

PREFACE

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome the publication of the second volume of the *Flora agrícola y forestal de al-Andalus*, covering the woody plants, both Angiosperms and Gymnosperms of the region. It covers more than 190 species in 105 genera and 48 families. The sequence - of both families and genera - is alphabetical and in conformity with APG IV.

Building on the experience acquired during the preparation of the first volume, the authors have produced a wider and more detailed picture of the rich diversity of woody plants, both wild and cultivated as well as others that were known in al-Andalus and used extensively for a wide range of purposes, for example in medicine, cosmetics, and nutrition. As a result, species such as the peppers *Piper cubeba* L., *P. nigrum* L., *P. longum* L. are included, although not native or naturalized in the region.

Some of the species included are no longer cultivated today or only so on a very local scale and are known as underutilized or orphan species and are the subject of increasing interest by agronomists in the search for new crops that may be adapted to the challenges posed by climate change and global warming.

The opportunity has been taken in this second volume to augment the information provided for each species by adding new headings dealing with the description of the plant, its distribution and ecology, and an account of how it has been used and cultivated over time, including pre- and post-al-Andalus periods, so as to show the different ways in which knowledge about the species has been passed on and adapted in the different cultures. This is very much in line with the growing current interest in the food we eat, its origins and methods of cultivation and production, its nutritional value and ecological footprint and the recognition of the linkages between ethnobotany, food and nutrition and the contribution of underdeveloped and orphan crops and wild species to nutrition and health

Also included is an account of the changes in the cultural landscapes of al-Andalus as new species were introduced, mainly from the Middle East and further east, and from Africa; the revival of the cultivation of species of the Mediterranean agroecosystem as a result of new agronomic techniques; and the increase in the varietal diversity and species improvement, largely as a result of increased and improved irrigation and the application of new grafting techniques, as well as the domestication of further species. Also included is an evaluation of the poorly known forest landscapes of al-Andalus and the component species.

The result is a volume that is best described as a treasure trove of information, not only regarding the plants grown and used but a major contribution to our knowledge of the life and times during the period of al-Andalus. It has involved the translation of original literature sources and much detailed and laborious research and scholarship. It is the result of remarkable collaboration between scholars and scientists and is in the best tradition of academic research. The authors are to be congratulated on their remarkable achievement.

The book is beautifully produced and amply illustrated. It is a remarkable tour de force and will appeal to a wide audience including taxonomists, ethnobotanists, agronomists, nutritionists, and historians and indeed anyone interested in the remarkable period in history known as al-Andalus.

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