GFAiR-Ibadan Hybrid meeting:

The New Odisha Government Scheme on Neglected Crops and Forgotten Foods

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Ibadan, Nigeria

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# Overview

The Webinar titled “The New Odisha Government Scheme on Neglected Crops and Forgotten Foods” focused on the Forgotten Foods Initiative aimed at documenting and promoting traditional crops in Odisha. Dinesh Balam opened the session by discussing the importance of preserving these crops, followed by an overview of participatory varietal trials to emphasize community involvement. The session highlighted how youth could engage in educational initiatives to promote forgotten foods and the vital role of government support and investment in ensuring farmers' rights and food sovereignty. The discussion further explored international collaboration opportunities for biodiversity and food security, addressed challenges faced by farmers, and outlined strategies for improving market access.

# Notes

## Introduction to Forgotten Foods Scheme of Odisha.

* The scheme focuses on the conservation and promotion of neglected crops in Odisha through community engagement and scientific documentation.
* It involves collaboration with local farmers, researchers, and government bodies to establish sustainable practices and improve crop diversity.
* The scheme aims to enhance food security and nutrition by integrating these crops into local diets and public distribution systems.
* The scheme initiative aims to document and promote neglected crops in Odisha.

## The participatory varietal trials in Odisha.

* The trials involved collaboration between farmers and scientists to evaluate traditional and released crop varieties in various local ecotypes.
* Four traditional millet landraces were identified as outperforming released varieties, leading to their formal recognition and potential inclusion in government programs.
* The trials aimed to establish credible evidence of the superior performance of local landraces, thereby promoting their conservation and cultivation among farmers.

## The importance of scientific documentation and community involvement in the process.

* Scientific documentation is crucial for validating the performance and nutritional benefits of forgotten foods, ensuring that traditional knowledge is preserved and recognized.
* Community involvement fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among local farmers, encouraging them to actively participate in the conservation and promotion of their indigenous crops.
* Engaging diverse stakeholders, including women and youth, enhances the sustainability of food heritage initiatives by integrating traditional practices with modern agricultural techniques and market demands.

## Community Engagement and Education

The role of youth in promoting forgotten foods through educational initiatives.

* Youth engagement in educational initiatives can revitalize interest in forgotten foods by incorporating traditional knowledge and practices into school curricula.
* Programs that involve students in documenting local food heritage foster a sense of pride and responsibility towards preserving cultural culinary practices.
* Youth-led campaigns and workshops can effectively raise awareness about the nutritional benefits of forgotten foods, encouraging families to incorporate them into their diets.

## Engagement with local communities to document traditional recipes and practices.

* Collaborative efforts with community members ensure that the documentation process respects local customs and accurately reflects their culinary heritage.
* Involving local youth in the documentation process can help bridge generational gaps, encouraging the transmission of traditional knowledge and practices to future generations.

## The role of government in supporting the initiative and mobilizing investments.

* The government plays a crucial role in supporting initiatives for forgotten foods by providing financial incentives to farmers for cultivating these crops.
* Operational cases must be built to demonstrate the economic viability of forgotten foods, making it easier for government support to be mobilized.
* Collaboration with various stakeholders, including local communities and private sectors, is essential for creating a sustainable framework for promoting forgotten foods.

## Ensuring farmer rights and food sovereignty.

* Empowering farmers through legal frameworks that recognize and protect their rights to seeds, land, and resources, enabling them to make decisions about their agricultural practices.
* Promoting participatory governance models that involve farmers in policy-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are prioritized in agricultural policies.
* Supporting sustainable agricultural practices that enhance local food systems, reduce dependency on external inputs, and promote biodiversity, thereby strengthening food sovereignty.

## Partnerships with international organizations and diaspora communities.

* Partnerships with international organizations can enhance funding opportunities and resource sharing for forgotten foods initiatives.
* Engaging diaspora communities can facilitate knowledge exchange and promote the consumption of indigenous crops in global markets.
* Collaborative efforts can lead to the development of innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and food security challenges faced by local farmers.
* Global collaboration is essential for sharing knowledge and best practices in sustainable agricultural methods that enhance biodiversity and food security.
* International partnerships can facilitate access to funding, technology, and resources needed to support local food systems and conservation efforts.
* Collaborative efforts can help address global challenges such as climate change, which directly impacts food production and biodiversity, by promoting resilient agricultural practices.

## Addressing challenges faced by farmers in adopting forgotten foods.

* Farmers often face economic risks when adopting forgotten foods due to lower market demand and lack of established supply chains, making it difficult to justify the transition from conventional crops.
* Inadequate access to resources such as seeds, training, and technical support hinders farmers' ability to cultivate forgotten foods effectively, leading to concerns over yield and profitability.
* Cultural preferences and dietary habits can pose significant barriers, as farmers and consumers may be resistant to change from familiar staple crops to less-known traditional varieties.

## Strategies for improving market access and consumer awareness.

1. Improving market access for forgotten foods can be achieved through the establishment of local cooperatives that facilitate collective marketing and distribution efforts.
2. Consumer awareness can be enhanced by organizing community events, cooking demonstrations, and educational workshops that highlight the nutritional benefits and culinary uses of forgotten foods.
3. Leveraging digital platforms and social media can help create a broader outreach strategy to connect urban consumers with local producers, thereby increasing demand for forgotten foods.

## Workshops and community events to promote forgotten foods.

* Community events to promote forgotten foods include engaging local farmers and communities to share knowledge about traditional crops and their benefits.
* Workshops focus on hands-on activities such as cooking demonstrations, seed saving techniques, and the nutritional value of forgotten foods to encourage participation and interest.
* Collaboration with schools and urban communities raise awareness and create demand for forgotten foods, integrating them into local diets and markets.

# Action items

## Building an online community for sharing knowledge on forgotten foods and crops among participants.

* Emphasis on the importance of networking and connecting various stakeholders, including diaspora communities, to promote sustainable practices and conservation efforts.
* Facilitate collaboration among researchers, farmers, and consumers to exchange best practices and innovations related to forgotten foods and crops.
* Create a digital platform for sharing resources, recipes, and success stories to promote the cultivation and consumption of neglected crops.
* Encourage participation from diverse stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and academic institutions, to enhance knowledge and awareness of food heritage.

**Opportunity:**

[Community of Practice on Africa Forgotten and Underutilized Food Commodities](https://faraafrica.community/fara-net/forgotten-foods?e=/__e/vc/73c1ccb3-00b4-4481-9a3f-754393943ab1)

The central objective of the Africa Community of Practice (CoP) on forgotten and underutilized food commodities is to foster the reintegration of forgotten food commodities into the mainstream food systems in Africa countries through research, knowledge generation and dissemination, technology development, advocacy for policy development and fostering investment.

The community of practice has the following characteristics. It comprises of:

1. stakeholders from the different sub-sector interacting on the underutilized commodities viz., the researchers, farmers, aggregators and marketers, processors, extensions agents, policymakers and other state and non-state actors.
2. individuals with knowledge, experience and keen interest in the development of underutilized commodities.
3. The CoP hosts the central “Think-Tank” which comprises of more top-notch professionals (Scientist and practitioners) with hands-on skill to brainstorm and generate ideal for further refinement and use by the CoP. The think-Tank will be elastic in nature.

Participation in the CoP is on voluntary basis; participation may be on individual basis or to represent an organization or a group. The CoP meets virtually and where resources is available organizes physical meetings. The FARA desk officer for forgotten and underutilized food organizes the meeting and coordinate the CoP.

The CoP engages in the following:

1. Development of programs and projects as well as fund raising for the advancement of the subject of underutilized and forgotten foods.
2. Engage in extensive discussion and strategy development.
3. The CoP captures and share existing knowledge to help people improve their practice on underutilized commodities.
4. The CoP provides a forum to identify solutions to common problems and a process to collect and evaluate best practices.
5. The CoP facilitates learning, enable dialogue to solve challenging problems.

## Explore the possibility of a joint research proposal between Odisha and Nigeria regarding forgotten foods and biodiversity

* Explore collaborative research on indigenous crops and forgotten foods to enhance biodiversity conservation strategies in both regions.
* Investigate market potential and consumer preferences for forgotten foods in urban areas to promote sustainable agricultural practices.
* Share knowledge and best practices between local farmers and communities to strengthen food sovereignty and nutritional security.

**Opportunity:**

[Third UK Research Grant Competition](https://www.gcbc.org.uk/grants/): Global Centre on Biodiversity for Climate (GCBC). The Concept Note application window will close on **Sunday 16 March**. Following the assessment of Concept Notes, the successful applicants from this first round will be invited to submit full Proposals for their proposed projects which address the RGC3 themes.

The GCBC will accept applications for projects with activities in GCBC-eligible countries in Latin America (including Central America), the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South-east Asia and the Pacific and Small Island Developing States.

[Research Grant Competition 3 (RGC3)](https://www.gcbc.org.uk/grants/)Theme 1: Using biodiversity to improve the climate resilience of agricultural, food and bioeconomy value chains.