

Abstract

Australian Native Plant Foods and Their Contribution to Diet Diversity †

Yasmina Sultanbawa

Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation (QAAFI), The University of Queensland, Coopers Plains, QLD 4108, Australia; y.sultanbawa@uq.edu.au

† Presented at the Third International Tropical Agriculture Conference (TROPAG 2019), Brisbane, Australia, 11–13 November 2019.

Published: 3 March 2020

Abstract: The triple burden of malnutrition is identified with overnutrition, undernutrition and hidden hunger. Although global food production in terms of calories has kept pace with population growth, low-quality diets that lead to micronutrient deficiencies and chronic diseases have become a global problem. Over 2 billion people globally suffer from micronutrient deficiencies as a result of insufficient intake of vitamins and trace elements in the diet. Currently, about 60% of dietary calories come from staple foods such as rice, maize, wheat, potato and soybean. There is a clear relationship between the reliance on a few staple crops or low dietary diversity and malnutrition. Dietary diversity is increased when consumption of cereals is accompanied by a high intake of fruits, vegetables and pulses. The occurrence of antioxidants and important dietary phytochemicals in these underutilised fruits and vegetables further enhances their value as dietary interventions to promote health and wellbeing. Australian native plant foods are rich sources of micro nutrients. Some better known examples are, the Kakadu plum (*Terminalia ferdinandiana*) which is a good source of vitamin C, green plum (*Buchanania obovata*) which is rich in folates and the wattle seeds (*Acacia* spp.) which are high in protein, dietary fibre and trace elements. Therefore, there is a need to develop strategies to include these food crops in nutrition intervention programmes and promote them as healthy food choices to be incorporated into the diets of Australians. The introduction of Australian native plant foods among nutritionally vulnerable communities where undernutrition, hidden hunger and chronic diseases have been reported will help alleviate these health problems.

Keywords: native plant foods; underutilized fruits and vegetables; nutritional value; food security; malnutrition; diet; antioxidants

Funding: This research was funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Industrial Transformation Training Centre (ITTC) for Uniquely Australian Foods (Grant number: IC180100045).

Acknowledgments: The authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which these Australian native plant species were harvested, and respect the knowledge and experience the Traditional Owners hold regarding the care, harvest and use of these plants.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.



© 2020 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).