

Diversity and use of traditional vegetables in two regions of Madagascar: Itasy and Vakinankaratra

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Abstract

In Madagascar is the fourth most malnourished country in the world, more than 50% of children under 5 years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition. In order to assess the diversity and use of traditional vegetables on regional scale, an inventory has been carried out in two Regions: Vakinankaratra and Itasy. These regions are found in the Central Highland of Madagascar, a densely populated area where main activity is based on family farming with little agricultural area. Peasant farmers in these regions are faced with the challenge to provide food for their family. Sampling was done at two levels: four villages per region representing the main agroecological zones and 10 farmers per village representative of the three main farm types: small and poor, medium-size, and rich. Focus group discussions were carried out in each selected village with meeting with males and females held separately to collect information about food crops, food use of wild and semi-wild species, and the abundance of each harvested species. Farm surveys were conducted to collect data on the use of wild species. Results show a high diversity of traditional vegetables in the two regions: 32 species. Amaranthaceae and Asteraceae were the main used botanical family, on average, each family has eight species as traditional vegetables. One species starts to be grown in field, others are harvested as wild species. Eight species from four botanical families are also traded. This diversity is important in supporting food and nutritional security particularly in the diversification of diets in both regions. Traditional vegetables are mostly available and useful during the rainy season, when staple foods are scarce.

Keywords: Amaranthaceae, Asteraceae, Traditional vegetables, Malnutrition, Madagascar