



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
“Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum”

Contribution of Wild Plants to Pastoralists' Diet and their Conservation Threats in Kajiado County, Kenya

MWANAIMA RAJAB, OLIVER WASONGA, CHRISTIAN HÜLSEBUSCH, BRIGITTE KAUFMANN

German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL), Germany

Abstract

The wild edible plants (WEPs) are not only important for their nutritional value but also as alternatives to staple foods during food shortage. Their roles especially in the drylands where they serve as sources of both regular and famine food for millions of pastoral communities is crucial for food and nutrition security. However, rapid land-use changes in the drylands accompanied by destructive exploitation of natural habitats such as extractive use through charcoal production, clearing for cultivation and settlement threaten the WEPs. Despite these concerns, there is scanty information on the use as well as the extent to which their conservation is affected by the prevailing demand for natural products and pressure on land.

This study was conducted in the pastoral areas of Kajiado County of Kenya in two locations neighbouring the city of Nairobi and the other two further away from the city. Semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data on priority WEPs. A combination of focus group discussions and resource mapping was used to determine the current and past availability of the WEPs, as well as their threats. In addition, on-the-spot observations through guided transect walks and photography were used to complement the collected data.

The results of this study present information on the priority WEPs based on informants' consensus, and the frequency of their use in comparison to conventional foodstuff as a way of determining their contribution to households' food basket. Also presented are the plant parts used, harvesting methods and their preparation. Additionally, availability and specific threats to the priority WEPs are provided. Finally, the authors give recommendations on the entry points for sustainable exploitation of wild edible plant resources and research gaps.

Keywords: Contribution to household food basket, pastoral areas, seasonality, threats, uses, wild food plants