

Cultivating Forgotten Foods: Farmers' Perspective from North Eastern India

Melari Shisha Nongrum*

&

Melodynia Marpna**

Abstract

The Sustainability Development Goal 'Zero hunger' is a global agenda for all countries however, almost one-third of the global population still experiences moderate to severe food insecurity. In India, food and nutrition insecurity is still a burden with a global hunger ranking of 105th out of 127 countries. To tackle the issue of global hunger, the United Nations has realised the need to transform the food system towards sustainable forms. The North Eastern Region (NER) of India is rich in biodiversity and people continue to cultivate nutritious forgotten foods, commonly known as traditional food. To obtain an insight into farming practices, a cross-sectional survey with 210 farmers from the four states in NER was conducted. Almost all of the farmers (90%) cultivate traditional food. They face challenges while cultivating them and the key challenges are the production and conservation of traditional seeds, marketing the traditional products, and the lack of knowledge in the preparation and processing of such foods. For the continuity of the cultivation of traditional food, there is a need to sensitise the larger community about the importance of traditional food so that the demand for forgotten food would be generated, traditional seed conservation strategies using local networks and context-specific technology can be introduced and participatory research with farmers and scientists on the same platform can be initiated.

Keywords: Farming, Food insecurity, Food security, Forgotten food in NER, Traditional food in NER

* The author is Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Public Health, Shillong, Meghalaya.

** The author is Associate Professor, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, Meghalaya