



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2022, hybrid conference

“Can agroecological farming feed the world?
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

Understanding the contribution and dynamics of wild harvest in Turkana county

FRANCIS ODHIAMBO ODUOR¹, FAITH THUITA², DASEL KAINDI³, GEORGE ABONG⁴, JORDAB IRMGARD⁵, CÉLINE TERMOTE⁶

¹*Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Food Environment and Consumer Behaviour, Kenya*

²*University of Nairobi, School of Public Health, Kenya*

³*University of Nairobi, Food Science, Nutrition and Technology, Kenya*

⁴*University of Nairobi, Dept. of Food Science, Nutrition and Technology,*

⁵*Alliance Bioversity International and CIAT, Germany*

⁶*Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Food Environment and Consumer Behaviour, Kenya*

Abstract

Background: Compared to domesticated plant food sources, wild edible plants tend to be overlooked. However, there is substantial evidence that wild edible plants have great potential for improving variety and diversity of diets as well as micronutrient intakes of local communities while lowering the cost of nutritious diets for households.

Method: This mixed-method study elucidated the diversity and consumption of available wild edible plants and the local perceptions of the communities living in Loima and Turkana South sub-counties in Kenya. In 2020, data was collected using 12 gender-disaggregated focus group discussions and a cross-sectional survey including 360 randomly selected households.

Results: In total 73 wild edible plants were listed of which 24 were consumed in the six-month reference period by 48.5% of the surveyed households. Consumption frequency and contribution made by the wild edible plants to the household food consumption varied for each plant and household. All the surveyed households (96%) were classified as severely food insecure. The mean household food insecurity access score did not differ significantly between households that reported consumption of wild edible plants (14.4 ± 5.4) and those who did not (13.8 ± 6.2), $p > 0.05$. However, significantly bigger proportions of households that consumed wild edible plants than those that did not reported consuming foods they had wished not to consume (92.4% versus 88.4%, $p < 0.05$) as well as having to eat fewer meals than normal (96.5% versus 90.7%, $p < 0.05$) to cope with food insecurity.

Overall, 57.1% of the participants harbored positive attitude towards wild edible plants. While the general attitude did not differ significantly between wild edible plants among consumers and non-consumers, the study demonstrates that positive attitudes about wild edible plants is associated with wild food consumption. Long distance to harvest sites, lack of knowledge about them, their seasonality and how to prepare them coupled by unfavourable attitudes and perceptions are the probable reasons for not consuming wild edible plants.

Conclusion: Wild edible plants potentially bridge food and dietary deficits in food insecure households although their consumption is still limited and they may not be among households’ favourites foods.

Keywords: Dietary quality, food security, turkana, wild edible plants