Press Release
For immediate release

Helveta's CI Earth is named Technology of the Month

January 4th, 2007: Technologies for Conservation and Development (t4cd) have named Helveta's CI Earth application 'Technology of the Month'.

CIEarth is designed to enable accurate forest inventory and community resource mapping from GPS data. The software is loaded onto a ruggedised handheld computer, data points are recorded via the touch-sensitive computer screen and the position of each data point is mapped according to its GPS location.

This technology offers enormous potential to strengthen conservation and development work, by enabling stakeholders to map key features and upload data directly from the handheld onto GIS base maps, or Google™ Earth. It is partly the speed and flexibility of the system that is attractive, but also the strength of the GPS receiver that can record a position within a few minutes under a dense tree canopy. Another important feature is that the software interface can be customised to meet the users' needs, and can be picture icon, rather than text, based making the technology accessible to non-literate users, such as rural community members.

The CIEarth technology is currently being used in a joint project combining Helveta, the Tropical Forest Trust, Forest Peoples Programme, the Department of Anthropology London School of Economics (LSE) and Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB), to map the surroundings and sensitive resources of indigenous communities in Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon. The Mbendjele Pygmy tribe are using Helveta's icon-driven handhelds equipped with GPS capabilities to capture the data themselves relating to areas of important community resource and cultural\or religious significance, which is then used to automatically generate maps in Google™ Earth and ESRI's ArcView. The data is then used by CIB to adapt their logging practices in order to reduce damage in culturally sensitive areas.

At the annual Timber Trades Journal Awards held at The Savoy in London in September, Helveta Ltd jointly won the Environmental Achievement Award for CIEarth and its deployment in Central Africa. Commenting on the deployment of CIEarth at CIB, Dr Jerome Lewis of the London School of Economics said: "The speed and efficiency of the Helveta system has astonished me. In 3 months the Helveta system has done far more than 8 months with the GPS system favoured previously."

Funding has now been secured by the Fauna & Flora International (FFI) West Africa programme to fund implementation of a CIEarth mapping exercise in the Afi

River Forest Complex in Cross River State, Nigeria. In partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including the State Forestry Commission, Pandrillus, Wildlife Conservation Society, Nigerian Conservation Foundation, traditional rulers' councils and Community Groups, the technology will be used to establish baseline biological data of the Afi River Forest Complex. The information will inform a Multi-Stakeholder Forest Monitoring scheme designed to ensure natural resources in and around the protected area are managed sustainably and according to legal requirements.

For further information, visit: www.t4cd.org or www.lse.ac.uk/collections/anthropology/news.htm.

About Helveta

Helveta Limited's CIS (Control Intelligence System) technologies enable the prediction and prevention of environmental and production problems for Blue Chip and Fortune 1000 companies through analysis of real-time data from client physical assets anywhere in the world. Helveta's CIS deploys a sophisticated library of analytics to asset data using a combination of handheld computing and Internet technologies.

About t4cd

The "Technologies for Conservation and Development" project, t4cd, is a joint initiative of the international conservation charity Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the South African-based development charity Resource Africa (RA). The project has been running for just over two years to research the technology needs of conservation and development practitioners in developing countries and to co-ordinate trial implementations of certain technologies in the field. Funding for a three year initial phase was granted in 2004 by the Vodafone Group Foundation (VGF).