



THE FUTURE

IS AN ANCIENT LAKE

*Traditional knowledge,
biodiversity and
genetic resources for
food and agriculture in
Lake Chad Basin ecosystems*



FAO INTERDEPARTMENTAL
WORKING GROUP ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE



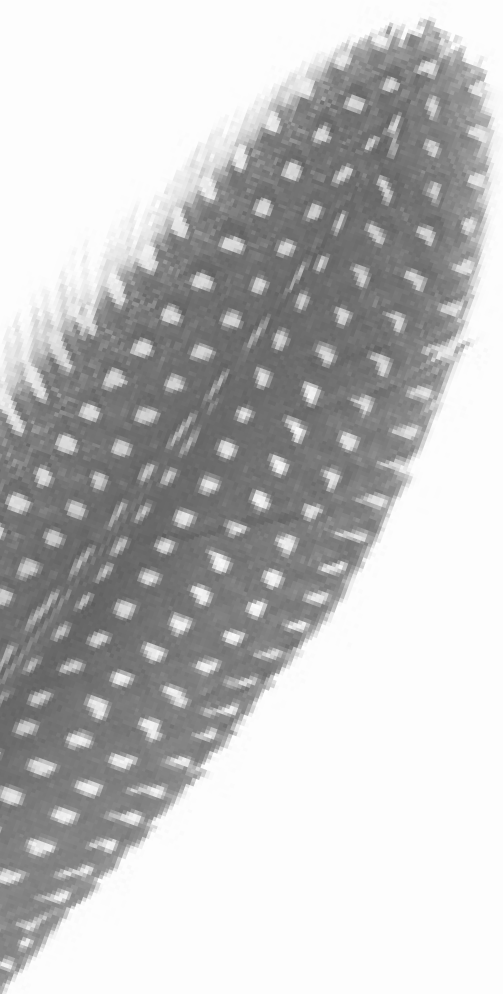
The uniqueness of Lake Chad Basin ecosystems derives mainly from the location of the lake. Nowhere else in the world is such a large freshwater reservoir found so far from seas and oceans and in such a hot and arid climate. The lake has always been a point of attraction for humans, animals and plants, all of which have had to learn how to live in balance with a fragile environment that is changing over time in response to both slow and fast variables.

This book suggests that a disappearing traditional practice of food production from wild grasses called *kreb* has many hopes for the future if supported by appropriated science and policies. The same is true of *dihé*, the alga harvested locally by Kanembu Kadjidi women.

The faint borders of agriculture and the narrow distinction between cultivated and collected vegetables are discussed in the book. The role of farmers in maintaining local cereal varieties and the way they use all available resources, such as *Calotropis*, with imagination and experience, are also described. Fisheries are dominated by traditional management systems, and the relationship between economics, livelihood impact and poverty is shown. Traditional polders and integrated pastoral, fishery and cropping systems are examples of the wise use of water and its fluctuations.

It is the authors' belief that local people should be made to feel proud of the traditional practices on which their production systems are founded. Once adapted to changing needs or combined with new technologies, many of these practices will continue to serve them in the future. Recognition and reward should be given to local communities who conserve biodiversity through observation, selection and management.





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