

FAO Regional Initiative on Zero Hunger Challenge
Regional Expert Consultation on Scoping, Prioritizing and Mapping
of Neglected and Underutilized Crop Species in Asia

In observance of International Year of Pulses

Co-sponsor: ACIAR

3–5 December 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand



Recommendations

Hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition are major challenges in the 21st century for Asia and the Pacific region. To achieve zero hunger, which stands at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need to improve dietary patterns and food systems urgently. Stakeholders in the agriculture and food value chain are affected by a disconnect between production, consumption, and nutrition. Agricultural diversification and resilience offer enormous opportunities for addressing hunger and malnutrition especially in the context of climate change. In this regard, Neglected and Underutilized Crop Species (NUS)¹ offer diverse and nutritious food resources. NUS are important in specific agro-ecological niches and often linked with the tradition and cultural heritage in their places of origin. They are an essential source of protein and micronutrients, enhance climate resilience, improve agriculture sustainability and boost household income and livelihoods with considerable commercial potential.

¹ “Neglected and underutilized species are those to which little attention is paid or which are entirely ignored by agricultural researchers, plant breeders and policymakers. They are wild or semi-domesticated varieties and non-timber forest species that are not typically traded as commodities.” PADULOSI, THOMPSON AND RUDEBJER (2013)

In this context, FAO, in collaboration with a number of national and international partners, organized a Regional Expert Consultation on Scoping, Prioritizing and Mapping of NUS held in Bangkok from 3–5 December 2016. Thirty-five participants, representing eight countries, as well as 22 national and international partners attended the Consultation (Appendix) and made the following recommendations:

1. Urgent call for decision-makers to raise awareness of the nutrition-sensitive and climate-resilient benefits of NUS to address hunger, malnutrition and climate change.
2. Recognize, identify and promote the complementarities of NUS with existing staple crops for nutrition enhancement, climate change resilience and diversification of cropping systems, and relabel NUS as “**Future Smart Food (FSF)**” to popularize these species.
3. Establish a National Coordinating Committee on FSF involving concerned ministries and appoint a Strategic Coordinator at the inter-ministerial level.
4. Create an enabling environment by strengthening national institutional support for mainstreaming FSF into national policies and programmes, by means of appropriate incentives, procurement of FSF for food programmes (e.g. mid-day meal/school meal scheme) to enhance national consumption, local production and facilitate marketing.
5. Establish nationally coordinated research for development programmes targeting FSF with high potential, and expand coverage of national agriculture statistics and national food composition data on FSF for evidence-based decision making.

6. Document and validate best-bet FSF case studies, compile indigenous knowledge related to FSF, undertake clinical and field studies to demonstrate the health benefits and climate resilience of FSF and assemble quantitative data for public dissemination.
7. Enhance public awareness of the importance of FSF by developing nutrition and climate change education materials and curricula on the importance of FSF for consumers, traders, producers, health professionals, researchers, teachers (e.g. school curricula), farmers, women and youth.
8. Identify key entry points in the value chain and encourage value chain development for specific NUS, including innovative and targeted interventions for promotion (e.g. ready-to-use food products) and increased funds for research, development and extension capacities on FSF production and processing technologies.
9. Strengthen multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collaboration through existing coordination mechanisms and build partnerships at national and regional levels, including academia, civil society and the private sector, to enhance research and consumption and to attract the private sector to boost production, processing, value addition, product development, and marketing of FSF.
10. Establish a regionally coordinated network on FSF to facilitate exchanging information, policy, technologies and genetic resources as well as FSF promotion in target countries.

List of National and International Partners

- i. Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)
- ii. Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI)
- iii. Bioversity International (BI)
- iv. Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI)
- v. Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences- Tropical Crops Genetic Resources Institute (CATAS-TCGRI)
- vi. Crops for the Future (CFF)
- vii. Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan
- viii. Department of Agricultural Research (DAR), Myanmar
- ix. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- x. FAO Special Ambassador for International Year of Pulses 2016
- xi. International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)
- xii. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
- xiii. International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
- xiv. International Tropical Fruits Network (TFNet)
- xv. Mahidol University, Thailand
- xvi. M S Swaminathan Research Foundation - Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (MSSRF-LANSA)
- xvii. National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), Lao PDR
- xviii. Nepal Agriculture Research Council (NARC)
- xix. Plant Resources Centre (PRC), Vietnam
- xx. The Akshaya Patra Foundation, India
- xxi. The University of Western Australia (UWA)
- xxii. Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya (UBKV), West Bengal, India