

Diversity of local foods resources traditionally used in infant feeding practices in Benin

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Introduction

Benin like like man developing countries is facing the crucial problem of children undernutrition . Simultaneously, there is a significant number of local foods resources which are used in a traditional way for food purposes by rural communities. However, the use of local foods resources is not always optimal for the nutritional status of the target group. Their effective valorization needs a thorough documentation for an adequate use in infant food formulation per agroecological zone in Benin.

Objective

This study aimed at documenting local foods resources that are traditionally used to feed children aged 4 -24 months in Benin.

Material and method

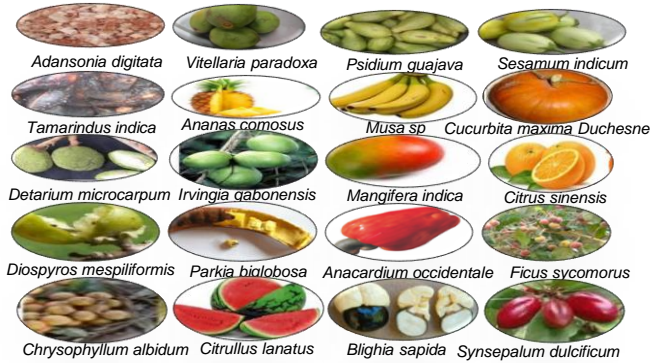
A literature review combined with an ethnobotanical survey allowed documenting the local foods resources. Ethnobotanical survey was performed in the 8 agroecological zones of Benin, especially in municipalities with high prevalence of food insecurity including one food secure municipality. Focus group, market exploration, structured interviews were used to collect data from informants. Specifically, a list of 34 resources reported in the literature were used for reconnaissance purpose during the ethnobotanical survey. Additional resources were mentioned by the surveyed population.

Results

138 local foods resources belonging to 123 species are used in infant feeding in 8 agroecological zones of Benin and are classified in 4 categories : cereals, vegetables and fruits, leguminous and oleaginous ,fishes, insects and meat



Cereals are staple foods in children diet. They constitute good source of carbohydrates and highly contribute to the energy value of infant foods.



There is a high diversity of fruits and vegetables which are locally available. They are good source of micronutrients (vitamins, minerals) and antioxidants.



Legumes highly contribute to the protein content of infant foods. Oil seeds offer additional energy to the formulated energy and protein to the formulated foods.



Various sources of protein of naimal origin mainly snails ,insects, etc. used in infant foods are usually seasonal. Some like fishes are highly priced.

Discussion

High use value of local food resources is not in accordance with a high consensus value
 •Zone agroecological with high food diversity are food insecure while zone(II) with the lowest diversity is food secure.
 •Knowledge share is wide and effective in zone (II) while the opposite is noticed in zones with high insecurity which however have high food diversity.
 •It is important to have access to the local foods resources, but it is even more important that their adequate and nutritionnaly balanced use is shared by all the population.
 •Zones with high local foods resources diversity and high food insecurity level should benefit from good sensitization on the best use of the available resources for the health benefit of their children.

TO TAKE HOME

Diversified nutritionnaly balanced foods
 Adequately combined foods + Good hygiene
 Good share of knowledge among population



Healthy child