

COMMUNITY DIVERSITY FAIR: AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Nguyen Ngoc De¹ and Vo Minh Hai²

¹. Site coordinator, In situ conservation project, Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute, Cantho University, Vietnam

². Field staff, In situ conservation project, Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute, Cantho University, Vietnam

A community diversity fair was conducted in Dai An village, Tra Cu district, Tra Vinh Province of the Mekong Delta, Vietnam to raise farmers' awareness of local plant genetics resources. This included raising awareness of the importance and role genetic resources in crop improvement and sustainable agricultural development and promoting an understanding of genetic diversity at community level. The fair was organized with two major activities: (1) the display of all materials collected by group members with full description of the main identification characteristics of each variety and (2) the farmer groups' contest on farmers' knowledge about local genetic resources, farmers' perception on the importance of local crop diversity, genetic erosion and its reasons and farmers' viewpoints on conservation and development needs. The information from community diversity fair revealed the number of varieties of each major crop being grown by individual farmers. Farmers could easily identify and recognize well the major characteristics of local varieties. In addition, they explained how to grow and conserve them in local conditions. Results showed that it was more difficult for farmers to explain or know the origin of the different varieties; knowledge was commonly about the year the variety was first planted, but the first grower(s) or the source person on the variety was commonly unknown. Farmers' knowledge on crop diversity and the necessity of crop diversity conservation and development were clearly acknowledged by most farmers. Genetic erosion and its reasons were also recognized by local farmers. Through diversity fair, all genetic materials displayed were collected for *ex situ* conservation, seed multiplication of favorable varieties, and exchange with other communities to increase local diversity. Diversity fairs were shown to be more effective than village surveys for data collection of crop diversity in the community. Results also indicated that precision of information was positively correlated with the level of farmers' participation.