

Understanding Ugandan native plant species' role in innovative sustainable landscapes

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Natural resource degradation in Uganda has increased over the past 20 years, causing biodiversity loss and livelihood problems due to reduced nutritional diversity and food yields caused by soil erosion, flooding and poor methods of farming. Lack of awareness of the benefits of more diverse food systems to people's health and the environment, population increase, market pressures and poor policies contribute to degradation with sustainable land use systems converted to monoculture cash crops. TBG in partnership with BGCI, Makerere University, Grassroots Uganda and National Agricultural Research Organization, funded by the Darwin Initiative, implemented a project aimed at promoting agroforestry using native food plant species to address this. The project investigated how 34 native food plant species in diverse agroforestry systems could help address plant conservation challenges in Uganda. These species were tested in agroforestry trials in five different sites, analysed nutritionally to create novel food products that address nutritional gaps in Ugandan diets, improving their value and marketability. As demand increases, there will be increased farmer uptake of agroforestry compared to less diverse systems increasing national biodiversity and health impacts. By the end of the project, five agroforestry demonstration plots were established, market and nutrition research was undertaken for 12 wild food species, six new products (three juices and three powders) were developed and tested, 50 workshops with 250 attendees were held in project areas to engage local communities to discuss food consumption and barriers to accessing nutritional food year-round and gather traditional knowledge on the target plant species, six cocreation sessions were conducted, and 24 radio programs and four interpretation materials were produced to promote agroforestry practices.