

Underutilized Fruits and Vegetables in Bangladesh-Contribution in the National Economy, Poverty Reduction, Household Food Security, Nutrition and Biodiversity

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Abstract

In Bangladesh, lots of underutilized fruits and vegetables grown largely in the homestead, fallow, forest areas as well as in the road/rail sides with less care. Those fruits are well adapted to the local climate, highly nutritious and contributing in the poverty reduction, household food security of rural peoples. Huge number of tribal people are also dependant on the underutilized fruits and vegetables. Underutilized fruits and vegetables also contributing significantly in herbal medicine. Underutilized fruits trees like river ebony, velvet apple, *Garcinia cowa*, ber contribute to protect natural disaster and balancing the coastal ecosystem. Contribution of the fruits in the nutrition of poor people and to alleviate poverty in coastal, hunger prone (monga) and flood affected areas also addressed. Plantation of underutilized fruit ber (Jujube) cv. BAU Kul 1 tremendously contribute in the poverty reduction and natural soil reclamation from saline to non-saline condition. Almost every year Bangladesh is facing serious flood and other natural disaster in about one third of the area where serious food shortage, nutrition problems, poverty enhancement happened. Similarly, in the extreme northern part of the country (about one tenth of the country area) periodic serious food crisis due to shortage of employment, no crops harvest in that time causes disaster which is popularly called as Monga. In all these areas underutilized crops contribute a lot as risk buffers, ensure household food security. The paper mainly deals the contribution of underutilized crops for food, nutrition, rural employment, women participation and risk managements. Finally, the paper focuses on the future policy of the managements of underutilized fruits/vegetables in Bangladesh for economy, nutrition, food and sustainable development.