
MOPHANE WORM RESEARCH PROJECT

The harvesting of the edible mophane worm, *Imbrasia belina* (or 'phane' in Setswana) in southern Africa has attracted a lot of interest among researchers who are investigating this species from biological, chemical and socio-economic points of view. Phane is an important protein source in Botswana. Women are engaged in the harvesting of the worm. They cook, dry and sell the product. It is therefore a major rural industry. Some concerns have been raised about the sustainability of phane enterprise which is considered one of the important commercial activities in the Veld. The Phane Research Team, which is based in the department of Biological Sciences, University of Botswana has conducted a number of field and laboratory studies on the mophane worm. The team has generated useful information based on their research findings. Publications from the team include:

- (a) **Phane**, Proceedings of the First National Multidisciplinary Symposium on Phane, 18 June, 1996; 139 pp.
- (b) **Technical Bulletins** in English, Setswana and Kalanga.
 - No. 1 Phane harvesting, processing and storage, (21 pp.).
 - No. 2 Street food vending, (37 pp.).
 - No. 3 Moulds and mycotoxins in foods, (38 pp.).
 - No. 4 Post harvest technology, (58 pp.).
 - No. 5 Business sense in the phane trade, (45 pp.).
- (c) **Booklet**: Insect pests associated with the edible caterpillar, phane (*Imbrasia belina* Westwood) during storage in Botswana (40 pp.).

The aim of the bulletins / booklet is to educate phane harvesters and the public on simple but effective methods which can be used to avoid contamination in general, and to produce good quality product which can attract a high market value and also meet the taste of consumers. The bulletin on business sense provides additional information on how the phane harvesters can make their business more profitable.

The mophane worm research project in the Department of Biological Sciences of the University of Botswana started in 1995 and is funded by NORAD. The broad objectives of the research project are:

- (i) To improve indigenous technologies in production, harvesting, processing and storage of the mophane worm, *Imbrasia belina*.
- (ii) To develop marketing outlets and explore new ways for the utilisation of the mophane worm in Botswana.

The achievements of the mophane worm research project apart from what has been mentioned earlier include eight research publications in reputable scientific journals. The findings of the research team have been presented by members of the team at international conferences in Namibia, South Africa, India and Canada. In Botswana, the findings have been presented at workshops on conservation and entomoforestry at Tswapong and Botswana College of Agriculture (BCA), etc.

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INASP

International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications

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The service has started on a small scale but with a view to expansion. African publishers are encouraged to nominate new journals for inclusion.

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African Journals Online is managed by INASP and received initial funding from UNESCO.

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- *Discovery and Innovation* (Kenya)
- *Ghana Journal of Agricultural Sciences*
- *Insect Science and Its Application* (Kenya)
- *SINET: Ethiopian Journal of Science*
- *Zimbabwe Veterinary Journal*

The intention is to expand quickly and to offer a wider selection of journals. In the short term, the following journals are being invited to participate.

- *African Environment* (Senegal)
- *African Journal of Tropical Hydrobiology and Fisheries* (Uganda)
- *East African Agricultural and Forestry Journal* (Kenya)
- *Ghana Journal of Science*
- *IFE Psychologica* (Nigeria)
- *Journal of Applied Science in Southern Africa* (Zimbabwe)
- *Journal of Science and Technology* (Zambia)
- *Malawi Journal of Science and Technology*
- *Tropical Freshwater Biology* (Nigeria)

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- *African Journal of Neurological Sciences* (Kenya)
- *Central African Journal of Medicine* (Zimbabwe)
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