

THE PRESENT STATUS AND AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON *ENSETE VENTRICOSUM*

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The genus *Ensete* is one of the smallest genera in the plant kingdom and belongs to the family Musaceae, order Zingiberales. Although the Ethiopian flora are currently being revised, the exact composition of the genus is not clear, and opinions vary as to the number of species in the genus. *Ensete* species can be broadly grouped into Asiatic, African, and North American species. Of the species in the genus, *E. ventricosum* is important in Ethiopia both culturally and economically.

Government research institutes, universities, non-governmental organizations, and foreign visiting researchers from universities outside Ethiopia have conducted research on *E. ventricosum*. This paper attempts to review the various studies on enset being conducted in Ethiopia, in order to identify gaps in the research and establish the future directions of research on enset.

The research activities can be grouped into three main areas, although all three are strongly linked to each other.

The first area includes research on agronomy, biodiversity/conservation, ecophysiology, nutrition, and the identification of yeast species involved in the fermentation of enset. Pathology studies are currently attempting to identify and characterize the genes that confer resistance to bacterial wilt. Research on household economics and that related to social/cultural anthropology are also included in this group.

The second area includes studies related to genetics and biotechnological approaches for producing clean, disease-free enset, with the goal of providing sustainable food security through the application of modern agro-biotechnological methods to enset.

The third area includes studies on the center of origin of the genus *Ensete*, with emphasis on *E. ventricosum*, using botanical, genetic, cultural, and folk systematics, as well as the record of historical and climatic changes, early food production, and processing. These studies focus on the evolution and domestication of *E. ventricosum*.

The importance and role of non-governmental and private research institutions will be discussed. I will emphasize the importance of networking and research links between various centers to the development and understanding of enset, as well as the entire domain of enset culture.

Keywords: Enset research, *Ensete ventricosum*, Ethiopia