

Jumpstarting Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato in West Africa through Diversified Markets

This three-year project partners with a diversity of NGO and public sector actors to target both informal and formal markets in each country. In the second year of the project, pilot efforts to develop markets for orange-fleshed sweetpotato to generate income and help combat vitamin A deficiency, are starting to take off in Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

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Fig. 1 Mrs. Nane and H.E. Kofi Annan view local dishes made with OFSP at Voggu Community Northern Region Ghana (credit E. Abidin)



What is the problem?

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*. Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso in West Africa are no exception. Orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) has the potential to provide a rich dietary source of vitamin A that can significantly reduce vitamin A deficiency among vulnerable populations (particularly young children and lactating mothers) at the community level in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). While sweetpotato is a well-known crop in West Africa, and is often commercially important, OFSP varieties are not widely available, the nutritional value of OFSP is not widely recognized, and as a result, it is not yet sought after by consumers and marketers. Therefore, the potential of OFSP to contribute effectively to both combating vitamin A deficiency and to improving farmer incomes is held back significantly.



What do we want to achieve?

We want demand for OFSP to be market-led in West Africa, both in areas where the crop is currently important (but OFSP is not), and in areas where sweetpotato is not particularly important, but where it has the potential to be. We expect that market demand for OFSP will greatly stimulate its production, ensuring profits for those who produce it, and nutritional benefits for a large

population of consumers, including young children and their mothers, who are particularly at risk. By working at different locations in three countries, we are exploring distinct market opportunities, including both informal and formal markets for OFSP, in fresh and processed forms. As a special side effort, we are working to stimulate demand for OFSP by pregnant women through the antenatal counseling program of the Ghana Health Service.



Where are we working?

This three year effort began in April 2014. We are targeting pilot locations in Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In Ghana, we are working in communities in the Upper East and Northern Regions, where at the start of the project, sweetpotato ranged from being the most important cash crop (districts around Bawku), to being of moderate (districts around Navrongo), to only minor importance in the farming system (Tolon and Kumbungu Districts near Tamale). In Nigeria, we are working in Osun State, where a successful school lunch program is piloting OFSP on the menu, and in adjacent Kwara State, traditionally a major producer of sweetpotato. In Burkina Faso, we are targeting communities near Orodara in Kennedougou Province in the southwest of the country, which are major suppliers to sweetpotato fresh markets in Burkina Faso and Mali.



How are we making it happen?

We are working towards four major outcomes at each target location: 1) to establish commercial sweetpotato seed systems to provide clean planting material year round, 2) to develop formal and informal markets for OFSP, 3) to enable farmers including women, to participate in OFSP value chains and 4) to increase consumption of OFSP and other vitamin A-rich foods by vulnerable target populations, particularly women and children under the age of five. In each location, we are working with an array of partners, relevant government agencies and NGOs, to



Promouvoir
la patate douce à
chair orange en Afrique
de l'Ouest à travers
des marchés diversifiés



Implementing Partners

NGOs

- IDE-Ghana
- IDE-Burkina Faso
- Association of Church-Based Development Projects (ACDEP)
- Partnership for Child Development (PCD)
- ESOKO

National programs

- Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA)
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – Crops Research Institute (CRI)
- CSIR – Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)
- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI)
- University for Development Studies (UDS)
- Ghana Health Service (GHS)
- National agricultural extension services



Fig. 2 Young girl eats OFSP chips at a long side food vendor in BonTanga (credit E. Abidin)

identify markets, organize farmers into groups capable of serving those markets, and access inputs and credit, if required. By conducting awareness and demand creation campaigns at the local level and advocating for OFSP for food and nutrition security at all levels, demand is created in both formal and informal markets. In each area, building capacity to achieve project outcomes is a key element of project activities, as is building the partnerships to ensure and replicate success.



What have we achieved so far?

Roughly half way through the project, we are well on the way to achieving our vision: To demonstrate sustainable and inclusive market-driven approaches for OFSP that lead to increased incomes and improved health through consumption of vitamin A-rich OFSP, especially in women and children. We have held “Theory of Change” workshops with partners and value chain actors in each country, helping to develop a shared understanding of the project and its impact pathways. In each country, OFSP varieties have been distributed to multipliers, and producers organized in groups by implementing NGO and extension partners. A total of 45 decentralized vine multipliers (DVMs)



Fig. 3 A vine multiplier with her baby (credit E. Abidin)

with 177 farmers (29% women) were recorded from Ghana, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Awareness and demand creation campaigns have stimulated sales of healthy planting materials, while groups have been trained in production and marketing, and in utilization and nutrition in their communities. For example, Mr. Dauda Zakaria, a DVM in Northern Ghana, earned USD 3,430 from OFSP vine sales and USD 375 from OFSP root sales during the past year. In Ghana, pregnant women receiving antenatal care counseling through the Ghana Health Service (GHS) have access to OFSP vines and storage roots. Through the rainy season 2015 (July/Aug 2015) 751,760 vine cuttings were produced through primary multiplication and DVMs. Through GHS, these cuttings can be supplied to 7,518 households who grow OFSP covering 22.55 ha of land. In Osun State, Nigeria, an OFSP meal (pottage) is on the menu once a week in 8 schools; there are 60 caterers who could serve 4,160 pupils OFSP over time. In Burkina Faso, a comprehensive 10-day training of trainers’ course on sweetpotato was conducted at the extension training institute, CAP-Matourkou. 24 francophone participants (25% women) were trained; they came from 6 countries: Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger and Burkina Faso. Our project pilot activities in Ghana served as ammunition for powerful advocacy by Mrs. Nane Annan and H.E. Kofi Annan, who came to Kumasi in March 2015 and to Tamale in August 2015. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation provide guidance and enable learning and adaptation as we strive to achieve our vision.



What’s next?

In our third year of implementation, we will train lead famers, government extension agents and NGO field management on labeling of vines that have been declared as clean planting material and get their recommendations. The sale of quality declared vines will be implemented. Through strengthened partnerships in project implementation, as well as intensified monitoring and evaluation efforts by all partners and actors, we will ensure project activities are benefitting women and children, through improving nutrition; and that incomes are improving through diversified market opportunities for OFSP.



Fig. 4 Market awareness and demand creation campaign (credit E. Abidin)

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