***Acacia colei* : seeds for human food**

(from John Turnbull)

Acacia seeds historically formed part of traditional diets of Australian Aborigines. Australian acacias were first introduced and trialled in the Sahelian region of West Africa in the 1970s and 1980s for fuelwood and windbreaks. In 1986 a paper in an Acacia conference in Australia by the “Bush Tucker Man”, Les Hiddins, stimulated interest in their potential for human food in the Maradi area of Niger.  In this area famine was a regular occurrence. After NGO- and CSIRO-supported trials *Acacia colei* was chosen as the key species to develop as a source of nutritious seed for human food. The main advantages of *A. colei* include: high seed production from the second year, seed easily harvested and processed, and suitability for long storage periods. It can also provide fuelwood, small construction wood and improve soil fertility. It tolerates drought and infertile soils and its foliage is not eaten by stock.

The seeds are tasty, safe to consume and nutritious, being high in protein (21%), carbohydrates (57%) and fats (10%). Acacia seed flour is amenable to incorporation in a range of food products. Aboriginal ladies from Central Australia visited Niger and passed on their knowledge of acacia food preparation. Acacia flour is now included in over 40 local dishes. World Vision reported that between 2006 and 2009, over 50,000 acacias were planted on 480 farms in 33 villages. More trees are being planted each year as consumers claim many benefits.

*Acacia colei* is named after Jerry Cole, a Canberra resident and former CSIRO employee, who discovered this species in Central Australia.