Pollination Effectiveness of Different Flower-Visiting Taxa on Annual Crops in Indonesia

by

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Index

List of figures .................................................................................................................. 5
List of tables .................................................................................................................... 6
1 Abstract ......................................................................................................................... 8
2 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 9
   2.1 Importance of pollination service ................................................................. 9
   2.2 Definition of a good pollinator ........................................................................ 9
   2.3 Pollinator effectiveness enhancement through inter-specific interaction ....... 11
   2.4 Crop pollination service at risk ......................................................................... 12
   2.5 Hypotheses ......................................................................................................... 13
3 Material and methods ................................................................................................. 14
   3.1 Study site ............................................................................................................. 14
   3.2 Crop study species and its observed pollinators ............................................. 15
      3.2.1 The crop species Cucumis sativus L. (Cucumber) ..................................... 15
      3.2.2 The pollinators Apis cerana Fabricius and Trigona spp. ......................... 15
   3.3 Plot preparation .................................................................................................. 17
   3.4 Observations ....................................................................................................... 17
      3.4.1 Pollinator effectiveness experiment ......................................................... 17
      3.4.2 Bee movement on male and female cucumber flowers ......................... 20
   3.5 Statistics ............................................................................................................. 21
      3.5.1 Single pollinator visits of Apis cerana and Trigona spp. ....................... 21
      3.5.2 Multiple Apis cerana flower visits on one flower .................................... 22
      3.5.3 Apis cerana and Trigona spp. flower visits on one flower ....................... 23
      3.5.4 Flower movement ....................................................................................... 24
4 Results ......................................................................................................................... 25
   4.1 Single pollinator visits of Apis cerana and Trigona spp. ............................... 25
      4.1.1 Effectiveness ............................................................................................... 25
      4.1.2 Effect of visiting duration on effectiveness ................................................ 27
   4.2 Multiple Apis cerana flower visits on one flower ......................................... 28
      4.2.1 Effectiveness ............................................................................................... 28
      4.2.2 Effect of summed Apis cerana visiting duration on effectiveness .......... 30
   4.3 Apis cerana and Trigona spp. flower visits on one flower ............................ 31
   4.4 Movement behavior of Apis cerana and Trigona spp. on male and female cucumber flowers .......................................................... 33
      4.4.1 Percentage of time in the different parts of male and female flowers ...... 33
      4.4.2 Actual time in the different parts of male and female flowers ................. 34
5 Discussion.................................................................................................................................36
  5.1 *Apis* top, *Trigona* flop – Effectiveness differences of the two main pollinators ....36
  5.2 Optimal pollinator abundance for a maximum crop yield ..............................................37
  5.3 Indirect interaction of *Apis cerana* and *Trigona* spp. at cucumber pollination ......38
  5.4 Dangers for pollination service in the Kebun kopı area.......................................................39
  5.5 Further research demand......................................................................................................40
6 Acknowledgment......................................................................................................................41
7 References..................................................................................................................................42
8 Appendix....................................................................................................................................47
  8.1 Material and methods...........................................................................................................47
    8.1.1 Plot impressions..................................................................................................................47
    8.1.2 Estimated factros during pollinator effectiveness experiment ........................................48
    8.1.3 Flower movement: Arrangement rules for the four outer segments.............................48
  8.2 Results.....................................................................................................................................49
    8.2.1 Mean values.........................................................................................................................49
    8.2.2 Summary outputs from statistical analyses.........................................................................50
    8.2.3 Factors not significantly affected by visiting duration.......................................................65
1 Abstract

Pollination by wild animals, especially insects, can be important for crop production but is threatened by agriculture intensification and land conversion. However, gaps in knowledge of pollinator community and species-specific effectiveness to contribute to the overall pollination services impede effective management planning. Many studies argue that not all flower-visiting-species are effective pollinators and some taxonomic guilds effectively pollinate some plant species but not others. Therefore this thesis studies the effectiveness of different pollinator guilds on cucumber (*Cucumis sativus* L.) as commonly grown annual crop species in traditional Indonesian homegardens.

The study was located on the Indonesian island Sulawesi, in the vegetable growing region Kebun kopi. The pollination effectiveness was tested for *Apis cerana* Fabricius and *Trigona* spp., the two high abundant pollinators visiting cucumber flowers in this area. Other pollinating species occurred just scattered in the study plot. Different flower visitor combinations were observed on virginal flowers: (1) Single pollinator visit of *Apis cerana* or *Trigona* spp., (2) multiple flower visits (from one to ten) of *Apis cerana* on one flower and (3) multiple flower visits of pollinators from the two species (*Apis cerana* / *Trigona* spp. and *Trigona* spp. / *Apis cerana*) on one flower.

For a high cucumber yield insect pollination is essential. Without pollination crop yield achieved only 25% of its maximum. Of the two observed pollinator species only *Apis cerana* was an effective pollinator for cucumber. *Trigona* spp. had no direct pollination effect at all. But through indirect interaction it slightly affected the *Apis cerana* effectiveness.

The number of *Apis cerana* visits on a single flower has not affected the crop yield in total. But it influenced fruit set and fruit weight, the two important factors for crop yield. Fruit set decreased with increasing *Apis cerana* visits. In contrast a higher *Apis cerana* visit number, with a higher summed visiting time resulted in higher fruit weight. Therefore, few visits resulted in a high fruit number with small mean fruit weight, whereas many visits resulted in a smaller fruit number but with high mean fruit weight. It is assumed, that with a certain number of *Apis cerana* visits the negative effects of decreasing fruit set outstrip the positive effects of increasing fruit weight and crop yield declines.