

Thème 2 – Enjeux planétaires contemporains
2 – A - De la plante sauvage à la plante domestiquée

Palm tree: at the heart of a problem!

It's summer time! You have invited a bunch of friends. But it's so hot (with that climate change) that you decide to make a salad for dinner. A friend of yours is vegan so you go for a vegan salad. You have tomatoes, fresh salad, rice, potatoes, oil and vinegar, salt and pepper etc. You also have this can of hearts of palm. Using your knowledge and the help of the documents, discuss the matter of the cultivation of palm trees. Would you add it to your salad?

Document 1 :

Palm hearts, eaten worldwide as a vegetable, are obtained by cutting the palm and removing the crownshaft, in which the heart is found. Palm hearts are the tender, whitish immature leaves of the palm frond just above the growing point on each stem. Although it has almost no nutritious value, palm hearts have been a staple food enjoyed by the local populations for generations and have also become an economic resource and export product for many rainforest countries. France, followed by the U.S. are the largest importers of palm hearts. Originally, much of the commercial palm heart production in South America beginning in the 1960's came from a different palm tree, *Euterpe edulis*, which only produces a single trunk. (However, one large tree can yield up to 50 pounds of palm hearts.) Because the tree must be felled to extract the palm heart, palm heart exploitation without any adequate management severely decimated the wild populations of this species at an alarming rate.



After many native *E. edulis* palm groves disappeared, harvesters began using the acai palm as a more sustainable alternative since it produces many stems/trunks. Unlike its cousin, when one of acai's stems is cut, more stems will grow back on the same root system and the cutting of some of the stems encourages fruiting on the remaining stems. Acai palm (*E. oleracea*) is now the world's main source of palm hearts.

Source: <https://rain-tree.com/acai.htm>

Vocabulary:

crownshaft: gaine

Document 2 : Brazil: hearts of palm being prepared for sale



Photo by: Ricardo Eliezer de Souza e Silva Maas

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heart_of_palm