

# NEWSLETTER

## NEGLECTED AND UNDERUTILIZED CROP SPECIES IN GHANA



Over the years, humankind has used almost 40, 000 plant varieties for medicinal and food purposes. Specifically, 7, 000 of these plant varieties are being farmed and used worldwide. However, the dynamism in the world population and the ever-growing nature of the global market system makes farmers intensively focused their activities around almost thirty (30) crops, which now form the foundations and basis for global agriculture. Although these vegetables play a very vital role in the improvement of rural families' welfare and livelihood in general, the concentration of farmers around these vegetable crops is limited to a very few varieties. Which results in a mono-farming culture as well as minimizing the number of crop species to which food security in the world depends on, thereby ignoring a large number of vital vegetable crops.

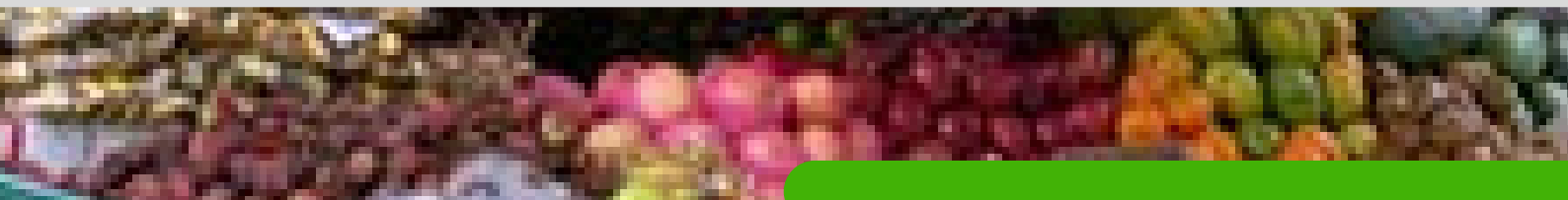
These “ignored” or “unrecognised” vegetable species with minor attention are nicknamed “Neglected and Underutilised Species (NUS).” Smallholder farmers in most farming communities keep these vegetables as part of the local food system, facilitating the less attention paid to them. However, these underutilized vegetables are potentially nutritious, medicinal, and income-generating foods for smallholder farmers in African communities.



## CATEGORIES

These species are categorized into two types: the life cycle, which includes the annual, short-lived, perennial, and long-lived, and the consumables, edible parts, purposeful or medicinal crops. The second category of NUS includes fruit vegetables, small trees/shrubs with edible fruits/nuts/seeds, leafy vegetables, cereal and legumes, medicinal annual crops, edible roots and tubers, and industrial annual crops. The accumulation of these two categories reveals almost 121 neglected and underutilized crops, out of which 40 per cent consist of trees and shrubs, and about 46 per cent are African Indigenous vegetables and crops.

West Africa is home to a diverse range of tree species, many of which are neglected or underutilized. Despite the large population of farmers and crops in Ghana, there are still a wide range of crops which are entirely utilized, and hence their potential is unexplored.





## OUR INTERVENTION

Smallholder farmers are mostly exposed to these crops, however, their knowledge of them and their utilization is almost nonexistent. As part of our projects, we educate women smallholders on the usage and benefits of some of these crops, especially those they cultivate. Through food demonstration events, we take them through how they acquire a complete nutritional package from some of these crops by incorporating them in their meals. Aside from nutrition and medicinal value, these crops holds a significant value economically. For this reason, our beneficiaries and women smallholders are taught to take up other agribusinesses we have introduced to them in the past.



Baobab, moringa, shea tree, tamarind, locust, cola nut, African mahogany are few examples of NUCS, and their significance cannot be emphasized enough.

