

# Study: African fruit is untapped resource

January 31 2008

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A report suggests native African fruits are an untapped resource that could help combat malnutrition and boost rural development on the African continent.

The U.S. National Research Council said African science institutes, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and individuals could use modern horticultural knowledge and scientific research to bring "lost crops" such as baobab, marula, and butterfruit to their full potential.

The report said current tropical fruit production in Africa is dominated by species introduced from Asia and the Americas, such as bananas, pineapples, and papayas. Those and other crops arrived on the African continent centuries ago. Already improved through horticultural selection and breeding, they increasingly displaced the traditional species that had fed Africans for thousands of years.

But, the report said, with renewed scientific and institutional support, Africa's native fruits could make a much greater contribution to nutrition and economic development.

The researchers said fruit trees and shrubs also offer long-term benefits by improving the stability of the environment.

The report is the third and final volume in a series that also explored the benefits of Africa's indigenous vegetable and grain crops.

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Citation: Study: African fruit is untapped resource (2008, January 31) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-01-african-fruit-untapped-resource.html>

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