



Tropentag, September 18-20, 2019, Kassel

“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Perceptions of Rural and Urban Population of Insect Consumption: Does Entomophagy Have a Future in Madagascar?

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Abstract

According to FAO (2013), the constant increase of the world population, the scarcity of natural resources, the strong pressure on the environment, are all constraints guiding reflections and discussions of researchers around the world on the possibility of considering insect consumption as a sustainable alternative to cope with a growing demand for animal protein. This is also true for the case of Madagascar where poverty and food insecurity dominate, and the impacts of agriculture and livestock farming on the environment are increasingly felt. Historically, entomophagy is already a secular practice. Insects have already been included in the traditional diet of Malagasy population. This communication aims to explain the perceptions of rural and urban population of insect consumption. The reasons for the consumption or not of insects were studied by considering various categories of population.

This communication lean on fieldworks conducted in the southern and central Madagascar highlands (Amoron'i Mania and Analamanga). The data were collected through surveys using a semi-structured questionnaire among various population groups, including 80 farmers, 20 civil servants, 20 workers in private sector, 20 in free-trade zones, 20 in informal sector. The results showed that entomophagy is a practice that interests more rural than urban population. Insects are more popular in rural areas where some people prefer to eat them instead of meat. People who do not consume them are rare; the reason is the allergy problems that can occur. In urban areas, psychological barriers affect negatively the development of entomophagy. For people who have never eaten insects, the main reason is the 'disgust' that comes from eating insects. The origins of disgust are rooted in the culture and education, which have a major effect on dietary habits. Some people have mentioned the danger that can be caused by consuming insect, especially the allergy case, and therefore refuse to consume it. Others just do not want to taste. The physical form of the insect (appearance, size), is at the origin of this feeling. However, these category of people agree to eat only if the insects are processed (e.g. into flour) and used as ingredients for other foods.

Keywords: Eating habits, entomophagy, insects, Madagascar highlands