

COHAB 2
Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity
Galway, Ireland, 25th to 28th February 2008

Satellite Workshop:

Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Natural Food Resources

Friday, 29th February 2008

The COHAB Initiative Secretariat, in association with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the United Nations Development Programme, the Centre for Indigenous People's Nutrition and Environment, and the Government of Canada, will convene a special discussion forum on the theme "**Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Natural Food Resources**", in Galway, Ireland, on Friday 29th February 2008.

The aims of this workshop are:

- To discuss the importance of biodiversity to the nutrition security and dietary health of Indigenous People worldwide.
- To share experience from community-based research and activities on traditional food systems.
- To discuss the threats which climate change poses to natural food resources, community health and traditions.
- To promote cross-cultural and cross-sectoral collaboration on the conservation of traditional food systems and natural food resources.

The workshop will take place on Friday 29th February 2008, the day after the main COHAB 2 conference ends. Participation is open to indigenous community representatives, to decision makers from the agriculture, health, and biodiversity / environment sectors, and to scientists, environmental professionals, and other stakeholders.

Background

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has highlighted the range of ecosystem services that support food production and associated livelihoods and traditions, while also illustrating how biodiversity loss can affect the nutrition security of millions of people worldwide. In particular, the health of Indigenous Peoples is often directly dependent on locally productive ecosystems providing sources of basic nutrition. Local food production is critical in preventing hunger and nutrition deficiencies, while also supporting important traditions and cultural practices, and promoting sustainable rural development. In many regions, food resources based on local varieties and traditional approaches are often inherently more beneficial to human health and livelihoods than more modern or intensive production methods, which utilise non-native food resources or environmentally damaging interventions. The dietary health of many communities is threatened by ecosystem degradation and the loss of biodiversity, and by transitions away from traditional food systems. Some issues of particular concern for Indigenous Peoples include:

- The effects of pollution and global contaminant transport on the quality of food resources.
- The emergence of new pests and diseases that compromise food security or threaten the health of those who rely on natural foods.
- The impacts of biodiversity loss on the ecosystems upon which traditional food systems depend.

- Rights to equitable access and sharing of the benefits arising from use of traditional knowledge systems and genetic resources used in traditional food systems.
- The negative impacts which a shift from traditional food systems can have on cultures and social cohesion.

Climate change is perhaps the most insidious threat facing traditional food systems and the health of Indigenous Peoples, as it not only affects food quality and resource security, but enforces a shift from traditional practices to more unsustainable or unhealthy alternatives, in some cases directly threatening the existence of entire cultures and ways of life. The reports of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment suggest that biodiversity conservation is likely to become increasingly important in ensuring food resource security as the effects of climate change become more pronounced and widespread. Enhancing the diversity of natural food resources and supporting indigenous food systems may be vital tools to help many communities adapt to climate change, and protect Indigenous Peoples' health in the longer term.

A series of twelve case studies on traditional food systems and the dietary health of Indigenous Peoples across the world have recently been completed by an international group supported by the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment (CINE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). These studies documented the range of natural food resources and food systems utilised by these communities, analysed the nutritional value of these resources, and identified opportunities to enhance community health using culturally sensitive and environmentally relevant elements of local food systems. This important work will provide the background of this workshop.

Workshop Format

The workshop will form part of a week of international discussions on biodiversity and human well-being, taking place in Galway, Ireland, centred around the Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity (COHAB 2).

The event will serve to promote and highlight the results of the recent CINE / FAO case studies, and other related work involving Indigenous Peoples across the world. Presentations of research from North and South America, Asia and Africa will be mixed with open discussions and working group exercises.

Results

The workshop will work to prepare a report for submission to the ninth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008. This report will highlight the issues linking biodiversity and climate change with the health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. It will focus on the values of traditional food systems to food resource and nutrition security, and the importance of traditional knowledge to global food production, outlining the challenges and opportunities which biodiversity loss and climate change represent. It is intended that the report will have particular relevance to CBD COP9 discussions on the issues of agricultural biodiversity, access and benefit sharing, and CBD Article 8(j). It is intended that the report will also be submitted to international meetings on community health, food security and climate change issues.

A series of papers from the workshop will also be published in a special section of a forthcoming edition of the *EcoHealth* journal.

Tentative timetable:

08.30 – 09.00	Registration
09.00 – 09.10	Welcome
09.10 – 09.35	<i>Presentation</i>
09.35 – 10.00	<i>Presentation</i>
10.00 – 10.25	<i>Presentation</i>
10.25 – 10.50	Discussion
10.50 – 11.10	<i>Refreshments</i>
11.10 – 11.35	<i>Presentation</i>
11.35 – 12.00	<i>Presentation</i>
12.00 – 12.40	<i>Discussion</i>
12.40 – 13.40	<i>Lunch</i>
13.40 – 14.05	<i>Presentation</i>
14.05 – 14.30	<i>Presentation</i>
14.30 – 14.55	<i>Presentation</i>
14.55 – 15.20	<i>Presentation</i>
15.20 – 15.50	Discussion
15.50	CLOSE
