



UNIVERSITY OF HOHENHEIM

Wild harvest practices of the Moroccan Aït Isful women:

Perceived environmental changes and their social and food security implications

Master thesis

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Abstract

The Amazigh people, natives to the Maghreb countries, are known for their consumption of wild harvest for food, medicine, and other uses, wherein the women commonly have a particularly central role. Significant changes in wild collection could have a large impact on the women (such as their community roles and economic opportunities), local biodiversity, and community food security. The aim of this research is to explore the habits of an un-studied Amazigh tribe in the Moroccan region of Drâa-Tafilalet where there is concern about decreasing wild collection. It aims to explore what has been observed by the women in the community regarding changes in harvesting practices or availability of the commonly used wild plants, why changes are occurring, and what impact this is having on them. Qualitative research methods during two research periods were used to collect data, including: formal and informal interviews, participant observation, a group collaboration, and transectional walks to observe plants. The results showed that wild collection in this tribe is largely done for personal medicinal use, with a much smaller fraction for food, cultural, and economic purposes. The findings show that there is an expressed concern that both the physical availability of the wild collected plants, as well as the cultural knowledge of their gathering and use are both eroding. A handful of important plants were identified as declining in availability for wild harvest, while some are perceived not to be at risk. Drivers for these changes were shown to be both social (migration, urbanization, and decreased interest in the use of wild plants) and environmental (drought, underground water shortage, and desertification). Following this study, it is concluded that further research in this area and other rural settlements of the region would benefit from additional research into the effects of climate change and intensive agriculture, as well as more in-depth ethnobotanical studies that could help to preserve and promote the cultural and environmental value of wild harvesting. In order to safeguard the bioculture and improve food security of these regions, the government needs to centralize the botanical knowledge of the locals (Amazigh), especially the women, when further developing social and agriculture policies and programs.