

Traditional Knowledge + Modern Practices

Lesson 2: Indigenous Traditions Associated with Foods and Lesson 3: Wolaita Livestock and Environmental Challenges **Farm to Table in Wolaita Curriculum Unit:**
Ethnobotany in Wolaita

Name: _____ Date: _____

The following information is obtained from an interview conducted with Dr. Dawit Dalsa, Wolaita Sodo University, July 19, 2017

Developing sequential gardens in the Wolaita culture is essential. During the main season of the year, root crops are planted: potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes and tara. During the rainy season, cereal crops are planted: maize, wheat, tef, barley and common beans (these are planted in the lowland areas) and fake banana (enset). Rural home gardens include planting coffee trees, fake banana, fruits and vegetables, tomatoes, garlic, herbs, cabbage and onions. Urban gardens include varieties of herbs, fake banana, fruits and vegetables. The challenge facing many farmers is crop procedures and soil quality composition--the soil is depleted and fragmented with the small area allotted for their crops. Dr. Dawit Dalso, Wolaita Sodo University, indicates that researchers are currently engaged in a composting project using biodegradable materials. In the southern Wolaita area, farmers have .025 acres to grow vegetables with dense planting. Soil management, conservation and crop rotation are popular measures practiced. Small scale farmers are receiving help to enhance the soil. They are given nitrogen-fixing plants and organic fertilizers which are combined with their traditional use of animal dung to enrich the soil. Farmers are also incorporating their intuitive farming techniques which have been used for generations. Through government extension workers visiting kebeles (villages), farmers are becoming educated on current farming technology to improve the soil and yield quality crops. A memorable thought that accompanies ongoing efforts to assist farmers is: "If we (Wolaita culture) give to our soil, then our soil will give to us."

Read the following excerpt from *A Selection of Ethiopia's Indigenous Trees: Biology, Uses and Propagation Techniques*, by Dr. Legesse Negash:

“Restoration of indigenous trees is much more than just planting them—it is about re-establishing (at a landscape scale) the lost vital ecosystem functions that vegetation used to provide for both people and other organisms, including wildlife and lower forms of life such as lichens, mosses, and ferns.

Landscape restoration through use of indigenous trees will connect (and hence help revive) forest fragments. It will establish a network of vegetation bridges among protected areas, thereby creating corridors for wildlife mobility. Landscape restoration helps mitigate the impacts of devastating climatic conditions manifested in Ethiopia through frequent droughts, increased likelihood of desertification, and intensified flooding. Although Ethiopia cannot be held responsible for the current global climate change, it has to play a constructive role in the sequestration of CO₂, the primary molecule that causes global warming. One way of achieving sequestration is to allow the revival of pioneer plants, as well as to establish as many indigenous trees as possible over Ethiopia’s degraded landscapes, including its shattered watersheds.

The benefits of restoring indigenous trees, shrubs, herbs, and grasses across degraded landscapes include biodiversity development, improvement of water quality and quantity, as well as regeneration and stabilization of the soil. Landscape restoration through the development of indigenous trees and biodiversity will have tremendous impacts on health (e.g. sustainable production of nutritious foods, provision of medicinal plants, and availability of fresh water) and economic growth (e.g. development of forest-based products and expansion of ecotourism). P. 4

Reflect on the above information and answer the following question:

1. With limited land for small scale farmers, what measures are being done to ensure successful crops?

References: Negash, L. (2010). *A Selection of Ethiopia’s Indigenous Trees: Biology, Uses and Propagation Techniques*. Addis Ababa University Press, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.