



Isaac Newton Boakye-Mensah, Principal Technologist at CSIR in Kumasi, Ghana, holding amaranth in the field. (Photo: Neil Palmer/Crop Trust)

BOLD gets BOLDER: Enhancing the Production and Consumption of Neglected and Underutilized Food Crops

Growing a diversity of crops is a key strategy farmers can use to protect their fields and livelihoods against the ravages of climate change. Different crops respond differently to heat, drought and pests and diseases, ensuring that the farmer always has something to harvest.

One class of crops, in particular, has great potential in this respect: neglected and underutilized species (NUS). These are crops that were once important sources of food but have fallen out of favor (and, oftentimes, also market shelves) because of the lack of attention paid to them by researchers, breeders and policymakers — and also because other crops became trendier.

Neglected no More

BOLD (Biodiversity for Opportunities, Livelihoods and Development) is a 10-year project, funded by the Government of Norway, to strengthen food and nutrition security worldwide by supporting the conservation of crop diversity in genebanks, and its use in pre-breeding. But now, thanks to additional funding from the Government of Norway, BOLD is adding NUS to the portfolio through BOLDER (Building Opportunities for Lesser-known Diversity in Edible Resources). Working with partners across Africa — Benin and Ghana in West Africa and Tanzania and Uganda in East Africa — BOLDER will enhance the conservation, production and consumption of lesser-known crops that are nutritious, robust, environment-friendly and important for local communities.

Examples of neglected and underutilized species:



Identifying and Improving Candidate Crops

BOLDER will work with genebanks, universities, national and international agricultural research organizations, farmers, food companies and other food system stakeholders to identify two to four NUS crops in each country that present particular opportunities. Collections in national genebanks will be augmented through in-country collecting, and the collections will be documented and conserved, including backed-up in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

Building on this diversity, the project will support existing crop improvement activities targeting these crops in the four countries. Farmers and consumers will be closely involved in evaluating the crops and any improved varieties developed to ensure that they meet local needs.

Strengthening Demand and Availability

But these crops will only really have an impact on food and nutrition security, and farmers' resilience, if there is a demand for them from consumers — and efficient production systems and markets to satisfy that demand. The project will thus work with experts in agricultural value chains in partner countries to increase cultivation and production of these NUS, improving the availability, production and consumption of nutritious food for both rural and urban consumers, and creating employment and income opportunities for youth, women and indigenous communities.

A Multipartner Effort

BOLDER is a collaborative effort. Key players include the Norwegian University of Life Sciences —which is co-leading the effort with the Crop Trust— the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and other One CGIAR Centers, the World Vegetable Center, national agricultural research systems, universities, NGOs, farmer households and the private sector.

Together, we will revitalize NUS and increase communities' access to foods with high nutritional value while bolstering efforts to develop and climate-proof agriculture.



About the Global Crop Diversity Trust

The Crop Trust is an international organization working to support conservation and use of plant genetic resources. The Crop Trust is recognized as an essential component of the funding strategy of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

About the Government of Norway

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports projects and programs around the world through Norway's development agency, Norad.



Fadiya Gula, a local farmer in Kumasi, Ghana, examines varieties of roselle, an indigenous leafy vegetable, in the field. (Photo: Neil Palmer/Crop Trust)



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