

Jumpstarting Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato in West Africa through Diversified Markets

Pilot efforts to develop markets for orange-fleshed sweetpotato, in order to stimulate production of the crop and to help combat vitamin A deficiency, are underway in Ghana, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. This three-year project partners with a diversity of NGO and public sector actors to target both informal and formal markets in each country.

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Sweetpotato is an important commercial crop at the wholesale market in Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, but OFSP is not yet in high demand (credit T. Carey)

What is the problem?

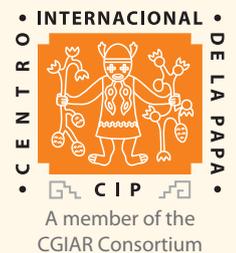
Micronutrient deficiency is a serious public health problem in many developing countries, but unlike wasting, it is often difficult to recognize and thus referred to as Hidden Hunger. Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso in West Africa are no exception. Orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) has the potential 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 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 in different locations in three countries, we will explore distinct market opportunities, including both informal and formal markets for OFSP, in fresh and processed forms. As a special side effort, we want to stimulate demand for OFSP by lactating mothers with small children through the antenatal counseling program of the Ghana Health Service.

Where are we working?

The 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 sweetpotato currently ranges 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 there is a successful school lunch program we are targeting, 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, where sweetpotato is a very important cash crop. This region is a major mango production zone, and we are targeting a successful fruit juice factory as a possible market for OFSP.



Implementing partners:

- NGOs:
- iDE-Ghana
 - iDE-Burkina Faso
 - Association of Church-Based Development Projects (ACDEP)
 - Partnership for Child Development (PCD)
- 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
 - Centre Agricole Polyvalent Matourkou





Sweetpotato growers at Soukouraba (Burkina Faso) know of OFSP but do not grow much because of limited market demand (credit T. Carey)



iDE-Burkina Faso will provide support for market farmers, using technology packages such as drip irrigation (credit T. Carey)



How are we making it happen?

We are working towards four major objectives at each target location: 1) the identification markets, 2) the organization of farmer groups to serve those markets, 3) the development of commercial seed systems to serve the farmers, and 4) increased 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 to identify markets, organize farmers into groups capable of serving those markets, accessing inputs and credit, if required. In Nigeria, the project links closely with the "Sweetpotato for Health and Wealth Project". Esoko, a social enterprise, providing cell-phone-based marketing and production services may also assist with monitoring and evaluation, and a Farm Radio International (FRI)

project promoting OFSP also aligns well with the project in target locations in Ghana and Burkina Faso. Finally, we are partnering with the Centre agricole polyvalent de Matourkou, to offer a francophone version of the "Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato" course.

At each pilot location, we will target specific markets. These include both formal (institutional) and informal markets (which may be local or in distant cities). We have already identified a number of potential markets. These include the successful school feeding program in Osun State in Nigeria, which serves more than 140,000 meals to primary school children daily, and the Dafani Ltd. juice factory in Orodara, Burkina Faso, which makes a high quality mango juice and which may consider an OFSP juice. Market assessments will help to identify additional promising markets, both formal and informal. We are also working to incorporate OFSP puree (boiled and mashed) into baked products, such as bread, or other appropriate local recipes and products, suitable for home consumption or commercial sales.

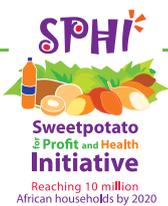


Children in Bawku, Ghana, where VAD is a problem, stand to benefit from expanded cultivation of OFSP (credit T. Carey)



What have we achieved so far?

We are in the early stages of implementation. We have held "Theory of Change" meetings involving partners and value chain actors in each country, allowing stakeholders to understand the project and their roles. In each country, OFSP varieties have been distributed to farmer groups in each target area and NGOs and extension partners are working with farmer groups to identify markets and provide follow-up. In Ghana, Community Health Centers have been identified where access to OFSP will be incorporated into the antenatal nutrition counseling program, and counseling materials have been revised and adapted to Ghanaian conditions. Virus cleanup of OFSP varieties from each country is underway and will be completed prior to the start of the next planting season.



VISIT THE SWEETPOTATO KNOWLEDGE PORTAL: WWW.SWEETPOTATOKNOWLEDGE.ORG

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