
Horticulture, biodiversity and poverty reduction: a positive feedback loop

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Abstract

The return to the benefits of indigenous fruits and vegetables and the related reactivation of underused and neglected species as well as the introduction of new varieties have made horticulture an important driver in the quest for preserving and increasing biodiversity. Moreover, this multitude of species and varieties can help to improve food and nutrition security as fruits and vegetables are the most important sources of micronutrients, fiber, vitamins and minerals essential for a balanced and healthy diet. In turn, high crop diversity reduces the risks of extensive crop failures for farmers. Additionally to improved health outcomes and risk mitigation effects, horticulture can contribute to development by creating new on- and off-farm employment opportunities, as horticultural production and processing is more labor intensive than staple crop production. Pre- and postharvest activities such as processing, washing, packing and labeling are often done by women, the landless, and other marginalized people who have few other job opportunities. Horticultural production enables farmers to access new domestic and international markets. Moreover, horticulture is usually more profitable than staple crop production, especially in situations where labor is abundant and land is scarce. Thus, horticulture creates wealth through different channels and offers a promising opportunity to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the global challenge of addressing both hunger while making an important contribution to preserving and increasing biodiversity.

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