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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Impact of Cultivation and Gathering on Medicinal Aromatic Plants: A Case Study in Makwanpur District, Nepal

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Abstract

Medicinal aromatic plants (MAPs) are an integral part of many households found in developing countries. Traditional knowledge of MAPs is often deeply rooted within the communities found close to the source of these plants. While a majority of MAPs are still being harvested from the wild, over-exploitation and unsustainable practices are depleting these resources at an alarming rate, particularly in Nepal. Bringing these threatened species into cultivation on a small-scale has become more apparent throughout the literature as a potential remedy to this persistent issue. Also, it could be an additional source of income generation. However, there seems to be a gap in the literature in the decisions leading up to the choice to cultivate by the farmer. The aim of this study was to highlight the variables that influenced or hindered the farmer to cultivate MAP species.

This study examined the differences, in terms of productivity, knowledge, and socio-economic factors between cultivating and collecting MAPs from the wild in Makwanpur District, Nepal. The influence of MAP cultivation on conservation and productivity was also analysed. An ethnobotanical approach was implemented applying both qualitative and quantitative methods using empirical data collected from the field as part of a master thesis project. One hundred households along with a number of focus groups and informal interviews were conducted in community forest user groups over a period of three months.

It was found that the challenges with adapting MAP cultivation include: lack of MAP cultivation knowledge, lack of quality planting material, technology and training, as well as a lack of a beneficial market. Collection was seen by the farmers as a conservation hazard both to the species itself and to the surrounding forest. Farmers that successfully cultivated MAPs had more knowledge, access to land, proper resources and a market benefiting the MAP species cultivated. The main motivation overall, however, was income generation.

Identifying the factors that promote successful cultivation of MAPs is imperative if cultivation is to be more prevalent in the future. Further research should be carried out to get a better representative picture.

Keywords: Community forestry, conservation, domestication, medicinal plants, Nepal, wild collection