

Malawi



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Rooting out Hunger in Malawi with orange-fleshed sweetpotato

Sweetpotato is important for food security and as a cash crop in Malawi. It has the potential to contribute significantly to alleviating hunger, improving nutrition, and increasing incomes.

Orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) is rich in pro-vitamin A. Vitamin A deficiency is a major health threat in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly for pregnant women and young children. OFSP is at the center of a major food based intervention to combat vitamin A deficiency and improve livelihoods called the Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI). SPHI is an initiative of the International Potato Center.





About SPHI and CIP

SPHI is a 10-year multi-donor initiative that seeks to reduce child malnutrition and improve smallholder incomes through the effective production and expanded use of orange-fleshed sweetpotato. It aims to build consumer awareness of sweetpotato's nutrition benefits, diversify its use, and increase market opportunities, especially in expanding urban markets of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The International Potato Center (known by its Spanish acronym, CIP) is an international agricultural research-for-development organization founded in 1971. It is based in Lima, Peru, with offices and projects in more than 40 countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In 1979, CIP established

a regional office in Nairobi, Kenya to better serve Sub-Saharan Africa. Currently, CIP has activities and offices in Angola, Burkino Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo (Dem. Rep.), Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

To maximize its impact, CIP targets its research priorities in potato and sweetpotato-producing areas with the greatest need, based on production, utilization and other indicators relevant to the UN Millennium Development Goals for improving food security and reducing poverty. Malawi is a priority country in CIP's strategic plan.

In Malawi, SPHI is funded by Irish Aid and other donors as a 4.5 year project. Its goals are to:

- Improve vitamin A and energy intake for at least 115,000 vulnerable rural households in Central and Southern Malawi using OFSP based approaches
- Ensure that at least 20% of households growing OFSP earn at least US \$100 per year from OFSP sales
- Increase average sweetpotato yields by 50%

SPHI works with multiple partner organizations to increase the capacity for and availability of clean sweetpotato planting material. This includes improving the productivity and quality of sweetpotato to ensure surplus production for sale and for decreasing the length of the hunger season. The program also seeks to improve the perception of sweetpotato, create increased demand for it, and integrate fresh and processed products into value market chains.

Early results of the program include:

- Establishment of 30 demonstration plots
- OFSP variety trials including 22 farmers/farmer groups
- Development of primary and secondary decentralized vine multiplications (DVMs) with 133 farmer groups covering 7.7 ha
- Development of more than 6.9 million vine cuttings of OFSP; enough for distribution of 4 kg vine cuttings to 23,000 households
- Through March 2011, 10869 households (5373 males and 5496 females) have grown OFSP through the subsidized vouchers. The clean planting materials were received from multipliers in every DVM.
- Development of a media-based campaign to create greater demand for OFSP

Partners for SPHI-Malawi include Department of Agriculture Research Services (DARS) of Malawi; Department of Nutrition, HIV, and AIDS (Office of the President and Cabinet); Nongovernmental organization (NGO) extension services: Concern Universal (CU); Chikwawa Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM); the Millennium Village Project (MVP); and the Ministry of Agricultural Extension Services (MAES) of Malawi.