Consumer willingness to pay for additional improvement of Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) food products: A case study at *Helabojun* outlets

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Abstract

Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition (BFN) initiative, known widely by its abbreviated form BFN, embraces a broad vision of increased utilization of global diversity of crop plants for achieving human well-being. These crops contribute to enrich the diversity of human food basket, but most of them were largely ignored until recent times. In this context, a study was undertaken to investigate the potentials and constraints of utilization of these underutilized crops at the *Helebojun* outlets that are operated by the Department of Agriculture. The study was conducted at three *Helabojun* outlets in Kandy district: *Galaha* junction, *Gannoruwa* and Kandy City Centre. Seventy-seven consumers were interviewed on the Willingness to Pay (WTP) for five improved food qualities of BFN crops. Data were analyzed using binary logistic regression and the relationship of WTP for additional food quality improvement with consumer age, income and gender were studied. It was found that the additional WTP of the respondents ranged between 5 % -100% for five quality attribute improvements, namely taste, healthiness and cleanliness, traditional nature, safe packaging and certification. The customers WTP for the food products that are made out of BFN ranges from LKR 20- 50 per servings for the crop ingredients of finger millet, fox-tail millet, horse gram, *moringa*, sesbania and *gotukola.* The customers WTP for traditional foods and certified foods had significant effect with the consumer income and the there was a positive correlation. Age also had a significant impact on the WTP for certified foods which is negatively correlated, implying that the likelihood for WTP for certified foods reduce with the increase of age. This is obvious because of the trend of preferences of youth towards the certified foods. The WTP for other food quality improvement: for more tasty and nutritious foods, for more healthy and clean foods, for attractive packaging had no significant relationship with the income, age and gender. Overall the study revealed that the *Helebojun* system could be effectively utilized to promote BFN crops and there is a potential for scaling-up.

Keywords: *Biodiversity for food and Nutrition-BFN, Helabojun, Traditional food, Willingness to pay*

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