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Editorial

Agricultural biodiversity is the diversity of crops and their wild relatives, trees, animals, microbes and other species that contribute to agricultural production. This diversity – which results from thousands of years of interactions among people and the environment – is a key component of healthy diets and human health. Food biodiversity is crucial to fight malnutrition and diet-related diseases. A diverse diet increases the likelihood of consuming adequate amounts of the full range of nutrients essential to human health. In agricultural production, agrobiodiversity supports long-term productivity, resilience and multiple ecosystem services, boosting yields in quality and quantity, increasing soil and water quality, and reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers. It also makes farmers' livelihoods more resilient, reducing yield losses due to climate change and pest damage. Broadening the types of cultivated plants is also good for the environment, increasing the abundance of pollinators and beneficial soil organisms, and reducing the risk of pest epidemics. Agricultural biodiversity also keeps open options for unknown future needs, when conserved. This can happen in gene banks as well as on farms, where agrobiodiversity is conserved by using it.

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