ENSET – AN ORPHAN CROP OF THE ETHIOPIAN HIGHLANDS

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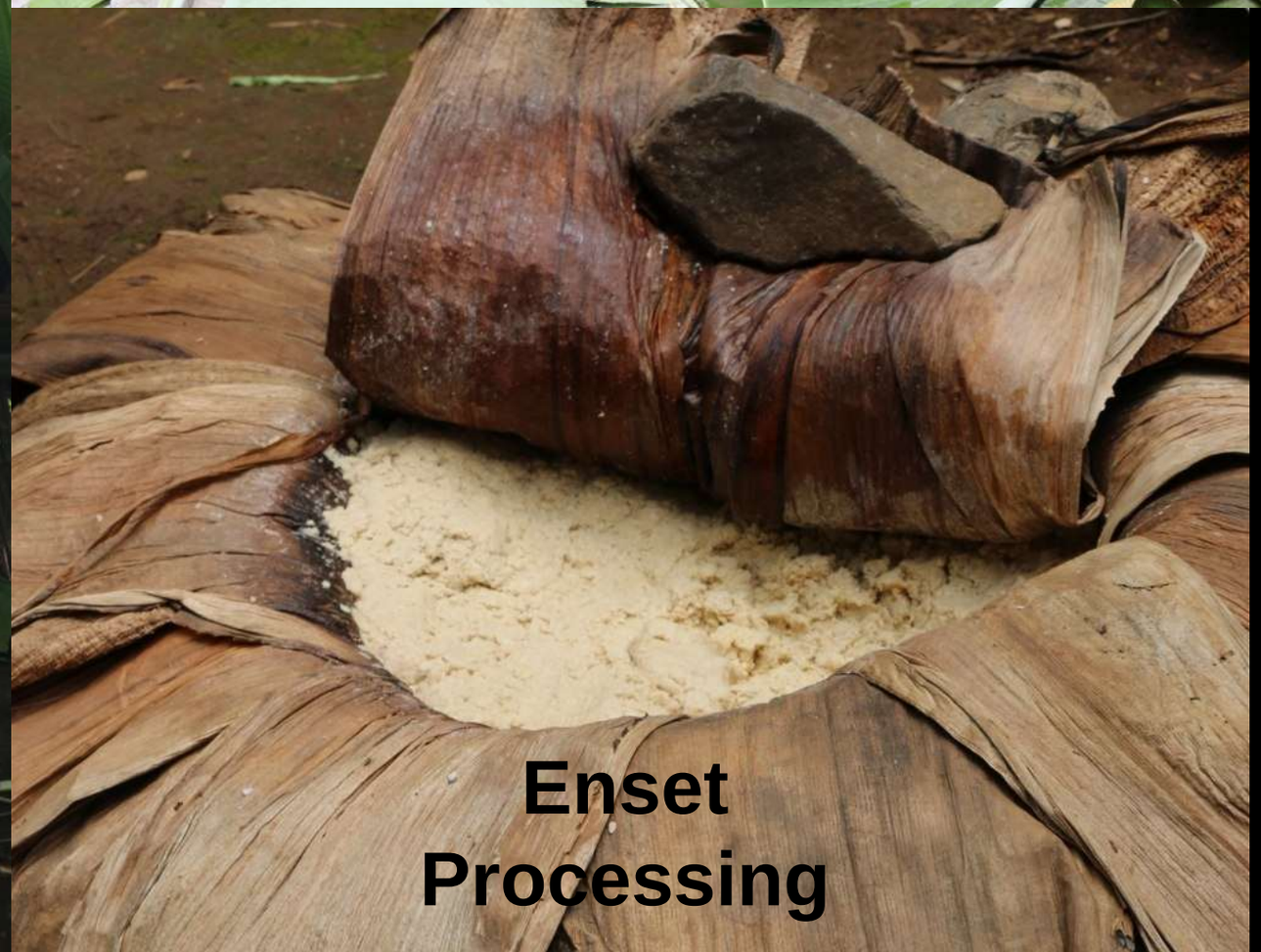
Ensete ventricosum

- main food source for 20 million people
- the ‘tree against hunger’: can be harvested at any stage and can keep producing through extensive periods of drought
- Multipurpose crop: staple food, starch, fiber, cattle feed - bridging the ‘hunger gap’ for cattle in the dry season
- Biodiverse, intercropped system with high ground cover

Enset gardens in the Gamo highlands

- Highly ‘dynamic’ and diverse agricultural systems
- Intercropped with a.o. cabbage, sugar cane, taro, potato, medicinal trees…
- Landscape matrix of Enset gardens, arable fields, grazing lands and forest remnants



Enset Processing

Many challenges, most urgent is the rapid spread of Xanthomonas wilt:

- Can kill entire garden, leaving family vulnerable to food shortage for years
- No applicable management options yet, little attention from international community
- Highlands are rapidly shifting from high-cover perennial systems to arable fields on extremely steep slopes, causing rampant soil erosion and siltation of rift valley lakes and disrupting gender roles

Understanding fermentation towards higher nutritive value & taste

Cattle fodder

Fiber quality

Complex cropping system with high ground cover

Amochi

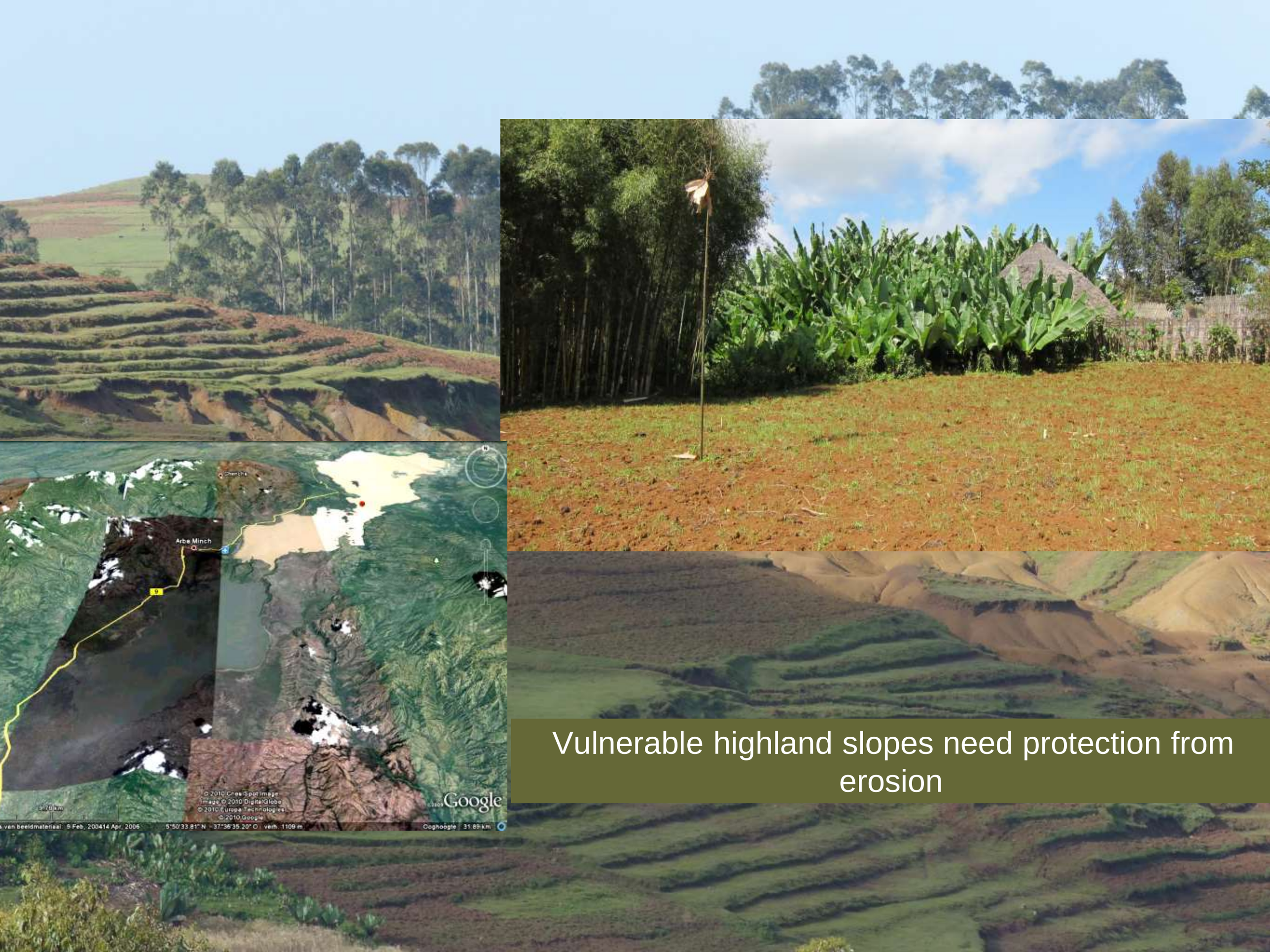
Cultural ecology, productivity, resilience risk (Quinlan et al., 2015)

Bacterial wilt, nematodes

Soil suitability for Enset

Excellent enset soil

Very poor enset soil



Vulnerable highland slopes need protection from erosion

- Seed banks? (Guzon et al., 2016)
- Crossings?
- Gender aspect (Tsegay et al., 2002)
- Soilscape Enset collections