





With the technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



One of the world's greatest challenges is to secure access for all to adequate supplies of food that is healthy, safe, and of high quality, and to do so in an environmentally sustainable manner. To achieve the necessary improvements, a sustainable management of natural capital must be at the forefront of the major goals of food production systems. Resilient environments, sustainable production practices and the protection of agrobiodiversity can serve as avenues to improve dietary diversity and quality and, in turn, generating income for sustainable small holder farmers, at the same time as aiding in the restoration and preservation of ecosystem.

Simplification of agricultural production has allowed increased farm yields in the second half of last century. However, the reduced variety of crops on which commercial farming is based upon implies a reduced capacity for agriculture to adapt to environmental changes and stresses. The loss or lack of adaptive capacity in modern, commercial agriculture is a cause for concern in relation to the expected impacts of climate change.

This topic is particularly relevant to mountain areas. Mountain farmers are preserving many of the rarest varieties of cultivars in functioning biodiverse agro-ecosystems, while the harshness of the environment as well as the effects of climate change increasingly pressures the mountain communities to modify their traditional approaches to agriculture.

Taking into account agrobiodiversity in food systems means bringing together various sectors of science, agriculture and economy to propose new strategies of food production that can be implemented in a changing environment, proposing diversified crops and practices as a resource and increased variety as a strength in agro-ecosystems. In addition to agricultural and genetic aspects, the agrobiodiversity discussion focuses on economic and social issues such as identifying markets for biological products, developing adequate value chains and marketing strategies, and preserving local crops.

The impact of investments in the agricultural sector depends significantly on the kind of interventions carried out and on the type of food system that is promoted. It is essential to enable community-driven food systems that provide the best possible outcomes for producers and consumers. In this model consumers and producers are connected through short, transparent, direct value chains, with a double impact on the income of citizens. Producers are incentivized to develop or conserve quality based production models that are then rewarded with a price premium by consumers. Conversely, consumers are able to access culturally adequate, safe, nutritious food at affordable prices.

Objectives, participants and venue:

The course will focus on the importance of biodiversity in agriculture, with particular attention to its role in enhancing resilience and adaptability of cropping and farming systems to climate change.

The lectures will illustrate principles and practices for gathering agro-biodiversity data through either participatory diagnostic and empirical approaches, and for their utilization to develop management approaches that improve resilience and adaptability.

The course will also analyse the economic value of agricultural biodiversity in food systems as an incentive to conservation. The most critical management aspects along the agricultural value chain will be investigated, ranging from production to marketing and consumption.

A set of tools and methodologies for improving market access of neglected and underutilized foods and the role of gastronomic heritage as a driver for rural development will be presented.

The aim of the course is to equip the participants with the necessary tools, knowledge and understanding to enhance productivity and improve marketing strategies in sustainable and resilient agricultural systems.

The training will include joint lectures by speakers from various national and international organizations and a field trips to nearby farm, which will provide hands-on experience on relevant practices.

Upon the completion of the training (75% of attendance required) the students will be awarded 6 CFU

Organizers: Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Environmental Biology; Bioversity International; Mountain Partnership Secretariat. With the technical support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

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Official course language: English

When: 18 - 26 September 2019

Fees: 400 Euro

Location: FAO Headquarters, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, Rome

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