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World Agricultural Heritage Systems: an Analysis of their Evolution and Configuration in Different Regional Settings

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Abstract

Traditional agricultural heritage systems are progressively gaining attention due to the shift from the prevailing agricultural production paradigm. Many of them have disappeared or have been reduced to their minimum expression after more than half a century of transformations linked to industrial and post-industrial agriculture. Many national and regional bodies are rediscovering their value and importance, not only from the point of view of conservation of their physical space, but also because of the ancestral knowledge that is embedded. They become key rural spaces for seeking alternatives in the sustainable provision of food for XXI century. There is no single worldwide denomination that identifies them, although Food and Agriculture Organisation's initiative around the Globally Important Heritage Agricultural Systems (GIAHS) is notable, and it has achieved some diffusion on a global scale.

This work tries to get an overview of the current situation after almost twenty years of evolution in the worldwide recognition of these agricultural systems. For this purpose, a review of the scientific production associated with these spaces is carried out. Three different scenarios are identified: the Asian, the European and the Latin American scenario. Each of them has its own characteristics regarding the level of development, mainly due to the period of time in which national and regional authorities has been working on them. But there are also differences in terms of conceptualisation and priority research focuses, as well as in the strategy for the implementation of networks at the national level that promote the conservation, research and transfer of knowledge from these systems to conventional ones.

Keywords: Agroecosystems, biodiversity, food security, heritage, traditional agriculture