

Medicinal Herbs Cultivation, Trade and Consumption in Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay

Isabel María Madaleno

Portuguese Tropical Research Institute

isabel-madaleno@clix.pt



Introduction

Colonia del Sacramento (15,934 residents) was founded by the Portuguese Manuel Lobo, in January 1680. It is located in the Northern margin of the River Plate and was mostly colonised by Spanish nationals, with a notable presence of Jesuit priests, responsible for vast mate tea plantations, as well as for cattle farms, where the local Indian populations, (formerly nomads), were settled.

Material and Methods

Fieldwork included interviews to three types of actors, using the same questionnaires: 1. Urban gardeners and farmers (24); 2. Herb traders and pharmacists devoted to plant retail (7 interviews); 3. The consumers (19), in a face-to-face and door-to-door sample research, conducted in 2011.

Origin	Therapeutic plant species (n.)	%
American Continent	23	32.9
European Continent	27	38.6
Asian Continent	12	17.1
African Continent	4	5.7
Universal species	4	5.7
Total	70	100.0

Results

In times of crisis there is growing food insecurity and malnutrition. The need to decrease national deficits is destroying most national health care systems worldwide. Consequently, urban agriculture is one of the responses that the urban poor find to meet their household needs, to cure mild diseases and mitigate health troubles. About 16% of the interviewed was over 80 years old, and 66%, more than 50.

The most cultivated species was African *Aloe*, corresponding to 62.5% of the gardens. The second were two species of native *Aloysia*.



Conclusion

Overall, the obvious preference was *Ilex paraguariensis*, usually known as mate tea, and the European flora consumed was superior in number to the American plant species as an output of both the Iberian Peninsula peoples colonisation and Jesuit settlements.