

Natural-Cultural Practices in Conservation of Traditional Crop Diversity in Mountain: A Study of Uttarakhand State, Indian Himalayas

Rajendra Prasara Juyal* and Mahesh Chandra Sati**

**Department of Economics, Nanakchand Anglo Sanskrit (NAS) College,
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India*

E-mail rp_juyal2k2@rediffmail.com

*** Department of Economics, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar (Garhwal),
Uttarakhand 246174, India*

E-mail satimc@rediffmail.com, sati.vp@gmail.com

KEYWORDS Baranaza. Indigenous Knowledge. Traditional Crop Diversity. Food Security Seed Festivals. Agro-ecosystem

ABSTRACT Agrarian communities of the remote mountains, in Uttarakhand have developed several eco-friendly farming practices to conserve traditional crop diversity. Celebrating agro-diversity with religious and cultural fervour is an important instrument of conservation. This process has helped the hill peasants to comprehend the linkages between nature and culture and has taught the precious lesson to turn harsh agro-climatic adversities into fortune. The different cultural and ritual practices evolved in the process of conserving bio-diversity have saved many crops which otherwise would have been extinct. Seed festivals, seed fairs, seed banks, seed movement and farmers to farmers' seed exchange are important social and cultural instruments of conservation and promotion of traditional crop diversity in the mid-Himalayan region of Uttarakhand. The transformation of indigenous knowledge of farmers (especially women) and farming innovations are highly effective in promoting participatory and sustainable livelihoods options in the tough, ecological sensitive topography. The innovative farmers of survey villages produce *Baranaza*, a mix of twelve grains and pulses, simultaneously in one field. This practice exhibits a great deal of variability in crop diversity, crop composition and crop rotations to support ecological sustainability, food security and socio-cultural prosperity. This paper is a modest attempt to comprehend how the cultural practice of the region are intimately linked with the conservation of bio-diversity and are effective instruments of continuous sharpening of the farming and agricultural skills.