

World Vegetable Center's genebank of traditional African vegetables in Tanzania supports better income and healthier diets for smallholders

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Abstract

Traditional African vegetables are valuable assets to support nutrition-sensitive agriculture under the climate change because they are generally more nutrient dense than most global commercial vegetable crops, they have lower water requirement, can do better on poor quality soils, and have higher resistance to pests and diseases. However, the biodiversity of traditional African vegetables is endangered by displacement in favor of high-energy staple crops and their seed system is largely informal. The World Vegetable Center – East and Southern Africa genebank maintains about 2,700 accessions of traditional African vegetables, with okra, African eggplant, roselle, amaranth, cowpea being the most represented crops. About 500 accessions (over 10,000 seed samples) are distributed annually to farmers, universities, seed companies, national research institutes. About 45,000 seed kits containing about 189,000 vegetable seed samples to smallholder farmers in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Madagascar from 2013 to 2019. To optimize supply of vegetable diversity, the WorldVeg genebank of traditional African vegetables continues working with partners in both the formal and local seed systems.

Keywords: indigenous crops, vegetable seeds, conservation, regeneration, characterization, distribution, WorldVeg