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## The Role of Root and Tuber Crops in Enhancing Development in the Coastal Region of Cameroon

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### Abstract

A wise planning and management of natural resources so as to secure their sustainability to ensure continuity of supply while maintaining and enhancing their quality, value and diversity attain rural development. Environmental degradation is highly contributed by the activities towards food production mostly by the local populace who are much engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. Their activities expose the soil surface during tillage which increase desertification, destroy virgin forests, and land. Such acts results in shifting cultivation which alters ecological balance of species, frequently contaminating water bodies with the farm chemicals often applied to boost production thus greatly contributing to environmental degradation which had been escalating in the past two decades and poses threat to increase in future. A large population of Cameroonians practice subsistence farming and yet a high level of food insecurity still prevails with low economic returns. Most farmers cultivate cereals, which forms 50 % of the first ten staple food in the area.

Root and tuber crops can contribute tremendously in redressing the odds cited with the concentration on cereal crops for their staple food. The potentials of the crops to more than double its production will go a long way in contributing to feed the 40 million Africans who are hunger striven. The potentials of these crops include: ability to grow compared to cereals, ability to grow in humid and sub-humid tropics with marginal soils thus serving as a better risk in environments where drought is a threat, minimal release of methane to the atmosphere compared to cereals, provide broader leaves that can be prepared as soup and which also serve as soil cover, minimal requirements of farm chemicals, relatively pests and diseases free, relatively higher productivity and highly efficient of edible carbohydrates. Harvesting, transportation and storage technology are constraints that limit the cultivation of the crops, which if overcome, could replace the other fraction occupied by cereals, which will boost production and environmental sustainability hence improving the lives of the local populace.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, degradation, development, environment, root and tuber, sustainability