# Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato on the Home Grown School Feeding Menu in Nigeria

Pottage made from orange-fleshed sweetpotato was included on the menu at eight schools in Osun State starting in late 2014. During the pilot period, which started in January 2015, 4,160 students in 8 schools were served 1.2 tons of OFSP each week, with increasing acceptance of the program by all stakeholders over time.

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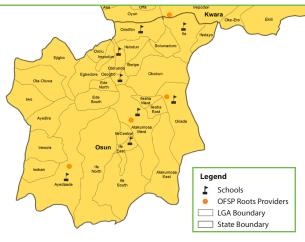


Fig. 1 Map of schools and sources of sweetpotato.



**Micronutrient deficiency** is a serious public health problem in many developing countries, but unlike wasting, it is often difficult to recognize and thus referred to as Hidden Hunger.

School feeding programs, which provide children with a nutritious meal daily, are recognized as an effective means to increase access to education and learning, and improve children's health and nutrition, particularly as a part of comprehensive school health and nutrition programmes. When these programs source foods from local farmers, so-called homegrown school feeding (HGSF), they also support local agricultural economies and supply chains. The African Union's (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security have endorsed HGSF for these multiple benefits that can contribute to educational, nutrition, and agricultural outcomes. While sweetpotato is not yet a commercial crop in many places in Nigeria, the inclusion of OFSP on HGSF menus would do much to provide stable markets, stimulate OFSP production and nutrition value chains.



O-MEALS, the HGSF program in Osun State, Nigeria was established in 2004, by the Federal Government and stewardship by the government of Osun State has led to its survival even during regime change. The program covers most public schools in the state, feeding roughly 250,000 meals per day to children in kindergarten through grade 4. We initiated a pilot effort in January 2015. in which eight schools included HGSF on their menu. Learning from this experience, we want to work with partners and actors (producers, vendors, transporters, and parent-teacher associations) to scale out to all the schools in the state. More than 3,000 vendors prepare and serve meals, procuring supplies with funds deposited by the program into their bank accounts. Inclusion of OFSP on the O-MEALS menu would present a large, formal market, which would contribute strongly to the introduction and commercialization of OFSP in Osun State, Nigeria.



# Where are we working?

**Osun State, in the southwest** of the country, has 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Schools in eight of these LGAs were chosen to pilot the inclusion of OFSP on the menu, starting in January of 2015.



## How are we making it happen?

Exploratory work to include sweetpotato on the O-MEALS menu began with familiarization visits to the program as early as 2011, and continued with further visits and support to develop capacity over the next few years. Various partners, including staff of the O-MEALS program, the Osun State Agricultural Development Programme (OSADEP), the National Root Crops Research Institute, the Partnership for Child Development (PCD), and the office of the Governor of Osun







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Osun State Elementary School Feeding and Health Programme O-MEALS



#### Implementing Partners:

- Partnership for Child Development (PCD)
- Osun State Elementary School Feeding and Health Programme (O-Meals)
- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI)
- Osun State Agricultural Development Programme (OSADEP)





Fig. 2 School meal vendors in IIa community expressing their acceptance of OFSP pottage for inclusion in the school menu (credit I. Oyerinde)

State, are lending their support to the effort. In September 2014, a visit by a delegation of the partners to the office to the office of the Deputy Governor of Osun State resulted in high-level endorsement for the "carrot potato" and its inclusion on the menu. In anticipation of approval of the pilot effort, a nutritious and easy to prepare recipe (peeled OFSP root, cut into chunks, cooked with palm oil, pepper and onion, and served with fish provided by the government to ensure pupils' intake of protein) was developed in consultation with the O-MEALS and PCD staff. A series of sensitization meetings was conducted, bringing together caterers, O-MEALS staff, headmasters and parents to discuss the benefits of OFSP and to present the recipe to the stakeholders, who deemed it good and approved its inclusion in the O-MEALS program (Fig. 2). Prices and delivery schedules were agreed upon in meetings of producers and caterers and in January 2015, we started piloting OFSP pottage in the school menu of eight schools in Osun State.

Additionally, several CIP-led projects contributed. The *Reaching Agents of Change* trained extension staff and helped to support trials that led to the official release of the OFSP variety, Mother's Delight, which is used on the O-MEALS menu. Two on-going projects, *Sweetpotato for Health and Wealth in Nigeria and Jumpstarting OFSP through Diversified Markets in West Africa* are also working to ensure the success of the O-MEALS by developing seed systems and root production to meet school needs and by working with stakeholders to set up viable pricing and delivery arrangements, among others.

Fig. 3 (right) Elementary pupils in Osogbo town eating OFSP pottage at mid-morning break (credit I. Oyerinde)

Fig. 4 (right) Nigeria school meal vendors at Ila-Orangun peeling OFSP for pottage at the stakeholders' sensitization (credit I. Oyerinde)



### What have we achieved so far?

**In September 2014,** the inclusion of OFSP on the school menu received high-level endorsement following a visit to the office of the Deputy Governor of Osun State. This was followed by approval by education stakeholders to include OFSP pottage on the menu of all schools in Osun State once a week. Due to logistical reasons, a pilot was initiated in eight schools in January 2015. The 4,160 students are consuming 1.2 tons of OFSP per week, served by 60 caterers (Fig. 3 and 4). With increasing numbers of meals served each week, there is also a growing acceptance of the meal by students.



# What are the next steps?

Both the nutrition and business case for OFSP in the O-MEALS programme are strong, and the O-MEALS programme is anxious to expand coverage. At this early stage in the program, close monitoring to ensure adequate supply of sweetpotato, and timing of production to synchronize with the school calendar are needed to guide planned expansion of the program to all schools in Osun State and other states in Nigeria in the coming years.





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