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Editorial

Dear Readers...

Agrobiodiversity is the result of natural selection processes and the careful selection and inventive developments of farmers, herders and fishers over millennia. Agrobiodiversity is a vital sub-set of biodiversity. Many people's food and livelihood security depend on the sustained management of various biological resources that are important for food and agriculture. Thus, agrobiodiversity encompasses the variety and variability of animals, plants and micro-organisms that are necessary for sustaining key functions of the agro-ecosystem, including its structure and processes for, and in support of, food production and food security. Local knowledge and culture can therefore be considered as integral parts of agrobiodiversity, because it is the human activity of agriculture that shapes and conserves this biodiversity. Many farmers, especially those in environments where high-yield crop and livestock varieties do not prosper, rely on a wide range of crop and livestock types. This helps them maintain their livelihood in the face of pathogen infestation, uncertain rainfall and fluctuation in the price of cash crops, socio-political disruption and the unpredictable availability of agro-chemicals. More than 90 percent of crop varieties have disappeared from farmers' fields; half of the breeds of many domestic animals have been lost. In fisheries, all the world's 17 main fishing grounds are now being fished at or above their sustainable limits, with many fish populations effectively becoming extinct. Loss of forest cover, coastal wetlands, other 'wild' uncultivated areas, and the destruction of the aquatic environment exacerbate the genetic erosion of agrobiodiversity. The main cause of the genetic erosion of crops - as reported by almost all countries - is the replacement of local varieties by improved or exotic varieties and species. In Burkina Faso, and throughout the West African Sahel, rural women carefully collect the fruit, leaves and roots of native plants such as the baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*), red sorrel leaves (*Hibiscus sabbarifa*), kapok leaves (*Ceiba pentandra*) and tigernut tubers (*Cyperus esculentus* L.) for use in the families' diet. These supplement the agricultural grains (millet, sorghum) that provide only one part of the nutritional spectrum and may fail in any given year. Local knowledge and culture can therefore be considered as integral parts of agrobiodiversity, because it is the human activity of agriculture that shapes and conserves this biodiversity.



Naturally yours

Vijikumar. S

Chief Editor