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A Study on the Use of Insects as Food in Seven Tribal Communities in Nagaland, Northeast India

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ABSTRACT This paper documents the use of insect as food among seven tribal communities of Nagaland. Information was obtained through personal field interviews with 240 informants with the help of semi-structured questionnaires. It was found that 82 species of insects belonging to 9 orders (Odonata, Orthoptera, Mantodea, Isoptera, Hemiptera, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera and Diptera) are an important traditional food item principally consumed by the tribal people. Insects are preferred as eggs, larvae, nymphs, pupa or adult which are cooked, roasted or consumed raw. Documentation was done by calculating the "use value" (UV) of each species. It is evident from the study that insects can enhance nutritional deficiencies and can also improve the livelihood of the rural poor in the region. Hence, an inventory of food insects covering as many tribes is necessary so as to get benefit from their natural diversity before the existing traditional information is lost.