

# Role of indigenous horticultural crops for rural smallholders in Mali

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## Abstract

Indigenous horticultural crops (IHCs) including vegetables, herbs and non timber forest products (NTFPs) have been traditionally utilized in West African societies. However, profits generated from IHCs for rural smallholders in these areas are still very low. A survey was conducted in 10 villages in Ségou and Koulikoro regions, Mali, in order to assess the current status of IHCs on villager's livelihood and the potential of IHCs for rural smallholders. In total, 34 species of vegetables and herbs, and 43 NTFP species were listed as crops which are highly appreciated for various purposes including food, beverages, medicine and cosmetics. Most NTFPs have multiple uses depending on the parts utilized. Access to germplasm was relatively easy since seed harvesting and collection is the common way in villages. Diversity, versatility and accessibility play a key role in the villagers' livelihood, while low and variable productivity, caused by their phenological traits and inappropriate management practices, limit the participation of IHCs in the market. Besides that, market expansion is limited due to the lack of processing / preservation techniques and facilities. Since smallholder farmers have limited access to finance, introducing a micro-finance system and/or setting up an organization of producers may strengthen market competitiveness. To support IHCs, there is a need to apply comprehensive countermeasures along the whole value chain.