BOOK REVIEW

FOOD CROPS : EVOLUTION, DIVERSITY AND ADVANCES

©DR. D.A. PATIL

Former Professor and Principal, SSVP Sanstha's L.K. Dr. P.R. Ghoghrey Science College, Dhule

There are several books available on food crops which cover the nutritional value, the breeding programmes or detail the food crops of a specific region. The author being an established angiosperm taxonomist, has covered the basic taxonomic aspects of wild species as food/alternative food crops, their evolution, karyotaxonomic relations with other wild crops having some characteristic value and the advanced knowledge of chemical composition pertaining to their nutritional/nutraceutical value within the diverse types of species, genera or vegetation as a whole.

The history of these crops has been explained to relate it with the origin of domestication of the crop, human development, civilization and trade practices. Karyotaxonomic and geographic evidences have been used to confirm the same. The book has thus become quite interesting with scientific content presented in simple language and limited to karyotaxonomy.

The content of the book is presented in ten chapters. First chapter relates to the history of domestication of various food crops in the world. Several myths about cultivation of food crops by ancient men are broken. Facts have been presented with reference to available literature and historic, karyotaxonomic and geographical evidences. In the following three chapters seven cereal, eight millets and three pseudocereals have been described. In the fifth chapter twelve legumes, in the sixth chapter five superfood grains of high nutritive value, in the seventh chapter twenty seven edible fruits whereas in the eighth chapter four leafy, six root vegetables and seven fruit and seed vegetables are discussed. Ninth and tenth chapters are based on richness of reserve foods, namely, oils & fats storing eleven crops, three starch and two sugar storing crops, respectively. The description of each food crop includes resume of the crop, its introduction, plant characteristics, useful parts, chemical constituents, uses and applications, karyotaxonomic evidence, history, further developments and an epilogue. At the end of each chapter sufficient bibliography has been annexed to assist the readers.

In general, the book carries interesting botanical, geographical and historical account of the food crops of the world for UG/PG students. It may or may not be a direct part of their curriculum, but may enhance their knowledge in a story like manner. The price is not mentioned in this book, but if it is moderately priced, people would like to buy it, even though it lacks diagrams, which is less expected from a taxonomist. Among the contemporary books on food crops, this book may be recommended owing to its unique relational treatment of the food crops.

Prof. Y. Vimala
Department of Botany
C.C.S. University, Meerut