



Consolidating roles and rights of custodian farmers as conservers, innovators and promoters of agricultural biodiversity

Workshop Highlights, 11-12 Feb 2013, New Delhi

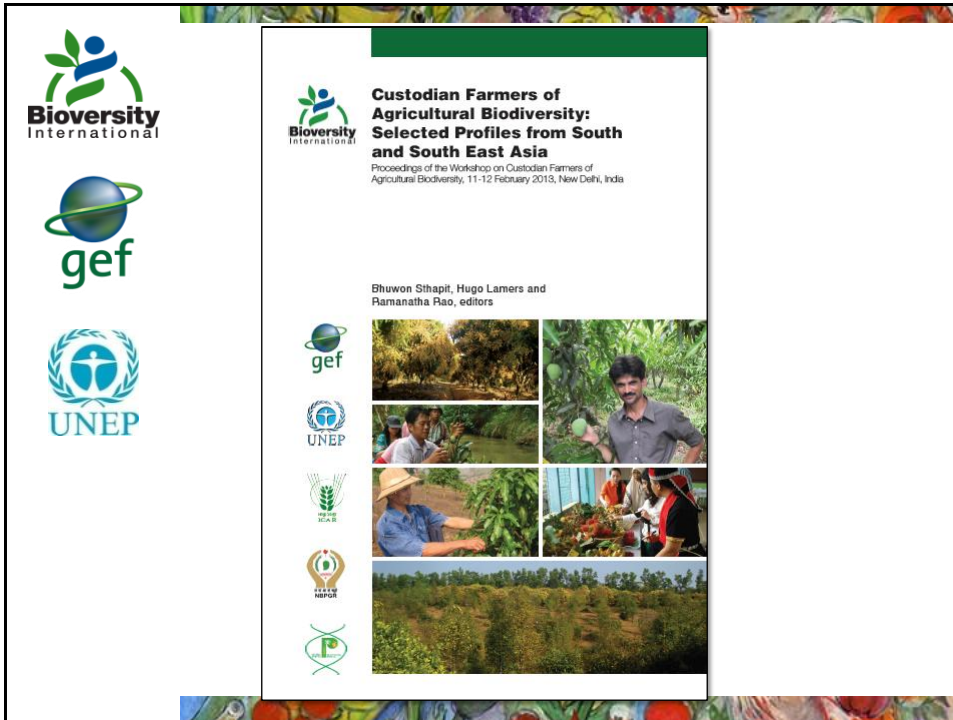
Bhuwon Sthapit, Hugo Lamers & Ramanatha Rao
Biodiversity International
31 July 2013, Pokhara, Nepal



Outline

- ❑ Context and definition
- ❑ Roles being played by custodian farmers
- ❑ Characteristics and typology
- ❑ Sources of motivations and drivers
- ❑ Methods for identification
- ❑ Results from case studies
- ❑ Roles, Responsibilities & Rights (3-Rs)
- ❑ Key highlights
- ❑ Recommendations and action plans





Bioversity International

Curiosity & Basic Questions?

- *Why making so much fuss about custodian farmers?*
- *What we really mean by custodian farmers?*
- *How we can identify them?*
- *What are the characteristics of such custodian farmers?*
- *What are current roles and functions of such farmers?*
- *Are there different types of custodian farmers?*
- *What role they can play for the national PGR system?*
- *Why this theme is important to the Aichi Biodiversity Strategic Goal (Targets 13)?*

Unrecognized roles....





Why is it important to identify and define custodian farmers?



□ Little research done on effective methods how to strengthen on-farm conservation or guide interventions



□ Lack of recognition for their contribution on *in situ*/on-farm conservation

□ These farmers play a key role:

- Linking traditional knowledge to scientific knowledge
- Linking formal seed sector to informal seed sector



Farmer selection:

Diversity in orchards and home gardens of custodian farmers

Inter and intra specific diversity of *Mangifera* sp., *Nephelium* sp., and *Gracinia* sp.



Selection: Unique and rare fruit diversity!

Source: Salma Idris, Malaysia



Key Questions



□ How could society continue to motivate such farmers, generation after generation?



□ Could custodian farmers contribute to a national conservation strategy?

□ How policy could support for their roles in use and conservation?



What we really mean by
custodian farmers?

How can we identify them?

Definition of Custodian Farmers?

Starting Definition: Custodian farmers are those conserver farmers who actively **maintain**, **adapt** and **disseminate** agricultural biodiversity over time and space, including the culture and institutions in which it is embedded, and the knowledge needed for its use and cultivation

http://www.futurepolicy.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Axel/Genetic_Resources/Regulation_germplasm_bank_custodian_Tuscany.pdf

Revised: Custodian farmers are those farming households (men and women) who actively maintain, adapt and disseminate agricultural biodiversity and related knowledge, over time and space, at farm and community levels and are recognized by community members for it.



What are Essential Roles & Functions of Custodian Farmers?

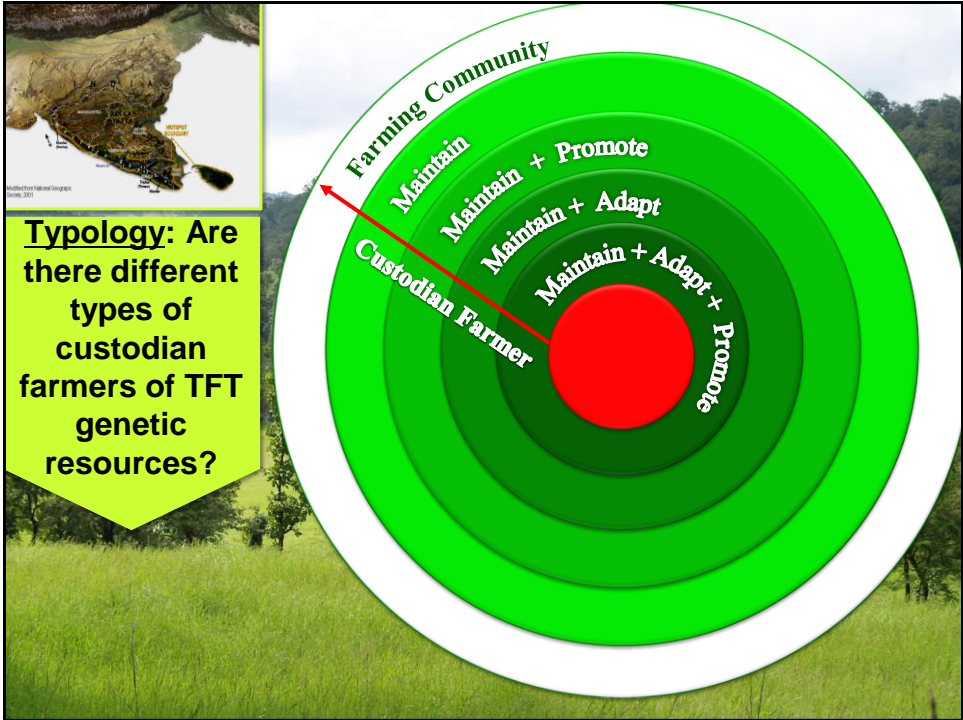


1. Maintenance
2. Adaptation/ innovation/ selection



3. Promotion/ dissemination
4. Continuity over time

Note: Genetic resources are deeply embedded in knowledge and practices of farmer's livelihood and food culture



Custodian farmers

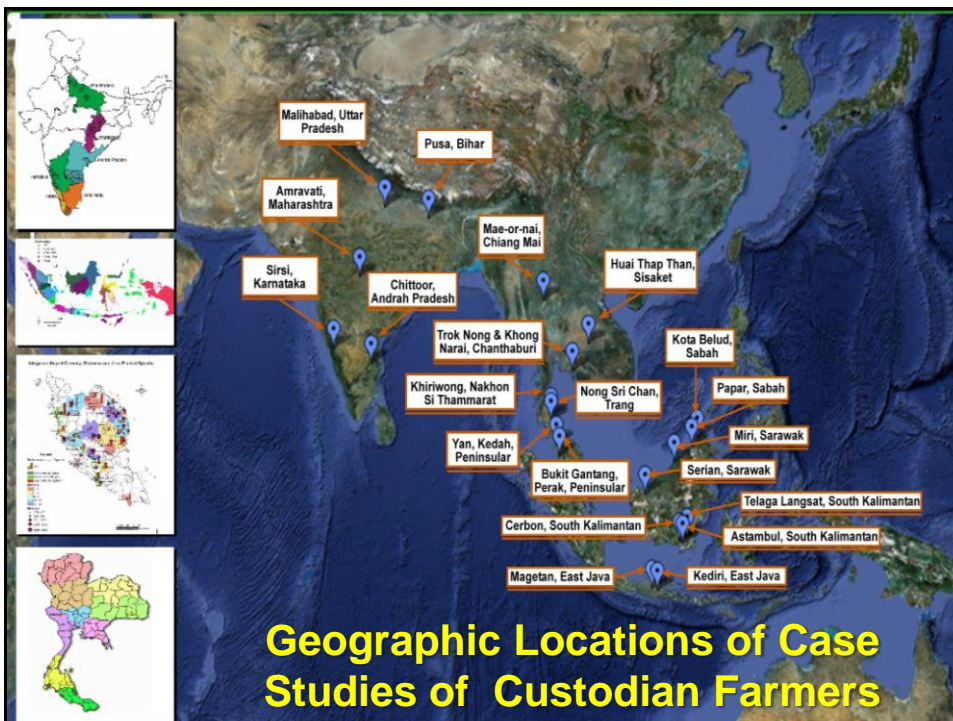
Characteristics	Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain rich diversity • Self-driven by conservation ideology • Knowledge holder • Highly motivated and self-directed • Recognition from community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we consolidate their role as conserver, dynamic innovator and promoter of diversity? • Can such custodian farmers be recognized and publicly supported?



Sources of Motivation



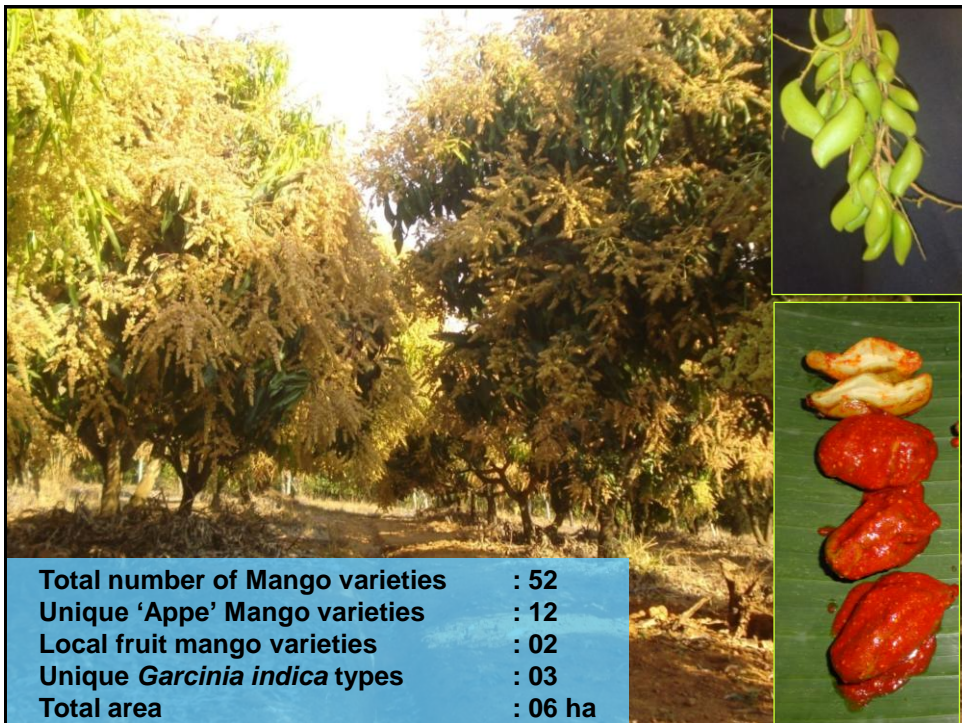
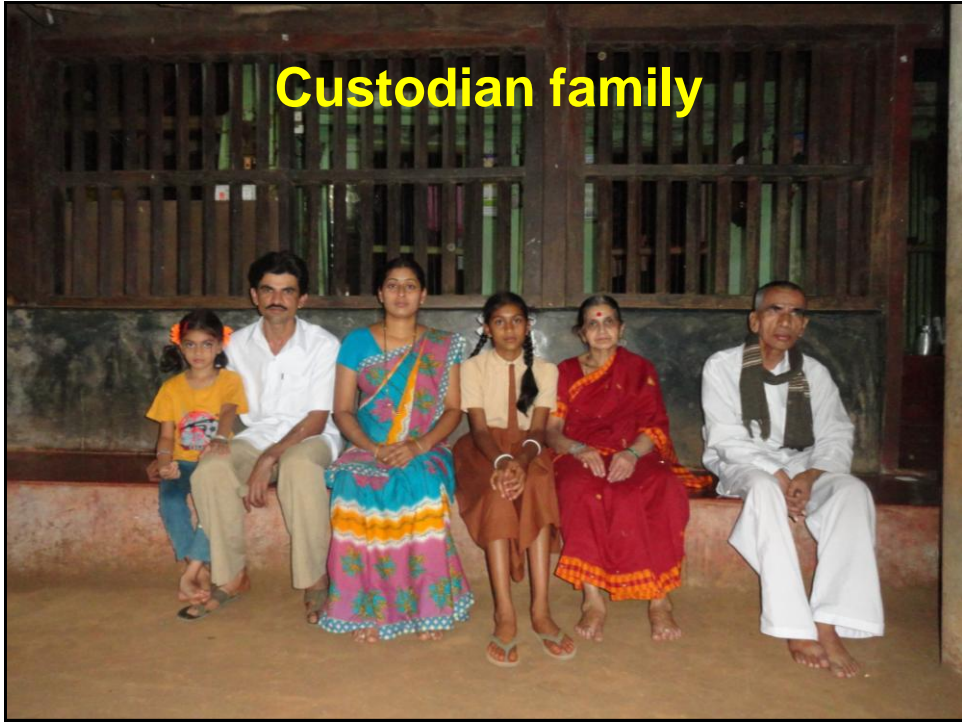
1. **personal** (driven by passion, pride or sensitivity regarding the need for conserving diversity for future generations; hobby)
2. **social** (driven by the desire to conserve socially important resources)
3. **economic** (driven by the value of traits; need for safeguarding diversity for economic options of the HH)
4. **environment** (driven by specific agroecology)
5. **cultural** (driven by the awareness regarding the intimate link between genetic and cultural diversity, festivity & food culture)





**SITE: SIRSI, India in the
Central Western Ghats
Hamlet: Bhairimane**

Dattatreya V. Hegde





One more example: passion for sharing knowledge and skills





Function of custodian farmers: roles, responsibilities and rights

Role	Responsibilities (Assumed/realised)	Rights (conferred)
Maintain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Saving seed/planting materials of portfolio of species/varieties/ traits at HH level and document associated TK ▪ Take care of at least 1 unique/rare/special/difficult to propagate variety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal and informal recognition ▪ Protection of TK (individual or collective) ▪ Ensure through current or new/adjusted legal framework of Farmer's Rights
Adapt/ innovate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify, domesticate, select or improve traits of interest ▪ Blend and use ecological indigenous knowledge of diversity, heritability and selection with scientific knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights to save and/or sell seeds/materials ▪ Access to information and materials ▪ Participation in research and development activities ▪ Recognition (internal or external) for innovation ▪ Protection of farmers knowledge in secured way that leads to community benefits



Function of custodian farmers: roles, responsibilities and rights

Role	Responsibilities (Assumed/realised)	Rights (conferred)
Promote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Willingness to share materials and knowledge with other farmers ▪ High frequency of exchange of seed and associated knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right to participate in decision making & benefit sharing through community-based approaches: i) capacity building, ii) seed selection and CBSP, iii) collective benefits-CBR, CSB, PPB, FFS, iv) community development, v) CBM fund
Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure family continue to harbor portfolio of species and varieties ▪ Transfer of knowledge and practice to younger generation ▪ Sets of traits maintained when old varieties are replaced ▪ Ensure alternative options for crops/varieties under threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better targeted benefit sharing ▪ Empowerment of network of custodian farmers ▪ Institutional support (local level –CSB and national gene bank) ▪ Recognition of shared custodianship within households and whole communities ▪ Access to new materials. ▪ Direct household-level benefits



Key reflections



- The term '**custodian**' does not necessarily refer to an individual; the people it describes do not always act on conservation in a single way. The outcome is product of collective action.
- Ones holding the highest level of diversity alone (maintain) should not be considered as custodian farmers by default unless they use diversity for innovation, sharing of knowledge & information (dissemination/promotion).



Key reflections



- The current working **definition** of custodian farmers are those farming HHs (men and women) who actively maintain, adapt and disseminate agricultural biodiversity and related knowledge, over time and space, at farm and community levels and are recognized by community members for it.
- Find local platforms to capitalize network of custodian farmers (e.g. CSB, diversity fair, PSE, PVS, PPB etc)



Key recommendations



- Entry point for on-farm conservation and community resilience
- Mainstreaming: Document and disseminate at least 1000 case studies of custodian farmers in the next 2 years and provide institutional recognitions
- Identify priority crops to build network of custodian farmers
- Establish financial mechanism to support custodian farmers' and their community
- How such custodian farmers play larger roles and what their rights?



Thank You !

