

Maximizing Livelihood Opportunities Through Introduction of High Value Medicinal Plants in District Swat, Pakistan; Study for Sustainable Development and to Meet SDGs:

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ABSTRACT

This study examined opportunities to maximize farm income through introduction of high value medicinal plants in the war-stricken district of Swat. The tested hypothesis was the establishment of ex-situ experimental production plots which has supposedly provided theoretical frame work for the development of skills in horticultural production and marketing among people in the valley and helps rebuild commercial connections between this region and the rest of Pakistan. This project was aligned with the overall attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals of the Government of Pakistan and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation agreed in 2002 under the United Nation Convention on Biological Diversity. The project involves a substantial agricultural extension component with farmers in three villages of District Swat. The project has covered a range of interventions such as local awareness campaigns, capacity-building training, and community mobilization for conservation of threatened species, formation of “medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) Producer Associations who are directly linked to big buyers for maximizing their net income. Moreover, the project also established demonstration plots of the selected high value MAPs for economic analysis/feasibility (in terms of cost comparisons/opportunity cost between cultivation of cereal/cash crops and the selected high value MAPs and regular monitoring and evaluation of the adoption by farmers of improved agricultural practices. Additional emphases have been placed on developing reliable marketing channels. In this context, and also in order to address different aspects of biodiversity uses for economic growth, the project has also worked to adapt appropriate strategies and technology recommended in Sustainable Development Goals by Government of Pakistan (<https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/pk/pk-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>). The study has also incorporate evaluation of its performance in introducing standardized production technology and appropriate post-harvest management, which represent the prime ‘engines of growth’ for the local economy. These strategic economic development areas are entirely based upon, and closely interlinked, with the management and conservation practices of high value MAPs, and intact landscapes.
