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Ethnobotanical Survey in Leyte, Philippines, and Comparison with Indigenous Filipino Plant Lore

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Abstract

Presented are the results of ethnobotanical fieldwork among members of *Cienda San Vicente Farmers' Association (CSVFA)* who are involved in community-based forest management on the foothills of Mt. Pangasugan on the island of Leyte, Philippines. The farmer's knowledge on useful plants is compared to that of four indigenous groups from the Philippines. Overall, 123 plant species belonging to 90 genera and 53 families were documented to be used by the farmers for 77 different purposes including 42 human ailments. The predominant lifeforms are trees and herbs and more than 60% of all recorded species are native to the Philippines. Many species are used for more than one purpose: 80 plants have medicinal value, 34 provide food and 32 serve for other uses. For the indigenous people mainly plant species utilised as food and construction material are recorded. Perhaps as a consequence of different species composition in the respective regions, less than 15% of the plant species recorded for each indigenous group are also used by the farmers in Leyte. Some medicinal plants are used in the same way by the indigenous and non-indigenous people in the Philippines indicating that their use is based on pharmacological activity. The recorded plant resources could serve as an alternative source of income by integrating such plants into sustainable land use systems. In conclusion, CSVFA farmers use a diversity of plants and have acquired a high degree of knowledge on useful plants within their environment. This study provides a base for enhancing scientists' attention towards consideration of non-indigenous rural folks as source of ethnobotanical knowledge.

Keywords: Ethnobotany, medicinal plants, Philippines