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COMPILATION OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON HIGH VALUE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Background Fruits and vegetables indigenous to Philippines, described as underutilized species from specific regions native to the area, are less popular than their imported counterparts due to the lack of familiarity and promotion to the general public. Although several campaigns and food-based initiatives have been made by industries in promoting common fruits and vegetables as a healthful diet to the Filipino people, the lack of promotion of the nutritional and health value of less-known indigenous plants through print media fails to encourage availability, access, and consumption of such. An extensive literature research and compilation of updated information of indigenous, less-known high value fruits and vegetables is necessary to help mainstream and promote the latter. Most recent data on the nutritional composition, functionality and active biological components, recipes and recommended method of preparation to maximize nutrients for consumption were identified. The scientific information is made into reader-friendly handbooks and flyers and is distributed to health professionals, nutrition educators, farmers, agricultural industry, and policy makers as means to increase knowledge and awareness of Filipinos about locally grown, less-known fruits and vegetables.

Objectives To compile available information on indigenous, high value fruits and vegetables in the Philippines to be published in the form of handbook and flyers that will be used as references of health professionals, nutrition educators, farmers, agricultural industry, and policy makers as promotion tools to help improve health and nutritional status of the general public.

Methods

1. Initial review of related literature, field work and interviews of experts
2. Shortlisting and finalization of plant species list
3. Comprehensive collection of available information
4. Coordination with various experts, institutions, farms and markets
5. Collection and photoshoot of plant species and process products
6. Drafting of narrative content, handbook and flyer layout

Result This project identified indigenous vegetables and fruits species, to include common names, scientific names, other local names, availability and distribution, nutritive value, bioactive components, dietary uses, non-dietary uses and latest researches. Actual photos of plants in their fresh (raw form), cooked (how it is prepared as dish), and with their commercial products, if any. The contents were published in the form of handbooks and flyers.

Conclusion The consumption of indigenous fruits and vegetables contribute significantly to the nutritional health of people by providing the essential nutrients and bioactive components required for body and for prevention of diseases associated with nutritional deficiencies. Furthermore, these plants contribute to household food and nutritional security by providing a diversity of nutritionally-rich foods that can be used on a daily basis. There is a need to develop a comprehensive package for the sustainable utilization of edible wild plants through information dissemination so that households from urban and rural areas can make conscious efforts to preserve these plants around their homesteads, in crop fields and communal lands.