Intrinsic characteristics of the minor food plants of Togo: threat factors

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Abstract

Plants are the base of life on the earth. However, many are nowadays threatened for various reasons. Between May 2003 and August 2006, ethnobotanical studies are carried out in 280 localities of Togo. 138 under-exploited and threatened species of food plants were inventoried. Within these, ten (10) spontaneous and/or semi-cultivated species are under-exploited for their intrinsic characteristics. They are *Sphenostylis stenocarpa* (Hochst. ex A. Rich.) Harms, *Macrotyloma geocarpum* (Harms) Maréchal & Baudet, *Phaseolus vulgaris* L., *Cajanus cajan* (L.) Millsp., *Piper guineense* Schum. & Thonn, *Solenostemon rotundifolius* (Poir.) J. K. Morton, *Dioscorea alata* L., *Dioscorea esculenta* L., *Dioscorea bulbifera* L. and *Vernonia amygdalina* Del. Moreover, 44 local varieties belonging to 12 other species are also disappearing for the same reasons which can be gathered in four categories as: undesirable morphology, bad organoleptic qualities, vegetative cycle not adapted to the new dryer climatic conditions and, greater requirement in maintenance work. According to the importance of these food species for human and plant diversity, suitable tracks of improvement is required for better management of theses characters.