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The Potential of Under-Utilised Fruit Trees in Central Sudan

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Abstract

Sudan is the largest country in Africa with an area of more than 2.5 km². The country includes various different ecological zones which are habitats for numerous plant species. However, only a few indigenous species have been promoted or researched and are under production in the field. Little attention has been paid to minor or under-utilised crop species like wild fruit trees.

The objective of this study was to emphasise the variety and multipurpose use of under-utilised fruit-producing trees, shrubs and palms in Central Sudan.

A number of very interesting under-utilised fruit trees were specified in the savanna belt of the Sudan. The fruits are often strongly used and an important diet for the rural people. Fruits like ‘nabak’ (*Ziziphus spinachristi*), ‘aradaib’ (*Tamarindus indica*) or ‘lalob’ (*Balanites aegyptica*) are available over the whole year on the market because of their demand and excellent storage capacity. They are a very important source of income for the rural population. The fruits have an exceedingly wide range of uses, i.e. food source, beverages and medicinal uses. They provide vitamins, proteins and minerals especially through periods of climatic stress as well as nutritional and financial deficiency. Examples for medicinal use of fruits are ‘garad’ (*Acacia nilotica*) and ‘gudeim’ (*Grewia tenax*). All of the fruits are harvested from wild fruit trees, no plantations are known sofar. Most of the fruit trees provide multipurpose use, such as the ‘tebali tree’ (*Adansonia digitata*). The fibre of the bark is used for making ropes, baskets and cloths and the leaves are an important vegetable beside the common use of the fruit. In Sudan the overuse of those multipurpose fruit trees has become a significant problem. Some of them are nowadays in danger like the palm ‘dom’ (*Hyphaene thebaica*).

Most of those woody plants are highly adapted to harsh conditions like drought or heavy winds. They are very important for soil conservation and protection and play an important role to slow down the desertification process in Central Sudan.

Keywords: Central Sudan, desertification, fruit trees, under-utilised crops