

SUMMARY

POTENTIAL USES OF *Piper auritum* Kunth (PIPERACEAE) IN THREE MUNICIPALITIES AT THE HIGH MOUNTAINS REGION IN VERACRUZ STATE

The purpose of this work was to determine the potential uses of *Piper auritum* Kunth from the traditional knowledge of the species, to promote its agronomic value and commercialization, which leads to a greater use of the resource in the High Mountains region of Veracruz, as a productive alternative for the inhabitants of the region. This was done through the identification of ethnobotanical uses, bibliographic research and current uses, identified through surveys in the municipalities of Huatusco, Ixtaczoquitlán and Zongolica. As a result from the bibliographic research, an instrument was developed to allow the identification of eight possible categories of use among the informants, which were: medicinal, food, ornamental, agricultural, ceremonial, cosmetic, artisanal and commercial. In addition, the "other" option was added to detect any category that could have been omitted, this category was a homogeneous group linked to the environmental issue. The sociodemographic characteristics of the informants were also analyzed to determine if the knowledge of the uses of *P. auritum* was linked to some characteristic of the informants; in result, only the occupation factor significantly influenced the reported uses. A relative importance assessment was carried out to determine the potential uses; in this regard, the medicinal category was the unique with the "Very important" result in the relative importance assessment, in the "Important" result, in order of interest for the interviewees the following categories were reported: cosmetic, artisan, food, commercial and agricultural. Leaving under the evaluation "Rare" the ornamental and ceremonial uses. Among the nine categories identified among the users of *P. auritum*, the main potential uses at local level were those registered in the medicinal, cosmetic, artisan, food, commercial and agricultural categories. The food category is highlighted as the main potential use, with a focus on commercialization due to the popularity and diffusion of its use as it was referred by all the interviewees.

Key words: *Piper auritum*, potential uses, current uses, sustainable exploitation.