



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Ethnomedicine in the High Lands of Chiapas, Mexico

EDUARDO ALBERTO LARA REIMERS¹, YAMEN HOMAIDAN SHMEIT¹, ELOY FERNÁNDEZ CUSIMAMANI¹, JUAN MANUEL ZEPEDA DEL VALLE², DAVID JONATHAN LARA REIMERS³

¹*Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Fac. Trop. Agrisci., Dept. of Crop Sci. and Agroforestry, Czech Republic*

²*Chapingo Autonomous University, Regional Centers, Mexico*

³*Chapingo Autonomous University, Dept. of Forestry Engineering, Mexico*

Abstract

Ethnomedicine is understood as a set of traditional knowledge, skills and practices based on theories, beliefs, and experiences of indigenous cultures. It is used as a health care source, as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illnesses around the world. Mexico has a long history in the use of ethnomedicine due to its biodiversity and multicultural (indigenous) groups, yet the use of medicinal plants is not only related to rural areas, economic status and cultural conditions.

The objective of this research was to record the medicinal plants used by 14 indigenous Tsotsil communities in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. The data was collected from 59 informants (61 % women, 39 % men) aged between 20 and 86 years, through a semi-structured questionnaire in the Tsotsil native language. A total of 59 species of medicinal plants belonging to 55 genera and 37 botanical families were reported. The Asteraceae family was the most cited, with 6 species (Uses Report = 51).

The highest cultural index (CI) was reported for *Matricaria chamomilla* (CI = 0.42), *Mentha sativa* (CI = 0.36) and *Ruta graveolens* (CI = 0.31). According to the informant Consensus factor (ICF) the main pathological categories treated were reproductive system diseases (ICF=0.80), respiratory infections (ICF = 0.75) and diseases of the digestive system (ICF= 0.70). The species reported and their diversity of uses provides the needs of the families with socioeconomic deficiencies.

Nowadays the use of medicinal plants is still high (visible) among the Tsotsil community but the diversity seems to be reduced in the recent years, and is gradually being replaced by modern medicine to heal general problems.

Keywords: *Asteraceae*, chiapas highlands, indigenous communities, medicinal plants, Tsotsil