

Preface

This book is part of a larger series, *Issues in Agricultural Biodiversity*, published by Earthscan/Routledge in association with Bioversity International. It addresses the biodiversity dimensions of one of the greatest challenges our generation faces: to eradicate hunger and malnutrition from the planet. With the alarming pace of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and their negative impact on poverty and health, this book makes a compelling case for re-examining food systems and diets. We hope this book serves to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the role of biodiversity in improving diets and nutrition security, particularly in the developing world which is home to the richest repository of biodiversity, and yet is also home to the world's poorest people. The book is also intended to be used as a tool and a guide to promote the use of biodiversity within food production systems, and to demonstrate that by providing local solutions for diversifying diets, nutritional status can be improved, effectively and sustainably.

The first half of the book outlines some of the challenges, and identifies potential solutions and opportunities to conserve, measure, and utilize biodiversity for improved diets and nutrition security. The second half provides twelve unique case studies on the links between agricultural biodiversity and diets and nutrition. The case studies are taken from diverse settings around the globe. This book builds on the work that Bioversity International and the UN FAO are doing on developing the concept of sustainable diets. Sustainable diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems; culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources. Sustainable diets are therefore an important element for sustainable development and a green economy, providing a platform to promote strategies that emphasize the positive role of food biodiversity in human nutrition and poverty alleviation.

The book represents an important milestone in sharing our work on agricultural biodiversity, sustainable diets and nutrition, and their contribution to sustainable development and healthy food systems. It is also very timely, as it

addresses several aspects of the Zero Hunger Challenge launched at the Rio+20 Conference by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Sustainable food systems need better impact assessments and relevant policies based on the best evidence from agricultural landscapes. We hope the different chapters of the book demonstrate some of this impact and provide convincing arguments for engaging and strengthening policies and programmes. At the very least, the book and its authors have positioned nutrition, biodiversity and sustainable diets as important contributions to the post-2015 development agenda.

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