

# Neglected no more

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ENHANCING THE CONTRIBUTION OF NEGLECTED AND UNDERUTILIZED SPECIES TO FOOD SECURITY AND TO INCOMES OF THE RURAL POOR

## GLOBAL INITIATIVE LAUNCHED



Quinoa, a highly nutritious grain from the Andes, Latin America

### PROBLEM AREA

The narrowing of the number of crops upon which global food security and economic growth depend has placed the future supply of food and rural incomes at risk. The shrinking portfolio of species used in agriculture reduces the ability of farmers and ecosystems to adapt to new environments, needs and opportunities. Agricultural development and food security depend on our ability to broaden the range of agricultural and forestry species in an effective and sustainable way. This means finding ways to protect and enhance locally important species so that they can be deployed more widely in agriculture and environmental management. We need to act now because the continuing neglect of valuable agricultural species is eroding their genetic foundations. Crop populations and knowledge of their uses and traits are also disappearing. The impact of narrowing the species base of global food security is likely to be felt most by the rural poor particularly in marginal areas as they are faced with restricted set of livelihood options.

### Partners and Stakeholders

IPGRI is coordinating a Global Project supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a United Nations Agency based in Rome, Italy. The three-year Project is the result of close cooperation with a diverse range of Stakeholder Groups, including farmers and NGOs from National Programmes of Central & West Asia and North Africa/CWANA (Egypt and Yemen), Asia (India and Nepal) and Latin America (Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru).

### Project goal

Contribute to raising the incomes and strengthening the food security of small farmers and rural communities around the world through securing and exploiting the full potential of the genetic diversity contained in neglected and underutilized species.

### Plant species

- **Medicinal & aromatic plants** for the CWANA Region [e.g. argel (*Solenostemma argel*), caper (*Capparis* spp.), oregano (*Origanum syriacum*), mint (*Mentha piperita*), liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), aloe (*Aloe* spp.), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*), henna (*Lawsonia inermis*), nigella (*Nigella* spp.), "Al hidawan" (*Boerhavia elegans*) and "Al warss" (*Flemingia congesta*)],
- **Andean grains** for Latin America [e.g. quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*), cañihua (*C. pallidicaule*) and amaranth (*Amaranthus caudatus*)];
- **Nutritious millets** for Asia [e.g. finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*), Italian millet (*Setaria italica*) and little millet (*Panicum miliare*)].



Cultivated field of sage in El Arish, Egypt

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Mint, one of the priority species selected by Egypt



Little millet from India



Amaranth field in Bolivia



Amaranth variety from Peru

## WHAT ARE NEGLECTED AND UNDERUTILIZED SPECIES

**Neglected crops** are those grown primarily in their center of origin or centers of diversity by traditional farmers, where they are still important for subsistence of local people. Some species may be globally distributed, but tend to occupy special niches in the local ecology and in production and consumption systems. While these crops continue to be maintained by socio-cultural preferences and use practices, they remain inadequately characterized, and neglected by research and conservation.

**Underutilized** means species whose potential has not been fully realized. Farmers and consumers are using these crops less because in some way they do not compete with other crop species in the same agricultural environment. The ecogeographic decline of these crops may erode the genetic base and prevent the use of distinctive valuable traits in crop adaptation and improvement.

## PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS

- Greater nutritional security and income generation
- Conservation of genetic diversity
- Enhanced use of local agro-biodiversity
- Improved post-harvest, processing and marketing
- Empowerment of local communities and women in managing biodiversity
- Strengthening of production-to-use supply chains

## EXPECTED PROJECT OUTPUTS

- A secure resource base for the selected crops for use in global development initiatives, including deployment in marginal areas in other regions;
- Knowledge of effective procedures to integrate neglected and underutilized crops into development actions;
- Publications, including technical guidelines, information on specific crops, their properties and nutritional value, and an overall synthesis;
- Global experience linking plant genetic resources research with local institutions for managing crop resources.



Participatory approach: a strategic tool in designing and implementing the IFAD-IPGRI Project on underutilized and neglected crops.

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IPGRI is a Future Harvest Center supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

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