Socioeconomic Dimension of Wild Food Plant Use during the Conflict in Syria

Naji Sulaiman[1], Lukas Pawera[2], Kindah Ibrahim[3] , Zbynek Polesny[1]

[1] Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Faculty of Tropical AgriSciences, Department of Crop Sciences and Agroforestry, Czech Republic

[2] Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, Czech Republic

[3] Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Department of Economics and Development, Czech Republic

Introduction

The use of wild food plants (WFPs) increases when the availability or accessibility of conventional food is limited due to emergency situations, such as conflicts [1].

Due to the conflict in Syria, Over 90% of the Syrian population are living below the poverty line. Nearly 60% of the Syrian population (12.4 million people) are food-insecure [2].

Our study aims to understand how people's socioeconomic status influences the use of wild food plants during the conflict.

Methods

The study was conducted in the coastal region of Syria between March 2020 and March 2021.

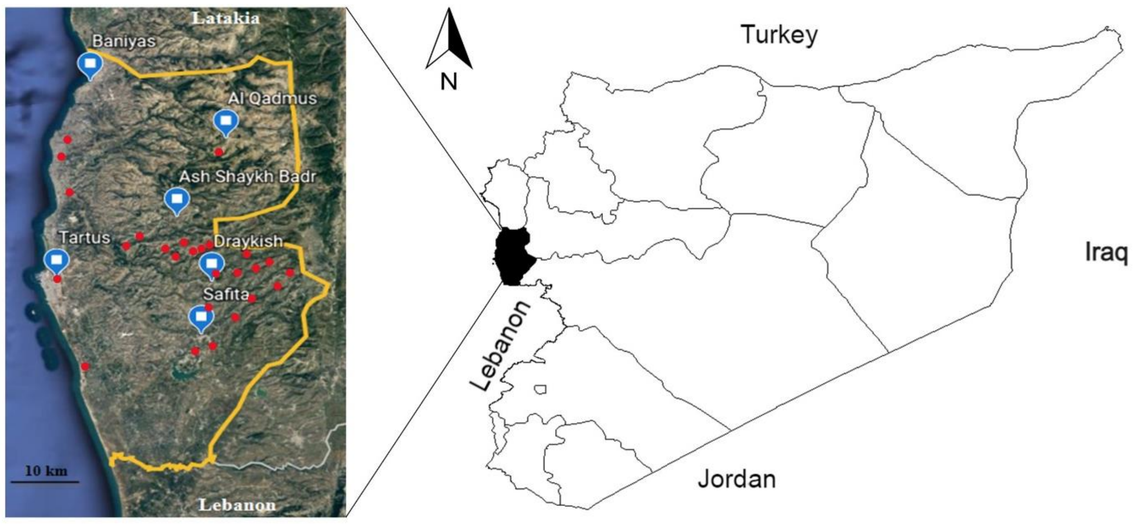

Figure 1. Study area, Tartus governorate. Red points refer to the selected locations where interviews were conducted.

Fifty informants (26 women and 24 men), representing 50 households, were interviewed in-depth on their use of wild plants during the current economic conditions resulting from the conflict.

Figure 2. A local lady searching for wild edible plants.

Results

Linear regression revealed that the reliance level on wild plant use as a food source and the frequency of use were highly correlated with gender.

The number of wild plant used species was predicted by age of informants (positively correlated) and the household income (negatively correlated).

Table 1 Influence of the socioeconomic factors on the use of wild plants

Variable	p-value		
Dependent variable / Independent variable	Reliance level	Number of used species	Frequency of use
Gender	**0.039**	0.944	**0.046**
Age	0.300	**0.031**	0.498
Education	0.464	0.640	0.116
Household size	0.930	0.581	0.549
War-involved households	0.229	0.644	0.154
Household annual income	0.168	**0.024**	0.474
Landholding	0.351	0.167	0.473

The most used species are *Origanum syriacum* L., *Rhus coriaria* L., *Eryngium creticum* Lam., *Cichorium intybus* L., *Micromeria myrtifolia* Boiss. and Hohen., *Allium ampeloprasum* L., *Cirsium vulgare* (Savi) Ten., *Gundelia tournefortii* L., *Scandix pecten-veneris* L., *Malva sylvestris* L., and *Anchusa strigose* Banks and Sol.

Figure 3. *Sleeq*, a common local dish based on a mixture of wild leafy vegetables

Figure 4. *Origanum syriacum*

Figure 5. *Shabshuleh*, a common local dish based on *Cichorium intybus*

References

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Email of the first author: sulaimann@ftz.czu.cz
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