

ROLE OF FORMAL EDUCATION CONSERVATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Sub-Saharan Africa has been endowed with great plant diversity and endemism is high in the region. For long, the traditional African communities have taken care of these plant genetic resources and used them sustainably. It is through this sustainable use that several crops were domesticated. Though lacking formal training in plant genetics they also retained the diversity of these species. This knowledge on sustainable use of plant genetic resources was passed from one generation to another. Unfortunately, we have of late witnessed a rapid destruction of this patrimony. The traditional plant varieties get replaced by modern 'high tech' ones while vast areas rich in biodiversity get cleared for human settlement and farming. Genetic erosion is really an economic loss and is already hitting small-scale farmers in Africa. Genetic erosion and control over plant genetic resources has acquired social-economic, political, and technological global dimensions. Formal training has a major role to play in raising awareness on the utilisation and management of plant genetic resources. However this is not well reflected in the many curricula in our tertiary institutions involved in manpower training this paper suggest ways of disseminating knowledge on conservation and sustainable utilisation of plant genetic resources.

Key words: Plant genetic resources, Conservation, Formal education