

Taiwan indigenous vegetables in current agri-food systems

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Abstract

About 150 Taiwan Indigenous Vegetables (TIV) were summarized from our previous reviews of ethnobotanical studies. We further investigated TIV production over the past 20 years and searched where and how the TIVs are currently produced, utilized and promoted. Production data and market prices were retrieved from monthly and annual Taiwan Agriculture Statistics Reports; information on TIV farms, local markets, restaurants were searched from internets with key words.

Among the 150 TIVs, only 14 were included in wholesale market database. Amaranth has the highest annual production in 2017 (8566 tons), follow by chayote vines (2549 tons), okra (2545 tons) and vegetable fern (247 tons). Six types of trends of TIV production and price changes overtime were classified. Many TIVs were produced by small farms and sold in local markets; production data were not recorded. About 39 TIV organic farms were searched from internet, 70% of the farms are opened to visitors and provide farming courses for education purpose. The learning program and topics generally include DIY (do-it-yourself), indigenous peoples' culture, and food and agricultural education. Farm locations were scattered around Taiwan.

Three common channels of purchasing TIVs include local markets, online shopping and wholesale markets. About 44 local markets selling TIV and 73 restaurants with TIV in menus were found from internet search. About 85% of the restaurants were tribal restaurants, 46 TIVs were mentioned in the 73 menus, and Mountain Pepper mentioned the most. Google Map for TIV farms, restaurants and local markets were developed using Google My Map for future promotion. Those farms, markets and restaurants not searchable from internet were not included in this study. The work was funded by Council of Agriculture (COA), Taiwan.