energy and Valuable Oils. The first prize in the Development Cooperation, Peace and Partnership category went to Using Mango Pips as a Source of Sustainable Energy and Valuable Oils. This project, coordinated by Mendel University in Brno, also involved representatives of FTZ. Jan Staš from the BioResources & Technology Division, BioEnviro Research Team, led by Assoc. Ing. Tatiana Alexiou Ivanová, prof. h. c., and students from this team Ing. Ksenia Paramonova and Ing. Musa Bappah.

The project focuses on transforming mango pits, a byproduct of Cambodia's large mango production, into fuel briquettes. These briquettes have proven to be an effective, environmentally friendly alternative to firewood, reducing waste and deforestation. The project has already helped local businesses reduce fuel consumption and mitigate environmental impact. We congratulate the team on this significant achievement and thank the Association for Social Responsibility for this recognition.



CZU Discovers a New Genetic Lineage of Pangolins in Congo

A research team from the CZU Prague, led by Barbora Černá Bolfíková from FTZ, has uncovered a unique genetic lineage of the white-bellied pangolin. This significant discovery supports efforts to combat the illegal trade of scales from these endangered animals and provides new insights into their movement across geographical barriers, such as rivers, as well as their adaptation in a changing climate.

The study was published in the journal Scientific Reports.

Book Launch: "Animals in the Age of Humans" Features Research by Barbora Černá Bolfíková on Hedgehogs and Antibiotic Resistance



October 8, 2024, the book "Animals in the Age of Humans" was launched in Prague. Authored by Lenka Vrtíšková Nejezchlebová, it features interviews with leading scientists, including Mgr. Barbora Černá Bolfíková, Ph.D., from FTZ. Bára Černá Bolfíková discusses her research on antibiotic resistance in hedgehogs, revealing how certain resistant bacteria naturally develop in their spines, without human interference.



The book explores human-animal interactions, from whales to rats, highlighting the impact of human activity on the animal world. It is a valuable read for both experts and the general public. Don't miss Bára Černá Bolfíková's interview on hedgehogs and their role in scientific studies.

CZU Ranked Among the Top Czech Universities by Times Higher Education

The Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) has been ranked as the third-best public university in the Czech Republic according to the prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) 2025 World University Rankings. Among the top 1,000 universities globally, only three Czech institutions were included: Masaryk University in second place and Charles University in first place. The THE rankings evaluate universities across five key areas: Teaching, Research Environment, Research Quality, Industry Collaboration, and Internationalization. This significant achievement highlights the growing quality of education, research, and international engagement at CZU, reflecting the dedicated efforts of its academic community and students.

Get Ready for the 2025 Society for Ethnobotany Conference in Prague!

In June 2025, Prague will become the center of international ethnobotanical activity as the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences at the Czech University of Life Sciences hosts the annual Society for Ethnobotany (SEB) meeting.

This prestigious event, held from June 7-12, 2025, will attract experts and students from around the world to share scientific knowledge and discuss key topics in ethnobotany.

Call for Workshop Proposals



As part of the event, we invite professionals to submit an educational workshop for the 2025 Society for Ethnobotany meeting. Suggested topics are provided but all workshop ideas linked to the teaching and practice of ethnobotany will be considered. Workshops are informal, interactive gatherings of people of similar interests. We welcome creative workshop formats. Each workshop proposal should specify duration and breaks as necessary.

To learn more details about submitting a workshop proposal, click [here](#).

Deadline to submit a proposal is February 1, 2024.

International Cooperation

Successful ADVALUE Project Meeting at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

On October 7-8, 2024, the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague hosted a productive meeting of Advalue project partners from Europe and Africa. The two-day event focused on advancing PhD modules and promoting knowledge sharing in sustainable agricultural value chains. The first day featured opening remarks from Dr. Petra Chaloupková (FTZ) and Prof. Dr. Michal Lošťák (CZU), with Dr. Angelika Thomas (HfWU) providing project updates.



Discussions centered on topics like agricultural research, transdisciplinary approaches, and rangeland management, with insights from Dr. Anna Maňourová (SLU) and partners from DITSL and the University of Nairobi. Day two addressed stakeholder engagement, quality assurance, and PR strategies. Representatives from Uganda and Kenya outlined plans for connecting with local stakeholders, and the program concluded with a summary of key outcomes. The Advalue project, funded by Erasmus+, links universities in Kenya, Uganda, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Sweden, with this meeting advancing its objectives in capacity building and PhD module development.

Guest Lecture Series on Agricultural Value Chains

The Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences hosted also guest lectures by scholars from Kenya, Uganda, and CZU, offering students diverse insights into African agricultural value chains. Topics included indigenous vegetable value chains in Uganda (Dr. Martin Mutambuka), value addition in agriculture (Dr. Elisha Otieno), postharvest issues (Prof. Cecilia Onyango), and ethical certifications for sustainability (Dr. Jiří Hejkrlik).

This series, part of the EU-funded ADVALUE project, promoted international knowledge sharing and capacity building in sustainable agriculture, fostering discussions on ethics and sustainability in value chains.

Roundtable Discussion on Rural Women in Agriculture

On October 15, 2024, in celebration of the International Day of Rural Women, a Roundtable Discussion was held at the Czech University of Life Sciences (CZU). Organized by AGRIGEP and ADVALUE, the event focused on the vital role of rural women in global food production and sustainable agriculture.



The event featured an opening speech by Vice-Rector Prof. Ing. Eva Vlková, Ph.D., followed by presentations on various projects including Fem2Forest, BETTER Life, DEMETRA, and AGRIGEP. The main roundtable discussion, "IDRW 2025: Rural Women Cultivating Good Food for All", brought together experts from the University of Bangui, Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, the University of Nairobi, and Pwani University, Kenya. The discussion highlighted rural women's contributions to agriculture, food security, and sustainability worldwide.

188th EAAE Seminar on Agri-Food Chains and Climate Change

The 188th EAAE Seminar, organized by the European Association of Agricultural Economists and the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania, focused on "Reorienting Agri-Food Chains to Hinder Climate Change and Food Security Threats." Held in Chania, Greece, on September 12-13, 2024, the event gathered experts to discuss key challenges in agriculture, climate change, and food security. After an initial reception, the seminar opened with remarks by Baourakis George (CIHEAM-MAICh), José María Gil (EAAE), and Frida Krifca (CIHEAM). The keynote by Christian Schöb (University Rey Juan Carlos) addressed the role of biodiversity in sustainable agriculture. The seminar included sessions on sustainable food systems, chaired by Assoc. prof. Miroslava Bavorova, who presented on food security dynamics in Iraq. Petra Chaloupkova, Ph.D., discussed sustainable tropical fruit supply chains in Central Europe, while Tereza Pilarova, Ph.D., presented a poster on drought challenges for small farmers in Tajikistan.

Visit from National University of Ucayali, Peru

On October 8-9, 2024, a delegation from Peru's National University of Ucayali (UNU) visited the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) to strengthen ongoing collaboration. Since 2003, CZU and UNU have cooperated on various projects, formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding.



Led by UNU Rector Dr. Edgardo Leoncio Braul Gomero, the delegation met with CZU Rector Prof. Petr Sklenička and key representatives from the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTZ), including Vice-Dean for International Relations Petra Chaloupková, Ph.D., Vice-Rector for Strategy Prof. Jan Banout, cooperation coordinator Prof. Bohdan Lojka, Vice-Dean for Research Assoc. Prof. Hynek Roubík, and colleagues Prof. Eloy Fernández Cusimamani and Assoc. Prof. Zbyněk Polesný. The Peruvian guests toured the CZU campus, FTZ's labs, and the university brewery, discussing new opportunities for student and faculty exchanges.



FTZ Hosted Delegates from the University of Bangui, Central African Republic

From October 2nd to 15th, 2024, FTZ had the honor of welcoming esteemed guests from the University of Bangui, Central African Republic. Dr. Lucie Aba-Toumnou, Dean of the Faculty of Science, and her colleague, Dr. Solange Makatia-Wango, visited the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague as part of a short-term Erasmus+ stay. The main objective of their visit was to deepen cooperation between the two universities and explore collaborative research initiatives that contribute to the development of science, education, and higher education management in CAR.

The visit's program was organized by Assoc. Prof. Karolína Brandlová, Ph.D. During their stay, the scientists from the Central African Republic participated in key activities such as the presentation of the Advalue project, which focuses on sustainable development in Africa, and a roundtable discussion in celebration of the International Day of Rural Women. They also presented their research during a seminar hosted by the Wild Ecology Lab, which focuses on the conservation and research of large mammals.

Assoc. Prof. Miroslava Bavorová as a speaker at the international conference "Western Balkans Economies in the Context of EU Integration"

Assoc. Prof. Miroslava Bavorova, the Head of department of Economics and Development, was invited as a speaker at an internacionála conference "Western Balkans economies in the context of EU integration - implications for good governance and competitiveness" which took place in Tirana on 24-25 October. Assoc. Prof. Bavorova shared experiences and results of studies on climate change adaptation by smallholder farmers in different countries of the global south. One of the aims of the conference was to deepen cooperation with economists from the Western Balkans and to develop strategies for further cooperation.

Experts from Senegal Visiting FTZ

In October this year, the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences welcomed two experts from Université de Thiès in Senegal – Mallé Gueye and Mohamed Cissé. Their visit was part of a short-term Erasmus+ mobility program aimed at strengthening research collaboration and identifying new areas of mutual interest. The collaboration between FTZ and Université de Thiès already has strong foundations. Earlier this year, assoc.prof. Karolína Brandlová and prof. Pavla Hejčmanová visited the Senegalese university to teach a block of courses focused on *Animal Behaviour*. Now, the visit of the Senegalese experts brings a fresh impetus to the partnership, focusing primarily on research of ungulates and large mammals in local national parks. Another goal is to enhance activities involving local students. It is planned that Senegalese students will come to FTZ in the upcoming summer semester, with joint projects set to continue for at least the next three years. We look forward to the next successful steps in this international collaboration!

Ecuadorian Delegation Visits the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences



In the last week of June, the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTZ) welcomed a delegation from Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Ecuador, as part of ongoing efforts to foster international collaboration. During the visit, representatives from ESPOCH, the Czech University of

Life Sciences Prague (CZU), and FTZ signed a significant cooperation agreement tied to the research project: "Diversity and Ethnomycology of Macroscopic Fungi (Macromycetes) in the Páramo and Tropical Montane Forest Ecosystems of Sangay National Park." The agreement was signed by Dr. Byron Vaca, Rector of ESPOCH, and Prof. Petr Sklenička, Rector of CZU. The project will be coordinated by Dr. Juan Carlos Carrasco, Professor at the Faculty of Natural Resources, ESPOCH, and Dr. Zbyněk Polesný, from the Department of Crop Science and Agroforestry, FTZ. This collaboration marks a milestone in strengthening scientific cooperation between the two institutions, facilitating the involvement of CZU researchers in project activities and fostering the exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise on an international scale.

AGRIGEP Lecture on Gender Equality by Dr. Jana Mazancová during Erasmus BIP

As part of the ERASMUS BIP Sustainable Future Educator programme at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, AGRIGEP contributed a compelling lecture on the integration of Gender Equality for Sustainability in Teaching. Delivered by Dr. Jana Mazancová on 10 September 2024, the session explored the pivotal role of gender equality in achieving sustainable education. Participants engaged in in-depth discussions about the importance of addressing SDG 5: Gender Equality and the necessity of implementing practical strategies to foster gender equity in both educational and work environments. Dr. Mazancová also delved into the complexities of intersectionality, highlighting how overlapping social identities influence gender issues and the importance of addressing these intersections to promote inclusivity and fairness.



The lecture was a crucial element of a larger international programme, bringing together students from the Netherlands, Finland, Bulgaria, and Slovenia, all working collaboratively toward a shared vision of a sustainable future. Held from 9 to 14 September 2024, the event fostered a deep sense of international cooperation and shared responsibility in promoting sustainability through education. Stay tuned for more updates from this ongoing collaborative effort!

Strengthening Agricultural Education in Moldova with FTZ Support

From October 31 to November 2, the Technical University of Moldova celebrated the 50th anniversary of its Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. As part of this event, Assoc. Prof. Tatiana Alexiuc Ivanova, Ph.D., represented the Czech development project "Modernization and Raising the Prestige of Higher Agricultural Education in Moldova" (No. 24-PKV-004), aimed at enhancing Moldova's agricultural education through CZECH AID funding.



Distinguished guests included Moldovan government officials and Barbora Žáčková from the Czech Embassy in Chişinău, underscoring the importance of international collaboration. A veterinary monitor was also donated to TUM as part of the project, equipping Moldovan students with advanced technology and reinforcing FTZ's commitment to educational advancement and sustainable development in the region.

EAZA 2024 Annual Conference – A Global Call for Conservation Action

In mid-October, zoo and aquarium professionals from around the world came together in Leipzig, Germany, for the EAZA 2024 Annual Conference. Representing the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTZ), Jana Mazancová and Karolína Brandlová joined this prestigious gathering, hosted by the renowned Zoo Leipzig. The conference addressed urgent global challenges, including biodiversity loss, climate change, and species conservation. Inspiring presentations by Species360 highlighted cutting-edge advancements in ZIMS and conservation science, sparking engaging discussions about innovative approaches to protecting wildlife and their habitats. The event also provided opportunities for networking and fostering collaborations that are crucial for driving meaningful conservation action.

Participants were treated to immersive experiences at Zoo Leipzig, exploring its themed animal habitats and the newly renovated aquarium, which showcased the beauty and importance of aquatic biodiversity. This conference underscored the collective commitment to a sustainable and biodiverse future.

Celebrating Collaboration and Success in Mostar

On December 4, 2024, our faculty had the privilege of participating in the 30th anniversary celebration of the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Technology, University of Mostar. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Prof. Ing. Jan Banout, Ph.D., and Ing. Iva Kučerová, Ph.D., who were honored for their exceptional contributions and dedication to international collaborations between the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague and the University of Mostar. These partnerships not only enhance scientific knowledge and expertise but also inspire and support future generations of students and researchers.





Vermicomposting Workshop at European Sustainable Development Week

As part of European Sustainable Development Week, BRT members Ing. Jan Staš and Ing. Marek Jelínek hosted an interactive vermicomposting workshop at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, CZU Prague.

Participants learned how to set up and manage vermicompost systems, a sustainable way to recycle organic waste into nutrient-rich compost using worms. The session included hands-on demonstrations, troubleshooting tips, and an introduction to BRT's organic fertilizer, BRTea, soon available at the CZU store.

This workshop is part of CZU's commitment to promoting sustainability and empowering communities to take eco-friendly action.

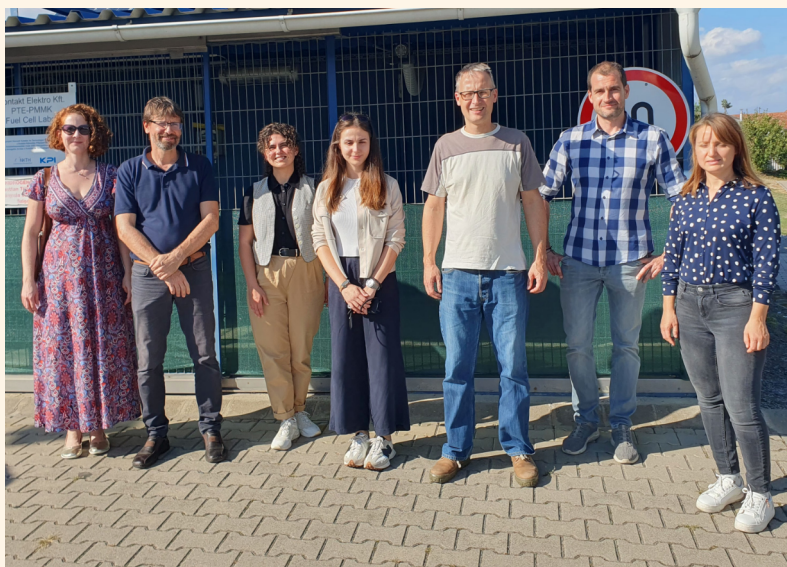
UNICOM Study Visit: Strengthening University-Community Cooperation

From October 1–4, 2024, the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) hosted representatives from universities participating in the ERASMUS+ KA2 CBHE project "Universities Communities: Strengthening Cooperation" (UNICOM N.101083077).

The study visit facilitated an exchange of experiences on implementing the third mission of universities and their role as catalysts for positive societal change. Participants explored strategies and initiatives that have enabled CZU to significantly impact local communities, discussing successes, challenges, and sustainable approaches to university-community collaboration.

Advancing Research Collaboration for Sustainable Solutions with ITB

The Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTZ) recently had the honor of hosting Prof. Tjandra Setiadi from the Department of Chemical Engineering of Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). The purpose of this visit was to strengthen the bonds of friendship and explore opportunities for collaboration with the BioResources and Technology Division (BRT) team. During the discussions, several key areas of cooperation emerged, the application of bioprocess engineering in tackling industrial wastewater challenges, the production of biopolymers and lignocellulosic enzymes, and the development of bio-based products. This collaboration promises to open new doors for joint research and innovative solutions in sustainable technologies.



H2SCALE Project: Building the Future of Hydrogen Energy

The H2SCALE project officially launched with a kick-off meeting hosted by the University of Pécs, Hungary. Partners from the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovenia, and Hungary gathered to set a collaborative foundation for advancing hydrogen technologies, renewable energy systems, and sustainable mobility solutions. Discussions focused on the project's strategic goals, including work packages, timelines, and stakeholder engagement strategies. A highlight was the visit to Kontakt-Elektro, a Hungarian leader in fuel cell technologies, providing valuable insights into practical hydrogen applications. This event marks a significant step toward establishing hydrogen ecosystems and supporting sustainable development across Europe.

Academic Issues / Alumni



Election of the Dean of the FTZ

The election of the Dean of the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences will take place on **9th January 2025**.

On 15th October 2024, the proposals of candidates for the position of Dean of FTZ CZU Prague for the term 2025–2029 were submitted. Eight candidates were proposed, of which two accepted their candidacies and meet the conditions for the position.

Candidates for the position of Dean of FTZ (in alphabetical order):

- Ing. Petra Chaloupková, Ph.D., dr. h. c.
- Assoc. Prof. Ing. Hynek Roubík, Ph.D.

The candidates' CVs and their visions for the direction of FTZ are available on [this page](#) (section Documents of the FTZ AS → Election of the Dean of FTZ 2024) on the FTZ's official notice board, or on the board on the ground floor next to the Study Department.

Congratulations

News from Scientific Board - Ceremonial meeting of the Scientific Board of CZU awarded students and teachers of FTZ

Congratulations to our talented students and faculty members:

- **Rohit Bharati** received the prestigious Professor Stoklasa Award
- **Jignesh Italiya** was honored with the Ministry of Agriculture Award for his research, and **Hidayatul Fitri** won the Rector's Award for the best doctoral publications.



Prof. Jan Šobotník, Ing. Iva Bernáthová, Mgr. Barbora Černá Bolfíková, Assoc. Prof. Karolína Brandlová, and Prof. Pavla Hejzmanová received the Rector's Award for outstanding publications listed in the Nature Index.



Josef Hlávka Award 2024 – Winner from the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences

We are proud to announce that the prestigious **Josef Hlávka Award 2024** has been awarded to our graduate of the doctoral program Tropical Agrobiology and Bioresource Management, **Ing. BSc. Abubakar Sadiq Musa, Ph.D.**



The Josef Hlávka Award, presented annually by the Foundation of Josef, Marie, and Zdenka Hlávka, recognizes talented students, graduates, and young researchers for their exceptional skills and creative contributions in their fields. Dr. Abubakar Sadiq Musa was nominated for his outstanding contribution to scientific research and academic endeavors.



The International Doctoral Award of the Italian Botanical Society for 2024 for Naji Sulaiman

Dr. Naji Sulaiman, a former key member of TRIBE lab, won the International Doctoral Award of the Italian Botanical Society for 2024. **The prestigious award recognizes outstanding PhD theses** defended between 2022 and 2024 on topics related to General Botany, Systematic Botany, Environmental and Applied Botany, and Pharmaceutical Botany. Naji's thesis, elaborated during his doctoral research in TRIBE Lab, focused on multiple aspects (botanical, food-related, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and sustainable) of wild plant use during the conflict in Syria, and it was successfully defended in March 2023. Naji is currently working as an assistant professor of Environmental and Applied Botany at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, Italy.



Nishanth Gurav Selected as a Society for Ethnobotany Student Ambassador

Nishanth Gurav, a 3rd-year Ph.D. candidate at the Tropical Botany and Ethnobiology Lab (TRIBE), FTZ, has been selected as a Student Ambassador and a member of the student committee of the prestigious Society for Ethnobotany (SEB).

Nishanth hails from India, and his current research focuses on sustainable practices and the folk taxonomy of wild edible plants used by the Gond tribal communities in the Bastar region of India. He has extensive experience working with local communities, having developed People's Biodiversity Registers (PBR) for over 70 villages in the states of Karnataka and Chhattisgarh. As a member of the SEB student committee (serving from June 2024 to June 2026), Nishanth will be involved in managing the committee's social media pages and student blog, as well as supporting the organization of student events and initiatives related to ethnobotanical research.



Doc. Ing. Vladimír Krepl, CSc., awarded as the best teacher of FTZ for the academic year 2023/2024

The Faculty of Tropical Agriculture (FTZ) of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague is proud to announce that the award for the best educator of the academic year 2023/2024 has been awarded to doc. Ing. Vladimír Krepl, CSc.

Assoc. Krepl began his teaching career at the Czech University of Agriculture in 1984 at the then Faculty of Mechanization (now the Faculty of Technology). Since 1986 he has been teaching the course Mechanization of Agriculture at the Institute of Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (ITSZ), which has now been transformed into the Faculty of Tropical Agriculture. He further developed his professional and teaching career after 1991, when he moved to ITSZ, where he became the supervisor of the course Mechanization of Agriculture in the Tropics and Subtropics.

Two New Associate Professors at FTZ!

We are proud to announce that Ing. Johana Rondevaldová, Ph.D., and Ing. Vladimír Verner, Ph.D., have successfully completed their habilitation proceedings and earned the title of Associate Professor at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences.

Dr. Rondevaldová's research focuses on tropical fruits and vegetables as sources of biologically active compounds and micronutrients, while Dr. Verner explores agrobiodiversity-sensitive value chains and strategies for poverty alleviation.

Congratulations to both on this significant achievement, and we look forward to their continued contributions to science and education at FTZ!

Events at the FTZ

Beauty of the West African Savannah – Exhibition at the FTZ Entrance Hall



The Unique exhibition at FTZ lobby, **Beauty of the West African Savannah**, showcased the diversity of West African nature through **7x7 family photography**. This exhibition highlighted the importance of protecting endangered species such as **the Western Giant eland**, the largest antelope in the world. The opening of the exhibition was supported by Mgr. Lenka Pokorná, former Czech Ambassador to Senegal, and Mgr. Václav Prášil from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

MCYR 2024: Fostering Resilience and Innovation Among Early-Career Researchers

The 5th International Multidisciplinary Conference for Young Researchers (MCYR) 2024, held at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, CZU Prague, brought together young researchers from over 20 countries and 55 institutions. With around 100 registered participants and 68 presentations offered in a hybrid format, the event centred on the theme "Resilience in the Face of Global Challenges," creating a platform for young and early-career researchers to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration and discussion. Organized by the BioResources and Technology Division, MCYR allowed participants to connect with peers and mentors, share research, and gain valuable experience presenting to an international audience. The conference emphasized networking opportunities to help early-career scientists advance in their fields. Looking forward to MCYR 2025!

Hajra Munir Receives Professor Vlček Scholarship

We are delighted to announce that Hajra Munir, a PhD student at FTZ originally from Pakistan, has been awarded the prestigious Professor Vlček Scholarship. This honor recognizes her outstanding contributions to promoting the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) locally and internationally.



Hajra's work focuses on conserving the critically endangered Visayan Spotted Deer. She is a valued member of the Animal Physiology and Behaviour Research Team and also supports international collaborations and excels as a Student Ambassador.

We congratulate Hajra on this well-deserved recognition of her exceptional achievements!

News from the FTZ Botanical Garden: Exhibitions, Expeditions, and Educational Innovations

The FTZ Botanical Garden team has been buzzing with activity, from organizing vibrant exhibitions to international expeditions and creating educational content. Here's a quick look at their recent endeavors:

10th Annual Chilli Pepper Exhibition

For the first five days of October, the FTZ Botanical Garden showcased its fiery jewels during the 10th Annual Chilli Pepper Exhibition. This long-standing tradition highlights the diverse and impressive collection of chilli peppers, which are among the garden's prized assets.

Exploration of the Azores



Representatives of the FTZ Botanical Garden recently participated in an Erasmus+ expedition to the Azores. Visiting the stunning islands of Faial and Pico, they delved into the unique flora of the region, built connections with the local botanical garden, and enriched their expertise in plant conservation and management.

New Educational Videos: A Gateway to Plant Knowledge

As part of the National Recovery Plan, the FTZ Botanical Garden has produced a series of five educational videos. These thematic videos introduce the garden's exceptional collections, such as the Citrus Collection, Subtropical and Tropical Fruits, and Medicinal and Crop Plants. While primarily designed for FTZ students, the videos offer valuable insights and inspiration for the general public, bringing the fascinating world of plants closer to everyone.

Student Activities

The semester kicked off with the Student Ambassadors playing a key role in welcoming new students and supporting Faculty Day, alongside Be Fair, hosting an engaging pub quiz that encouraged meaningful interactions within the faculty, including students and academic staff. The semester marked a significant milestone for the student ambassadors as they debuted at Student Organizations Day. The ambassadors showcased their initiatives for the first time since their inception, introducing themselves to the broader student community with enthusiasm and purpose. In recognition of the outstanding contributions, one of our ambassadors, Hajra Munir, was honored with the prestigious Prof. Vlček Award, an achievement that also inspired the development of new activities for Student Ambassadors and creating valuable networking opportunities for students. Ambassadors also supported the New Students Film Club by presenting the first film on sustainability, agriculture, and our planet, sparking fresh discussions. To close the semester on a high note, the ambassadors launched a 10-day swap initiative to promote sustainability - a cause they passionately advocate for.

Welcome Course for New International Students Offers Practical Tips and Support

On September 10, 2024, the online welcome course "Multicultural Environment and Study in the Czech Republic" was held, organized by the International Relations Office and Student Ambassadors team at the FTZ. The course provided new international students with practical advice on living and studying in the Czech Republic, introduced them to cultural differences, and offered opportunities to connect with fellow students and faculty members.

The course was opened by Vice-Dean Petra Chaloupková, who warmly welcomed all new students and emphasized the importance of supporting a multicultural environment at FTZ. The Student Ambassadors shared helpful tips on how to manage the first steps in the Czech Republic, from housing and studying to everyday life.

Student Organizations Day

On October 22nd, CZU hosted Student Organizations Day, bringing together diverse student groups to showcase their activities and engage with the university community. The event, held between the Aula Ceremony Hall and the Rectorate, encouraged students to find their perfect fit among the many associations on campus. Representing FTZ, **Student Ambassadors** and **BeFair** highlighted their activities, fostering connections and inspiring others to get involved in meaningful initiatives.

Erasmus+ Coffee

Held on November 28 at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, attracted students interested in exploring opportunities for studying or interning abroad. The event focused on presenting the possibilities of the Erasmus+ program, including International Credit Mobility (ICM), which facilitates exchanges with countries outside the European Union. The first part of the program showcased the various opportunities offered by Erasmus+, ranging from short-term internships to semester-long stays at partner universities. Participants gained valuable insights into program requirements, application procedures, and practical tips for preparing to study abroad. A highlight of this session was the presentation by an FTZ student who shared her experiences from both a study exchange and an internship abroad. Her story inspired many attendees to seriously consider pursuing their own international adventures. The second part of the event was dedicated to meeting international students who are currently studying at CZU through the Erasmus+ ICM program. Students from **South Africa, Algeria, Thailand, and Niger** shared their inspiring stories about how international mobility opened new doors, broadened their horizons, and enabled them to build friendships across cultures. Their experiences offered a practical perspective on studying abroad, including managing cultural differences and overcoming language challenges. Details [here](#).

First Screening of the New Students Film Club

On December 9, 2024, the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences hosted the inaugural session of the New Students Film Club, featuring the gripping documentary Paved Paradise. The film sparked lively discussions on sustainability, biodiversity, and the surprising challenges of organic farming.

With its thought-provoking insights, the event brought together students passionate about sustainability and eager to explore new perspectives. Stay tuned for more screenings and join the conversation on the pressing issues facing our planet!

Christmas Swap at FTZ

From December 9 to 19, 2024, the Christmas Swap event took place at FTZ. Participants could bring clothes, books, accessories, toys, and other useful items to exchange for new treasures. The event was held in the lobby of FTZ, offering everyone the chance to find something they liked or perhaps discover the perfect Christmas gift. It was a great opportunity to share, recycle, and spread holiday cheer.

BeFair Supports the 10th Annual "Výstava na stromech"

From October 5–12, 2024, the **10th Annual Výstava na stromech** took place across the Czech Republic as part of the Week for Decent Work. This national exhibition series raises awareness about the importance of fair working conditions and highlights the lives of farmers around the world.

This year's theme focused on the Fairtrade system, showcasing its impact on communities globally. The FTZ student organization BeFair proudly participated, bringing this important message to life and engaging with the public.





FTZ Celebrates 20 Years of Fairtrade Czech Republic and Slovakia

On November 4, 2024, the Museum of Literature hosted the 20th anniversary celebration of Fairtrade Czech Republic and Slovakia under the patronage of First Lady Eva Pavlová. Representing FTZ were Dean Prof. Patrick van Damme and members of the BeFair student association.

Jiří Hejkrlik, Vice-Dean of FTZ, played a pivotal role in founding Fairtrade Czech Republic and Slovakia 20 years ago. As a Fairtrade Faculty, FTZ remains committed to promoting responsible consumption.

Alumni spotlight

DR. AISHWARYA CHAURE



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, FRESH GRADUATE

Dr. Aishwarya Chaure from India graduated from the FTZ in 2024 with a thesis titled 'Antimicrobial activity and chemical composition of essential oils and extracts from Indian medicinal plants'.

Nowadays, Dr. Aishwarya Chaure is engaged in a collaborative research project with the Czech Technical University aimed at assessing the antimicrobial efficacy of essential oils and their volatile components. The study focuses on encapsulating these bioactive compounds into building materials to inhibit the growth of wall-damaging fungi and bacterial pathogens, thereby enhancing the structural integrity and longevity of the materials.

We are proud that Dr. Aishwarya Chaure emphasized the importance of further cooperation with FTZ in her field: "A key aspect of my future work will involve staying connected with the Laboratory of Ethnobotany and Ethnopharmacology, led by my former supervisor, Prof. Ladislav Kokoška, who has pioneered the use of essential oil vapors in laboratory settings. Alongside my postdoctoral colleague, Markéta Houdková Ph.D, we have developed innovative methods for assessing the antimicrobial potential of these compounds. Moving forward, I am eager to build on these findings and continue advancing the field."

You can read the full interview [here](#).

UWAMAHORO CARINE, RWANDA



LABORATORY RESEARCH SPECIALIST, GORILLA CONSERVATION

We've previously introduced our remarkable alumna, Uwamahoro Carine, who works as a Laboratory Research Specialist at the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund, a non-profit organization committed to conserving gorillas and their habitats through protection, scientific research, education, and community engagement.

Now, we are excited to bring you a full interview with Carine, where she shares deeper insights into her journey, experiences at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, and her impactful work in gorilla conservation.

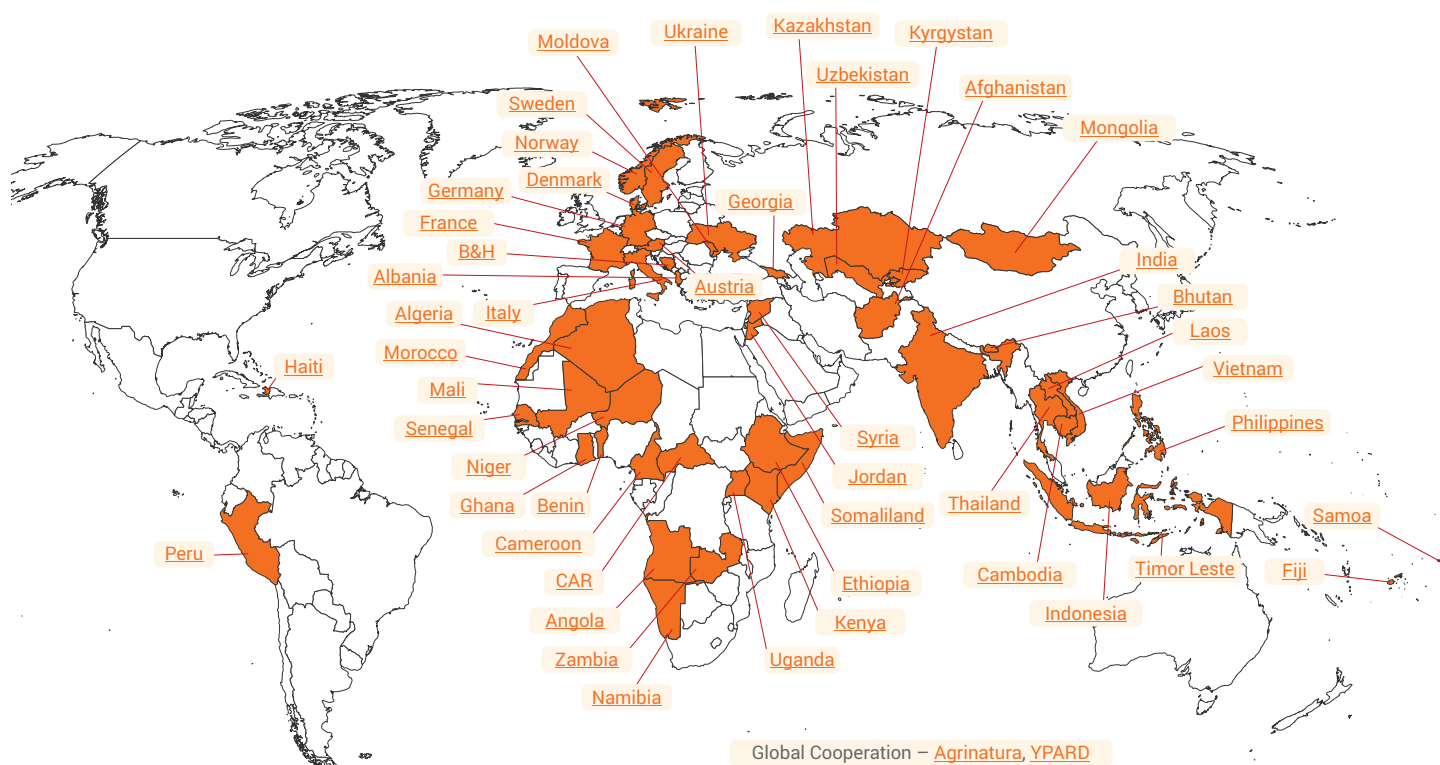
Reflecting on her studies, Carine says: "I chose the master's program in Wildlife Management and Conservation (WMC) at the Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, CZU because of my strong interest in wildlife conservation and management. The program emphasizes sustainable practices and the conservation of biodiversity and natural habitats. It provides students with a comprehensive foundation in ecological sciences and practical skills, preparing them for a rewarding career dedicated to protecting and managing the world's wildlife. Completing this program helped me pursue my career and contribute to conservation efforts in my home country, Rwanda."

Learn more about her incredible work and experiences in the interview [here](#).

FTZ Projects and Partnerships

The Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences (FTZ) at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU) is a unique institution in the Czech Republic with over fifty years of expertise in tropical agriculture, rural development, and sustainable natural resource management. FTZ is dedicated to educating Czech and international students and is actively engaged in research that addresses the specific needs of tropical and developing regions.

The faculty's mission is to transfer cutting-edge knowledge and technology between the Czech Republic, the EU, and tropical regions, while respecting local traditions and development levels. This global engagement is reflected in FTZ's numerous projects and partnerships across various countries, as shown on the accompanying map.








Do you want to cooperate with the FTZ?

We are interested in cooperation on

- Research
- Projects
- Guest lectures
- Internships
- Sharing experiences
- Other

We look forward to hearing from you!

Contact

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