

Unprecedented international project on biodiversity presents Brazilian-native species of the future

Results of the “Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition” initiative ([BFN](#)) will be unveiled at a symposium to be held in Brasília, on the 27th and 28th of November, Royal Tulip Alvorada Hotel, Brasilia

*Specialists from the four countries that make up the **BFN Project** will present the most important nutritional and economic aspects of native foodstuffs that promote sustainable production and healthier and more nutritious diets*

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Brasília, November 2017 - The ‘International Symposium Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition’ will present the results of the [Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for the Improvement of Nutrition and Human Wellbeing \(BFN\)](#) project. [Uniting four countries](#) (Brazil, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Turkey), the initiative draws attention to the benefits of biodiversity in diets, with implications for both human nutrition and the safeguarding of agricultural biodiversity to meet future needs.

At the Symposium, publications and other important training and research tools will be presented. First and foremost in the researchers’ intentions is to raise awareness among producers, industry, healthcare and education professionals, governments and society, of the information that has been discovered on the importance of biodiversity for food and nutrition. Amongst the presentations will be a [Database of the Nutritional Composition of Brazilian Biodiversity](#); a collection of publications on [Plants for the Future](#); a recipe book entitled *Brazilian Biodiversity: Flavors and Aromas*; and the online course “Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition”.

Participants in the Symposium include, in addition to the members of the BFN Project in the four member countries: the global project coordinator, Danny Hunter; representatives from UN Environment (formerly UNEP) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Florence Tartanac; the President of EMBRAPA, Maurício Lopes; the former Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Bráulio Dias; and the President of the National Food and Nutrition Security Council – CONSEA, Elisabetta Recine. Welcome speeches by the General-Director of *Bioversity International*, Ann Tutwiler, the General-Director of FAO, José Graziano da Silva, and the UN Environment Executive Director, Erik Solheim will be broadcast during the opening ceremony.

During one of the sessions, five chefs will prepare and serve dishes using native biodiversity, to be later enjoyed by guests during the Symposium’s opening cocktail party, hosted in conjunction with UniCeub and SENAC.

Priority species - Despite Brazil housing the widest variety of biodiversity on the planet (more than 20% of the world’s total), the majority of the country’s agricultural activities

are based upon exotic species. “We are reducing our consumption of species with high nutritional values to eat the same food that is being eaten in Hong Kong. This has consequences for the biodiversity of the planet, for our nutrition, the eating habits of future generations, and even the ways in which water is used,” explains the National Director of the BFN Project, Lidio Coradin. It should be recognized that, since 1900, according to FAO estimates, around 75% of the genetic diversity of plants has been lost.

In a study involving researchers from Brazilian federal universities (UFRGS, UNIFESP, UFG, UFC and UFPA), state universities (UECE and USP), the National Institute for Amazon Research (INPA) and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (EMBRAPA), the BFN Project has generated and compiled laboratory data on the composition of native foodstuffs, with the intention of promoting the consumption of those containing more nutrients, such as dietary fiber, calcium, iron, magnesium, and vitamins A and C.

Amongst the non-conventional fruit and vegetable species that have regional food value and are of potential economic and social importance, 70 species have been prioritized. The nutritional value of these native species was compared to that of the most consumed species in Brazil: banana, orange, apple, papaya and melon (according to the 2008-2009 *Pesquisa de Orçamentos Familiares* [Family Budgets Research / POF] performed by the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics / IBGE]). It was demonstrated that Brazilian fruits are equivalent if not richer in nutrients: the vitamin C content, for example, in 100g of the pulp of four native fruits - ‘camu-camu’ (1888 mg), ‘mangaba’ (332 mg), ‘caju-do-cerrado’ (294 mg) and ‘jabuticaba’ (238 mg) – is at least **three times higher** than that contained in 100g of common varieties of orange (53mg), banana (21.6mg) and papaya (82.9mg).

Encouraging the wider use of these 70 species could result in extremely positive nutritional, commercial and environmental effects. With this objective in mind, the project has developed the [Database of the Nutritional Composition of Brazilian Biodiversity](#), in partnership with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Communication, using data generated by the partner universities and research institutes. This tool is expected to become a national benchmark for establishing the composition of foodstuffs derived from Brazilian flora, as well as a powerful instrument for research and development, whilst also serving as a basis for the creation of public policies.

Plants for the Future - The [Database of the Nutritional Composition of Brazilian Biodiversity](#) will provide information on the nutritional value of 70 fruit and vegetable species selected by the BFN Project, based upon the species with economic potential prioritized by the [Plants for the Future](#) initiative. The aim is to increase knowledge about each species and encourage public opinion to pay more attention to issues concerning the conservation of flora - something that is directly related to climate change and its impact on the production of foodstuffs.

The initiative has also published a number of books on native species and their potential social, environmental and cultural benefits. The *Plants for the Future of the [Central West Region](#)* (with a preface by chef Alex Atala) will be launched during the Symposium, while

the book on the [Southern Region](#) is published and available for download on the website of the Ministry of the Environment. “The collection seeks to include these species in the meals of Brazilians and also encourages their cultivation for domestic and overseas markets,” explains Camila Oliveira, environmental analyst for the Department of Conservation and Management of Species with the Biodiversity Department at the Ministry of the Environment.

In an attempt to better understand the flora that is underappreciated in the daily lives of the Brazilian people, recipes based upon the studied fruits have also been developed and published in *Brazilian Biodiversity: Flavors and Aromas*. This book contains dishes that use ingredients from the five regions of Brazil, some of which will be tasted at the Symposium’s opening cocktail party. Some of the [recipes are available](#) (in English) on the international website of BFN.

An understanding of the importance of biodiversity in the human diet will also be shared by means of an online course. The course covers the relationship between biodiversity conservation, the sustainable cultivation of foodstuffs, quality of life, the generation of income, and the improvement of human nutrition and health. It also offers additional resources to facilitate the mainstreaming of biodiversity into programs and initiatives focusing on food and nutrition security. Anyone interested is welcome to access the online course as of 27th of November, when the first three lessons will be available on the BFN Project’s global website.

A fundamental achievement - one of the central objectives of the “Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition” (BFN) project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is the conservation and revitalization of highly-nutritional native plants. It also intends to help the public better understand the strong ties that exist between biodiversity, diet and nutrition, and, in Brazil, develop nationwide activities that include the provision of study and research grants, development of educational materials, tools and resources, as well as support for seminars, congresses and other events. Furthermore, the project is working in partnership with different government ministries to ensure the inclusion of biodiversity in policies and programs concerning food and nutrition security.

All these efforts have culminated in the creation of Inter-Ministerial Ordinance Nr. 163, dated May 11th, 2016, that uses species of flora native to Brazil to provide a list of those plants considered as making up socio-biodiversity, for the purposes of commercialization *in natura*, or of their derivative products, within the sphere of operations performed by the *Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos* (Foodstuffs Acquisition Program / PAA) in its different forms, by the *Política de Garantia de Preços Mínimos para os Produtos da Sociobiodiversidade* (Minimum Price Guarantee for Socio-Biodiversity Products Policy / PGPMBio) and by the *Programa Nacional para Alimentação Escolar* (National Program for School Meals / PNAE).

This ordinance will contribute enormously to increase the understanding and promotion of the sustainable use of the listed species and their consequent conservation. “It is expected that these species will be better recognized, not only by the federal institutions

that are partners in the BFN Project, but by the population as a whole,” explains Daniela Moura de Oliveira Beltrame, Coordinator of the Project in Brazil.

SERVICE

International Symposium Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition

Official website: <http://bfnsymposium.com.br>

Dates: November 27th and 28th, 2017

Location: Royal Tulip Alvorada Hotel,
SHTN Trecho 1 Conj. 1B - Asa Norte, Brasília - DF, 70800-200

Hours: 8am to 8pm