Tackling food and nutrition insecurity using leafy wild vegetables: The nutritional compositions of some selected species

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Fourteen wild vegetable species were analysed to determine their proximate compositions and mineral constituents. Fibre crude content ranged between 0.39 and 1.79 g/100 g; crude protein between 0.48 and 1.53 g/100 g; crude lipid between 0.02 and 3.83 g/100 g; phytate between 0.92 and 8.92 g/100 g and ash content was between 0.39 and 1.79 g/100 g. *Solanum nigrum*, *Tulbaghia violacea*, *Chenopodium album* and *Chenopodium murale* had the highest concentrations of fibre, protein, lipid, phytate and ash respectively. Calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium, phosphorus, copper, iron, zinc, manganese and vitamin C ranged between 6.70-34.84; 1.54-22.79; 50.6-125.97; 0.25-18.73; 2.10-4.76; 0.01-.0.02; 0.21-2.60; 0.12-0.60; 0.04-0.60 and 41.67-225.00 g/100 g respectively. *Chenopodium murale* had the highest concentration of Mg, K and P while *Physalis peruviana* had the highest concentration of Fe and vitamin C. Copper was remarkably low in all the wild vegetables. This study revealed the potential of wild vegetables to meet the daily requirements of nutrients needed for human health. The nutritional content suggests that inclusion of these vegetables in the diet may help alleviate hunger and nutritional deficiency in the Eastern Cape by enhancing the function and nutritional properties of food and food products. Also, the supplementing the diet with these nutrient rich foods is in line with global and government programmes aimed at drastically reducing food and nutrition insecurity.