Correct Application of Colloquial Plant Terminology May Help to Combat Food & Nutrition Insecurity

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Genetic diversity in commercial food crops is decreasing, leading to a higher exposure to food & nutrition security threats, mainly: (1) diseases, (2) climate change (3) soil depletion. Reversal may occur through identification and supply chain reintroduction of underutilised edible plants with unaltered genotypes, from the pre-war era. Feasibility of the assignment is dependent on the correct application of specific definitions in archival literature research and the possibility of commercial exploitation of the definitions in supply chain diversification. The aim of this research is to quantify and define colloquial terminologies for ‘forgotten edibles’ to provide practical application across the food industry.

A linguistic corpus search and a systematic literature review were applied using the 5 key terms related to ‘forgotten edibles’, these were: *traditional, heirloom, heritage, landrace* and *orphan*. This search allowed for quantitative data generation on the frequency and context of the distinct lexical items. The data was presented in numerical and tabular formats.

Results from academic data bases indicate that heirloom, heritage, landrace and orphan are terms used to describe ‘naturalised’ & ‘indigenised’ food crops with strong affiliation to selective plant breading by farmers. On the other hand, findings from colloquial resources led towards the use of ‘traditional’ as an overarching term. Contextualising the terms was found as ‘arbitrary’ and ‘undefinable’ due to their continuing evolvement in the socially accepted form of language.

More frequent application of the above terms in all sectors of the food industry would lead to an increase in agrobiodiversity, resulting in higher level of food & nutrition security. Current consumers’ trends towards ‘planet health’ can be exploited using these terms, to impose new sustainable practices across the industry.