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Agricultural production practices, challenges and opportunities of small-scale farmers in Burkina Faso and Senegal

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Abstract

Transforming local food systems is a complex process that requires a comprehensive understanding of the current status of existing systems, as well as producers’ perceptions of their challenges and potential solutions. The NUTRiGREEN project is aimed at exploring and improving the value chains of healthy and sustainably produced traditional plants in order to integrate them into the diets and incomes of resource-poor people, and strengthen their impact on the food systems in Zintenga, Burkina Faso and Thies, Senegal. As a foundational step, the project conducted a household survey, interviewing 210 main decision-makers in Burkina Faso and 204 in Senegal. The objective of this survey was to identify current practices, barriers, and potentials in the two project regions.

This article presents the core findings of the survey, which include an analysis of current farming practices and decisions made by local farmers in the research areas. The study compares the production of cereals, cash crops, roots and tubers, vegetables, fruits, and trees between the two countries, while emphasising the key factors that influence farmers’ production decisions. A special focus is placed on showcasing the agroecological practices that are already being followed, with an emphasis on the production, perception, and use of traditional plants, many of which have great potential in terms of nutritional security and medicinal properties. Furthermore, the article highlights the benefits of crop and dietary diversity, focusing on some of the indigenous plants being consumed in West Africa.

The study also includes an analysis of the information channels used by farmers, with the goal of establishing improved support and communication strategies to promote locally adapted sustainable resources management approaches. In addition, the article sheds light on the main perceptions and adoption methods chosen by small-scale farmers to address climate change.

Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the current status of local food systems in Burkina Faso and Senegal and highlights the challenges and opportunities for improving these systems in a sustainable manner. The findings of this study are relevant to policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working in the areas of food security and sustainable agriculture in West Africa and beyond.

Keywords: Climate change, farming decisions, production practices, traditional crops, West Africa