



CONCEPT NOTE – Webinar for the International Year of Fruits and Vegetables

**THEME: Mainstreaming Indigenous Fruits and Vegetables for a food and nutrition secure future
[14 September 2021]**

**Co-Organizers: Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT - Asia
FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific**

BACKGROUND

Asia is known for its collective biodiversity, rich culture, and home to a wide variety of crops like wild edible, and semi-domesticated species that support not just the local and regional population but also the rest of the world. These underutilized crops are grown in areas that are also home to more than half of the world's hungry population. [According to an FAO report](#), around 77 percent of households living in or near forests in 24 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia collect and consume wild foods with varying levels of use—some consume it regularly, some to augment nutrition and dietary needs, and some for commercial use, among others.

In the collective effort to bridge the gap in poverty and malnutrition in Asia and around the world, there are strong calls for the increased consumption of traditional foods like indigenous fruits and vegetables (IFVs)—foods that are grown in the local environment, and are typically domesticated and accessed by indigenous peoples. This food category usually is something [that IPs do not have to purchase and exist within specific cultures and traditional knowledge](#) and environment. By mainstreaming IFVs, we are presenting opportunities to improve diets and nutrition and boost livelihoods in the region, paving the path to food and nutrition security. The currently neglected and underutilized crops have the potential to enhance overall diets in developing countries specifically in indigenous communities, who are most familiar in the management and regulation of local environments, in Asia where most of undernutrition and poverty is also observed. IFVs can provide a direct source of a range vitamins and minerals that can fortify diets of consumers.

The increase in the global demand on rice, wheat, and corn influenced the change in agricultural practices that resulted in the gradual shift to more homogenous food productions around the world particularly in Asia. This introduced a gap in health and nutrition in areas where production systems changed; giving farmers far fewer choices in nutritious and healthier diets. Aside from threats in nutrition, changes in agricultural practices drive environmental concerns such as degradation of ecosystems and increased risk and vulnerability to climate change.

Growing IFVs is essential in conserving soil nutrients, improving ecosystem services, and controlling carbon emissions and the spread of pest and diseases. Besides environmental gains, this movement towards greater recognition of agricultural biodiversity will also put the farmers in the driver's seat and manage the production and consumption of IFVs at the farm level thereby giving smallholders opportunities to take better control of their livelihood. The return to IFVs will also promote better nutrition by integrating vitamin and mineral-rich food in diets in the region.

Part of mainstreaming IFVs in the region would include using scientific evidence of the benefits of using IFV in food systems to raise awareness at the policy level to create a stronger platform to create a stronger enabling environment for greater conservation and use of IFV, including breaking down market and other barriers and silos between sectors. This entails a multi-stakeholder approach that brings together various stakeholders in research, government, private sector, producers, and consumers are essential in the movement towards food and nutrition security through IFVs.



The conversation on IFVs will also contribute to the development of research and frameworks to help preserve and grow traditional knowledge of indigenous communities where IFVs are most commonly cultivated. This opens the opportunity to create markets and linkages for IFV produce to ensure indigenous farmers and consumers benefit from this diversity.

OBJECTIVES

In celebration of the International Year for Fruits and Vegetables, this webinar aims to:

- Highlight the importance of indigenous fruits and vegetables and indigenous custodian farmers in traditional knowledge on the management and use of traditional crops;
- Describe barriers in the utilization of indigenous fruits and vegetables;
- Enumerate success stories and lessons learned linked to the work on mainstreaming indigenous fruits and vegetables in the region; and
- Identify opportunities for convergence among key partners (governments, research, private sector, civil society) to mainstream indigenous fruits and vegetables in the region.

WEBINAR AGENDA (1:00-4:00pm, BKK time)

Time	Activity	Speakers
1:00-1:10	Introduction/Welcome Group Photo	Takayuki, Hagiwara , Regional Programme Leader, FAO-RAP Juan Lucas Restrepo , Director General, Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT
1:10-1:25	Overview presentation	Stephan Weise , Managing Director for Asia, Alliance of Biodiversity International and CIAT Rosa Rolle , Senior Enterprise Development Officer, FAO
1:25-1:55	Country Perspectives	
	Bangladesh	Kamrul Hasan , Professor, Department of Horticulture Bangladesh Agricultural University
	India	Suresh K. Malhotra , Agriculture & Horticulture Commissioner, MAFW
	Mongolia	Bayarsukh Noov , Director of Mongolian Institute of Plant and Agricultural Sciences
	Pakistan	M. Azeem Khan , Chairman, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council
	Thailand	Trapruaksa Thanyakaset , Subject Matter Specialist, Department of Agricultural Extension, MoAC



Time	Activity	Speakers
1:55-2:55	Case study Presentations	
	Global Insights on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition	Danny Hunter , Senior Scientist & Teresa Borelli , Research Officer, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
	Regional Insights on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition	Prem Mathur , Senior Technical Advisor, UNDP
	Country insight from Sri Lanka	Gamini Samarasinghe , Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
	Country insight from Vietnam	Ngo Thi Hanh , Head, Department of Vegetables and Spicy Crops, Fruit and Vegetable Research Institute
	Country insight from India	BNS Murthy , Director, ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticulture
2:55-3:25	Panel discussion	Ravi Khetarpal , Executive Secretary, APAARI
		Santosh Shrestha , Senior Programme Manager, LI-BIRD
		Lei Li , Director of International collaboration Officer/Division of Scientific Management, The Institute of Vegetables and Flowers, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
		Hossein Asghari Leskokalayeh , Director-General of the Bureau for Paddy Fields and Forage Products
		Lorna Herradura , Chief, Bureau of Plant Industry, Davao
		Mary Ann Guerrero , Chief, Bureau of Plant Industry, Crop Research and Production Support Division
3:25-3:50	Participant reflection	
3:50-4:00	Feedback	



ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Alliance of Biodiversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) delivers research-based solutions that address the global crises of malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation.

The Alliance focuses on the nexus of agriculture, environment, and nutrition. We work with local, national, and multinational partners across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and with the public and private sectors and civil society. With novel partnerships, the Alliance generates evidence and mainstreams innovations to transform food systems and landscapes so that they sustain the planet, drive prosperity, and nourish people in a climate crisis.

The Alliance is part of CGIAR, the world's largest agricultural research and innovation partnership for a food-secure future dedicated to reducing poverty, enhancing food and nutrition security, and improving natural resources.

www.alliancebiodiversityciat.org

www.cgiar.org

ABOUT FAO RAP

The FAO regional office for Asia and the Pacific (FAO-RAP) employs a highly participatory process to translate FAO's corporate strategic objectives into five Regional Strategic Priority Areas: 1) strengthening food and nutritional security; 2) fostering agricultural production and rural development; 3) enhancing equitable, productive and sustainable natural resource management and utilization; 4) improving capacity to respond to food and agricultural threats and emergencies; 5) coping with the impact of climate change on agriculture and food and nutritional security. Within the above regional priorities, the core functions of the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific are: 1) providing perspectives, trend monitoring and assessments; 2) capacity building and technical support; 3) policy assistance and advice to subregions; 4) building partnerships and alliances; 5) strengthening information, knowledge and statistics; 6) developing international instruments.

FAO-RAP is one of five FAO regional offices across the world. It has grown more than fourfold since 1948 and now has 46 member countries. The regional office is headed by an Assistant Director-General who is also the FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific.

<http://www.fao.org/asiapacific>, <http://www.fao.org>