
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plants are essential for all life on earth. The uptake of carbon dioxide, one of the principle greenhouse gases, during photosynthesis is the major pathway by which carbon is removed from the atmosphere and made available to humans and animals for growth and development. Plant diversity also underpins all terrestrial ecosystems and these provide the basic life-support systems on which all life depends.

Wild plants are also vitally important in supporting livelihoods for millions of people around the world. The most significant is timber, with wood removals from forests being valued at over US\$100 billion annually between 2003 and 2007. Other important wild plant products include fuel wood (valued at US\$7 billion in 2005), food (non-cultivated plants are especially important in enhancing dietary diversity and combating micro-nutrient deficiency), medicine (global exports of medicinal plants were valued at US\$2.2 billion in 2012) and raw materials for cosmetics. A number of plant species are also harvested from the wild for ornamental purposes providing an important source of income for rural communities. However, the unregulated exploitation of wild plants can put severe pressure on populations and even threaten the survival of species. Greater efforts are required to ensure the sustainability of wild harvested plant products.

Despite the importance of plants, the total number of species in existence is not yet accurately known. Plant scientists estimate that there are around 400,000 species, but with an average of 2,000 new species being discovered and described every year, and a possible 10-20% of flowering plants as yet unknown to science, this number may still grow.

The first consolidated list of the world's plants (The Plant List) was completed in 2010 and now includes over 350,000 accepted plant names. Building on the knowledge gained in producing The Plant List, efforts are now focused on the development of a World Flora Online by 2020.

Despite not knowing all the world's plant species, we do know that they are unevenly distributed across the globe, with the majority of plants being found in the tropics. Many plant species are restricted in range with a significant number being single country endemics. Islands have particularly high numbers of endemic plants and are home to 35% of the world's plants.

Plant diversity is under increasing threat from the combined effects of habitat loss, pollution, invasive species and climate change. Although this crisis is a reality, the scale of the problem is not yet clear and there is no list of globally threatened plants. Estimates suggest that at least one in five of all plant species are under threat of extinction.

The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2002 and updated in 2010 provides the overall framework for plant conservation at the global and national level. It consists of 16 output-oriented targets covering all aspects of conservation and sustainable use of plants. A number of countries have developed national responses to the GSPC, including several mega-diverse countries (e.g. Brazil, China, Mexico and South Africa). Other countries are implementing the GSPC through their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Implementation of the GSPC provides a direct contribution to the achievement of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the associated Aichi targets.

This report provides a review of progress towards the 16 targets of the GSPC. It shows that progress is being made towards all the targets, but generally not at a sufficient rate to achieve the targets in full by 2020. Lack of information on the distribution and conservation status of plants constrains efforts to conserve plants effectively, both *in situ* and *ex situ*. Furthermore, as the threats to plant conservation increase, botanical capacity and funding for plant conservation are decreasing in many parts of the world. Having said this, the GSPC is generally recognised as a successful strategy. It has stimulated the development of new initiatives at both national and global level and has helped to focus the attention of the biodiversity community on the importance of plants.

Although encouraging progress is being made in some areas towards conserving and sustainably using wild plants, these efforts are not enough. Activities are still constrained by a general lack of recognition of the importance of plants and the insufficient allocation of resources for their effective conservation. It is essential that CBD Parties and other Governments further engage with partner organizations to make the best use of available expertise and find ways to fully involve indigenous and local communities and the widest range of stakeholders, to enhance plant conservation and ensure full implementation of the GSPC.

