

Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use for Improved Human Nutrition and Well-being (Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition Project – BFN Project) in Sri Lanka

W.L.G. Samarasinghe, A. Wijesekara and Danny Hunter

National Project Coordinator, Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Gannoruwa, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

✉ gaminisam@yahoo.com

Biodiversity of plants and animals with high nutritional properties can contribute significantly to the dietary diversity, livelihoods and well-being of millions of individuals in countries all over the world. Sri Lanka has been identified as one of the countries in Asia with a very high degree of biodiversity. The BFN project objective is to strengthen the conservation and sustainable management of agricultural biodiversity through mainstreaming into national and global nutrition, food and livelihood security strategies and programmes. Three pilot sites; Udukumbura (Kandyan home garden), Gampola (cascading system) and Niwunella (Owita system) were chosen. Baseline assessments for biodiversity and nutritional status were completed in two sites. The baseline research revealed that people consumed in very small proportions from the minimum 400g of fruit and vegetables per day recommended by the World Health Organization. Also reported that home gardens in the Wet zone of Sri Lanka have increasingly been replaced by cash crop cultivation. Traditional varieties of rice (7), banana (5), yams (4), brinjal (2), finger millet, jack, green gram, cowpea and leafy vegetables (3) were identified for detailed food composition analysis. The Traditional Food Festival and the International Symposium on Biodiversity and Nutrition organised were another successful example of country efforts to raise awareness of BFN. Market outlets for agrobiodiversity and traditional foods were opened in several locations in the country by Department of Agriculture. The market outlets are run by women farmers selected among women organizations in the area and subsequently trained by the Women Farmers Extension Program of the Department of Agriculture, a partner of the BFN Project in Sri Lanka. The Project would enable Sri Lanka to accelerate the implementation of the national priorities and policies at a time when the country is facing a nutritional food crisis due to price rises in imported foods and a decline in the quality of diets throughout the country.