



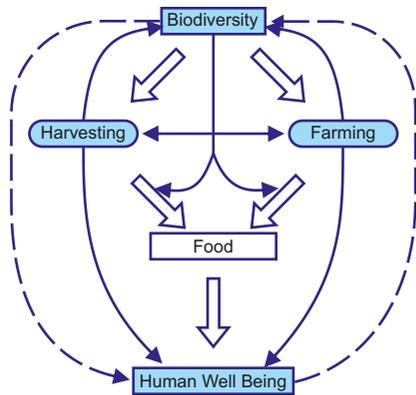
Madurai Symposium 2015

Venue: Thamukkam Grounds, Madurai

September 14, 2015

Our Food Biodiversity

An interactive workshop



Background

The provision of food is a principal link between biodiversity and human health. Human societies derive food by harvesting naturally self-sustaining wild populations or by farming. In its broader sense, biodiversity is the source of our current food and will be the source of novel foods in future. The conceptual model indicating the links between biodiversity and our

food system is shown in figure. Biodiversity is farmed or harvested, providing food, the quality and quantity of which affects human health. Farming and harvesting activities are not independent and they feed back on biodiversity, which can affect the efficiency and sustainability of food production and can have positive and negative effects on human health and wellbeing (Andrew Wilby et al. 2009). That way our local food system is embedded in our ecosystem and its biodiversity.

However, our food system has undergone a lot of changes in the last 2 decades and is still changing very fast. Some of the changes include increasing proportion of processed foods, decrease in dietary sources and the consequent decline in diversity of food components. In terms of dietary sources, we are more and more focusing on foods sourced through farming, leaving behind uncultivated harvested foods. In terms of food provision, we are moving away from self-provisioning and increasingly dependent on markets. The degree of this change varies from location to location. While communities living in remote pockets still depend to a significant extent on self-provisioning, communities in the well-connected areas depend a lot on markets. In this transition of the local food system, we are slowly losing our links with our ecosystem and its biodiversity. The knowledge and skills related to the links between 'the ecosystem and its embedded biodiversity', and 'the food system' is fast eroding, with new generations not inheriting them. The economic, health, cultural and social values of these links have eroded.





The transition in the local and regional food systems is one of the important reasons for health transition we are witnessing now in our country. We are facing double burden of malnutrition, with hidden hunger on the one side and obesity on the other side, even after many years of high economic growth. Among the children under the age of five years, 38.8 percent have stunted growth and 15 percent are wasted (IFPRI 2014). Anaemia caused by malnutrition among pregnant women in agriculturally well-developed regions like Andhra Pradesh remain as high as 49%. On the other hand, chronic and non-communicable diseases are on the rise. For example, the prevalence of Type-II diabetes mellitus and impaired glucose tolerance were affecting at an alarming rate both rural (2.4%) and





urban (11.6%) populations . Obesity is fast increasing across the rural and urban areas (Kalra et al. 2012). Non-communicable diseases, which were considered to affect only the affluent urban population, have become common among rural and less affluent populations.

At this juncture, it is important to look at the various links between our food and our biodiversity and take initiatives to strengthen these links, not only to enhance the well being of ours but also the next generation. For exploring the links between local food system and biodiversity and the possibilities of strengthening it in different contexts, that vary in terms of social groups (rural and tribal), cropping systems and agro-climatic regions, an interactive workshop has been organised by the Rainfed Farming Development Program of DHAN Foundation as part of **Madurai Symposium 2015**. The **Madurai Symposium 2015** focuses on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the theme of the workshop is in alignment with the proposed SDG 2 on Ending hunger, SDG 12 on Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and SDG 15 on Sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Objectives

1. To learn to systematically study the links between local biodiversity and local food system
2. To understand the specific links between '**our ecosystem and its embedded biodiversity**', and 'our local food system' in different contexts
3. To promote ways for strengthening these links for moving towards healthy diet and to enhance biodiversity

Participants

About 60 participants comprising of farmers, field staff and Dhanites from Tamil Nadu and outside Tamil Nadu locations will take part in the workshop

Expected outcomes

1. Appreciation of links between our biodiversity and our food system
2. Understanding of trends related to these links in the last two decades
3. Identification of practical interventions for strengthening these links

Place: Thamukkam Ground, Madurai, Tamil Nadu

Date: 14th September, 2015

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