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Strategies for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition in Sri Lanka

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The project funded by GEF, with the goal of mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and sustainable use for improved human nutrition and well-being (BFN), shows a great promise in Sri Lanka. Baseline surveys in 3 pilot sites revealed a rich level of utilization of the available agro-biodiversity by the households but poor consumption of a balanced diet. The study also revealed the prevalence of food secure, food insecure without hunger, food insecure with moderate hunger and food insecure with severe hunger as 40%, 57.4%, 7.1% and 1.4% respectively. As project interventions, BFN started collection of existing nutritional data and started composition analysis of 64 priority, local agricultural biodiversity species/varieties in collaboration and development of information portal on BFN in comply with INFOODs data base. Several awareness programs on BFN have being planned and conducted at selected pilot sites including establishment of school home gardens, promotion of diversity and food fairs. At the national level several activities are underway; to establish marketing strategies for under-utilized, traditional crop varieties including local root & tuber crops; the development of demonstration plots; traditional knowledge documentation and dissemination; production and marketing of novel value added products; empowerment and self-employment programmes for women to popularize the use of nutritious herbal food and beverages; festivals of under-utilized fruits; increasing local fruit and vegetable consumption of Sri Lankans through '*helabojun*' sales centres; and development of a model urban home gardens. The policies encompassing biodiversity, food and health are being also currently reviewed in addition to integration of BFN concerns in to NBSAP document for 2016-2022.

Keywords: Agrobiodiversity, Dietary diversity, Local food, Nutrition