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Original article**The Use of Kholar in Kiphire, Nagaland: A Traditional Pulse with Modern Relevance****Karibasappa. C. S¹, L.J. Bordoloi^{1*}, Manjunath S Tondihal¹, Alok Dube¹, Sunil Kumar¹, A.K.Mohanty² and H. Kalita³**¹KVK Kiphire, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Nagaland Centre, 798611 (Nagaland).²Director, ICAR- ATARI Zone-VII, Umiam, Meghalaya.³HoRC, ICAR Research Complex for NEH Region, Nagaland Centre, Medziphema, Nagaland^{*}Corresponding author: *kvkkiphire2017@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Kholar, a traditional variant of kidney bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), holds immense agricultural, nutritional, and cultural significance in Kiphire district of Nagaland. Cultivated primarily by the Yimkhiung and Sangtam tribes through organic, indigenous methods, Kholar thrives in the region's hilly terrain and temperate climate. Rich in proteins, complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, and essential minerals, it serves as a vital plant-based protein source in local diets. Beyond its dietary role, Kholar features prominently in local cuisine and cultural practices, symbolizing community resilience and heritage. Despite its potential in organic and niche markets, commercialization faces challenges such as limited market access and inadequate processing infrastructure. Nonetheless, with strategic support and increased awareness, Kholar represents a promising avenue for sustainable development, food security and cultural preservation in the region.

INTRODUCTION

Kiphire district, located in the southeastern part of Nagaland, is home to diverse ethnic communities, pristine landscapes and deeply rooted agricultural traditions. Among the various indigenous crops grown in this region, **Kholar**, a variant of kidney bean, holds special significance in both the culinary and cultural spheres of the local people. This traditional legume is known for its high nutritional value, adaptability to local conditions and versatility in cooking. Grown primarily by the Yimkhiung and Sangtam tribes, Kholar is a staple in local diets and a key part of sustainable agricultural practices in the region.

Botanical and Nutritional Overview

Kholar belongs to the legume family (Fabaceae) and its scientific name is *Phaseolus vulgaris*. It resembles the common kidney bean in both shape and texture. The beans are typically dark in color, ranging from deep red to black, and are cultivated either in shifting (jhum) fields or on terraced

farms. Well-suited to the hilly terrain and moderately cool climate of Kiphire, Kholar thrives as a resilient and traditional crop of the region

Nutritionally, kholar is rich in proteins, complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, and essential minerals such as iron, magnesium and potassium. It is low in fat and cholesterol-free, making it an excellent source of plant-based protein for the local population. Regular consumption of kholar supports digestive health, stabilizes blood sugar levels and contributes to muscle development and overall energy levels.

Agricultural Practices

Kholar cultivation in Kiphire is purely organic and follows traditional methods passed down through generations. Seeds are often saved from previous harvests and chemical fertilizers are rarely used. Farmers rely on compost, crop rotation and intercropping techniques to maintain soil fertility.



**Kholar Beans (Left) and Pods on the Plant (Right):
Showcasing the Harvest and Growth Stage of this Indigenous Legume**

Kholar is typically sown in the month of August, following the harvest of maize and matures within three to four months. Once harvested, the beans are sun-dried and traditionally stored in bamboo baskets or earthen pots, which help maintain their quality over extended periods. Recognized as a climate-resilient crop, Kholar requires minimal inputs and thrives under the local environmental conditions, making it well-suited for sustainable cultivation in the region.

Culinary Uses

Kholar is a key ingredient in everyday meals and festive dishes across Kiphire. It is often prepared in a variety of ways, depending on the tribe, occasion and availability of other ingredients. Common preparations include:

- 1. Boiled Kholar with Smoked Pork:** One of the most popular dishes involves cooking kholar with smoked pork, salt and chili. The beans absorb the smoky flavor of the meat, resulting in a rich and hearty meal.
- 2. Kholar Stew:** A simple vegetarian dish, often prepared with seasonal vegetables, wild herbs and minimal spices. This stew is both nutritious and easy to digest.
- 3. Fermented Kholar:** In some villages, kholar is fermented and mixed with spices to make traditional chutneys or relishes that are eaten with rice.
- 4. Kholar Soup:** A light and healthy soup made by boiling the beans with ginger, garlic and sometimes dried fish, used especially during the cold season.

These dishes are usually accompanied by steamed rice or millet and are often shared in community feasts and family gatherings.

Cultural and Social Importance

Kholar is more than just a source of nutrition - it is a symbol of community, resilience, and tradition. It plays an important role in the social and cultural life of the people of Kiphire. During festivals, such as Tsüngkamneo or Metümnyo, traditional dishes featuring kholar are prepared as offerings and shared among families.

Women play a central role in the cultivation, processing and cooking of kholar, reflecting the gendered knowledge systems in traditional Naga societies. Elders often pass down their knowledge about seed selection, preservation techniques and culinary skills related to kholar, preserving indigenous knowledge and heritage. Additionally, Kholar is frequently exchanged or gifted during ceremonies, marriages and communal gatherings, reinforcing social bonds and mutual support among villagers.

Economic Potential and Challenges

In recent years, kholar has begun to attract attention beyond Kiphire for its potential in organic and niche markets. Small-scale initiatives have emerged to package and sell kholar in local and regional markets under organic labels. Some NGOs and farmer cooperatives are supporting these efforts by training farmers in better post-harvest handling and marketing techniques.

However, several challenges hinder the wider commercialization of kholar:

- **Limited Market Access:** The remoteness of Kiphire limits farmers' access to larger markets and value chains.
- **Lack of Processing Facilities:** Without adequate infrastructure for cleaning, grading and packaging, it is difficult to meet market standards.
- **Awareness and Demand:** Outside of Nagaland, kholar remains relatively unknown, limiting its demand.

Despite these challenges, there is growing interest in reviving traditional crops as part of sustainable development strategies. Kholar, with its adaptability and health benefits, has the potential to become a flagship product for the region.

CONCLUSION

Kholar is a vital part of the agricultural and cultural fabric of Kiphire district. Its resilience, nutritional value and deep roots in traditional practices make it a crop worth preserving and promoting. As local communities continue to uphold their indigenous farming systems, kholar stands as a testament to the wisdom of traditional agriculture. With appropriate support and awareness, this humble bean could play a significant role in enhancing food security, promoting sustainable livelihoods and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Nagaland.