SHORT COMMUNICATION

Ethnobotanicalstudy of native edible and medicinal plants in Kyrdemkulai, Meghalaya

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Receipt: 01.01.2025 Revised: 28.01.25 Acceptance: 30.01.25
DOI: 10.53552/ijmfmap.11.1.2025.288-296

ABSTRACT

Neglected underutilized crops can be called the 'future food', especially as the impact of climate change intensifies and drastically affects the global food production system. These crops, which are adapted to local conditions and have lower water and input requirements, offer a sustainable alternative to conventional crops. However, neglecting these crops is leading to a subsequent loss of traditional knowledge regarding their consumption and utilization. Additionally, the preference of local consumers and farmers is shifting towards high-yielding improved varieties, resulting in a loss of biodiversity. Meghalaya, in particular, is endowed with a rich biodiversity of horticultural crops, including indigenous wild crops. Preserving and promoting these underutilized crops is essential for maintaining biodiversity, supporting local economies, and ensuring food security in the face of climate change.A survey-based study focused on the Kyrdemkulai area of the Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya identified 63 native edible and medicinal plants, belonging to 33 families, with Euphorbiaceae, Fagaceae, Musaceae, and Zingiberaceae being the most represented. The most commonly used native plants in the area are Castanopsis purpurella, Emblica officinalis, Myrica esculenta, Baccaurea sapida, Rhus chinensis, Calamus erectus, Elaeagnus pyriformis, Morus australis, Averrhoa carambola, Artocarpus chaplasa, Musa spp., Citrus grandis, C. esculenta, Dendrocalamus hamiltonii, Sechium edule Allium spp., Centella asiatica, Begonia roxburghii, Hibiscus sabdariffa, Kaempferia galanga and Phlogacanthus thyrsiflorus. Most wild edible plants are trees, followed by herbs, shrubs, and climbers. Maximum of these plants are densely wild, then, sparsely wild, and very few are under cultivation. The lack of awareness, processing, and storage facilities hinders these wild species' wider adoption and utilization. Developing value added products of wild edible plants is essential for their acceptance among the consumers. Promoting cultivation of these crops into the existing farming system is crucial for increasing crop diversity and ecosystem balance.

Keywords: Biodiversity conservation, ethnobotany, native edible plants, utilization