



PREFACE

An important aim of this book is to give people living in the Lake Chad Basin pride in their knowledge, their land and their future. It focuses on small farmers, pastoralists and fishermen who need to improve their food security, their income and their rural livelihood. A second aim is to deepen the awareness of diverse policy-makers of the significance of this important ecology and the people who live there.

The growing population is putting increased pressure on natural resources and new solutions have to be found to enhance productivity in a sustainable manner without sacrificing the possible prosperity of future generations.

This publication highlights a selection of traditional practices that are valuable in ensuring food security, income and sustainability. It aims to show that a middle way exists; that it is possible to increase food security and still preserve the environment by combining traditional knowledge with new technologies. Traditional practices described here are adapted to local environmental and social circumstances and some of them represent new income opportunities for local and regional markets or for international demands for high-quality and diversified food.

Traditional knowledge has contributed for centuries to food security of farmers and pastoralists. They developed many techniques to protect and manage wild plant and animal species in order to eat them. They also adopted low risk

strategies and low input cultural practices as a response to unreliable rainfall and pest attacks. They maintained a high level of heterogeneity in their seed stock to respond and produce in varying climatic conditions. But today many of these practices are associated with poverty, lack of education and poor capacity of adoption of new technologies. Often, scientists and policy-makers know very little of these traditions, and even local people themselves are losing this heritage.

We hope that this book, drawing from many disciplines, will provide readers with new ideas and new instruments for their policies, projects and studies, promoting a dynamic and modern agriculture based on scientific knowledge, new technologies and traditional production systems.

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