

## Promoting home gardening to enhance conservation and use of agrobiodiversity

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Biodiversity with high nutritional significance [which will also be referred to as Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN)] comprises a vast array of cultivated and wild species that, if made available and utilized effectively, can contribute significantly to the dietary diversity, livelihoods and well-being of people. Many barriers hinder the sustainable utilization of biodiversity with high nutritional potential and have caused it to be relegated to a minor role in agriculture. Yet, it could play a strategic role in food and nutrition strategies. This neglect has travelled at great cost to national healthcare budgets with increasing trend of malnutrition in rural areas even though agricultural practices are appraisable. Sri Lanka is a country within tropical belt with a very rich agrobiodiversity. Conservation and sustainable utilization of agrobiodiversity enriched through local wild relatives land races and cultivars can be achieved through introducing sustainable model of home gardens. Baseline surveys carried out in Udukumbura, Gampola Giribawa and Neunhella villages have identified unique ecosystems with rich agrobiodiversity. In order to conserve agrobiodiversity and its sustainable utilization, home garden diversification practices were successfully implemented. BFN started series of awareness programs to improve the knowledge among villagers on nutrient rich local edible plant varieties. Trainings & seminars to establish & maintain home gardens, designing, modernization, maintenance and use of ecofriendly farming practices supplied together with edible wild plants and agricultural equipments. Uplifting home gardens as agrobiodiversity sensitive surroundings have effectively supported in conservation and sustainable utilization of edible plants as dietary intakes. Securing and sustainable utilization of unique agrobiodiversity and crop genetic resources have aided the villagers in improving dietary diversity thereby increasing the nutritional status among households.

**Keywords:** Agrobiodiversity, Dietary diversity, Malnutrition