SUSTAIN Malawi: Scaling Sweetpotato in the Malawian Context

AUGUST 2014

Use of extended bags leads to bruised roots during transport that reduces shelf-life (credit J. Low)

What is the problem?

The problem with sweetpotato in Malawi is that it is underappreciated in regards to its contribution to farm family resilience and its current and potential role in sustainable food security. Though sweetpotato research and development are supported by the Departments of Agriculture Research Services (DARS) and Extension Services (DAES), donors and NGOs; these efforts tend to be somewhat isolated and small scale. Though high yielding high Vitamin A varieties exist, farmers do not yet have access to them. This results in missed opportunities for learning and scaling.

What do we want to achieve?

SUSTAIN Malawi will have a significant agricultural production, market and nutritional impact by increasing the productivity, production, consumption and processing of Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP). This will contribute to increased food availability, increased dietary diversity and improved Vitamin A nutrition of women and children. It will also increase the sale of OFSP increasing producer incomes and creating a stable supply in the urban market. Our main numerical target is to reach 75,000 households with children under 5 years of age with vines of nutritious OFSP varieties and with nutrition messages and counseling. In addition, we are working with Universal Indus tries, a commercial food processing company, to establish at least one commercially traded product on the market that uses OFSP as a major ingredient. By partnering with Government, NGO and UN food security and nutrition programs, we expect to reach a further 450,000 households with OFSP vines over the next four years.

Where are we working?

SUSTAIN Malawi will work mainly in southern Malawi – in areas of current high sweetpotato production and also in areas where it is currently a minor crop but where the potential exists to increase production and achieve nutrition impacts. The main intervention areas are in the following districts:Chikwawa, Nsanje, Blantyre (rural), Phalombe, Mulanje, Thyolo.

In each district, we have identified Extension Planning Areas (EPA's) where we partner with DAES and NGO's that are working in these locations to reach beneficiary households. These project locations complement the intervention zones of other OFSP projects, such as the Rooting Out Hunger and VISTA projects in Southern and Central Malawi.

How are we making it happen?

SUSTAIN is supporting a three-pronged approach to increase OFSP adoption, utilization and consumption: i. vine marketing and production, ii. Nutrition education and counseling, iii. commercial processing and fresh root markets. This follows CIP's Integrated Agriculture-Nutrition-Marketing Approach and adapts the key elements of this approach to the specific opportunities and conditions in Malawi. We will exploit significant opportunities in Malawi to increase OFSP production through better farmer access to vines of five recently released OFSP varieties: Chipika, Kadyaubwerere, Kaphulira, Mathuthu, and Anaakwanire, in addition to the previously promoted Zondeni variety, and by strengthening winter wetland cultivation of both roots and vines for the main summer rainfed season. In addition,

SUSTAIN
Scaling up **Sweetpotato** through Agriculture and Nutrition

CENTRO INTERNACIONAL DE LA PAPA
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SUSTAIN is a 5-year partnership (2013-2018), coordinated by CIP and financed by the UK Department for International Development, to scale up the nutrition benefits of biofortified orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP). The goal is to reach 1.2 million households with under-5 year old children in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Rwanda. SUSTAIN supports integrated interventions in agriculture, nutrition, utilization and marketing to strengthen production and consumption of OFSP. SUSTAIN emphasizes rigorous measurement and evaluation in order to assess the scalability of these interventions and contribute to global evidence on achieving large scale nutrition outcomes through biofortified crops.

Sweetpotato has become a staple food in Southern Malawi (credit J. Low)

SUSTAIN is working with commercial vine multipliers and other projects and agencies to improve linkages and information flow in the sweetpotato vine markets in Malawi. This combination of variety, increased yields, increased area under production and strengthened vine system will result in impact at scale.

We implement our nutrition education and counseling interventions through community-level CARE groups and work with Concern Worldwide and SUN-CSONA (Civil Society Organization for Nutrition Alliance) to support these groups. These interventions will start with the on-set of the main planting season in December 2014.

The marketing component aims at two value chains: the fresh roots markets in Blantyre and other towns in the SUSTAIN intervention districts, and establishing a market for OFSP-based processed products through Universal Industries Ltd. In both cases, we expect that expanding and diversifying the markets for OFSP will result in increased consumption and create further incentives for OFSP adoption and intensification of production.

These and other assumptions and hypotheses inherent to CIP's Integrated Approach will be tested and analyzed through independent impact evaluation research by Michigan State University starting in 2015 in Malawi. We will take a 'Utilization Focused Evaluation' approach involving practitioners in monitoring, learning and evaluation, as a way to support scaling-up through continued learning and innovation.

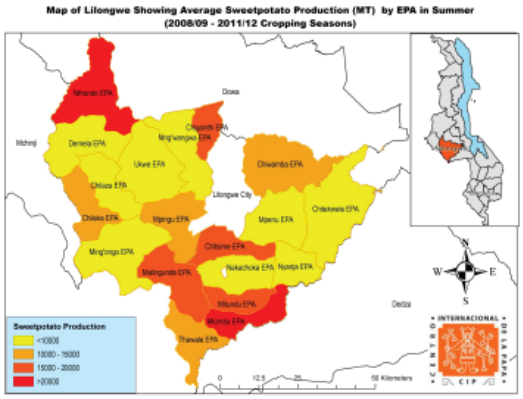
What have we achieved so far?

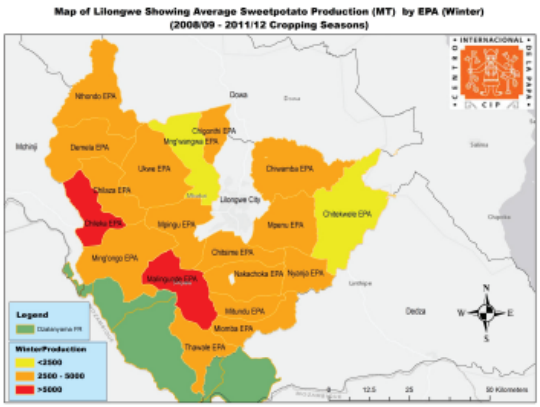
SUSTAIN has implemented a set of 'quick start activities' with the five new varieties to accelerate the multiplication of vines and the establishment of farmer managed mother and baby variety demonstrations in three districts in the south. SUSTAIN has also initiated a pilot activity with Universal Industries to test new commercial products based on pureed OFSP.

SUSTAIN Malawi has carried out a detailed analysis of sweetpotato production trends at the sub district level that has allowed us to identify areas with significant summer and winter production potential. These maps are being used to identify target areas for investment, development a market information system and strengthen the critical sweetpotato seed system with the spatial and temporal movement of vines.

Here are two maps of sweetpotato summer and winter production in subdistricts in Lilongwe District (see maps of summer and winter production). These maps indicate the importance of sweetpotato primarily as a summer rainy season crop but also as a winter crop cultivated in the 'dimbas' or wetlands. Though there is only one rainy season a year, sweetpotato is produced two times. This is significant because vines are available year round and can be moved between seasons. This allows farmers to plant when they want to, enabling them to sell into the Lilongwe market throughout the year.

And lastly, SUSTAIN has invested in the construction of a gravity irrigation system for a reputable commercial vine multiplier so he can play a role in quickly increasing the supply of vines of the five new varieties.





Key Partners

The key research partner is DARS Bvumbwe. In addition to new variety development, DARS has a lead role multiplying primary planting material, in supporting vine multipliers and designing, implementing and analyzing on farm trials. The key development partners include Concern Worldwide who will support the OFSP nutrition work and field activities in selected districts where they have a presence and programming. Concern will assist SUSTAIN in engaging the SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) movement via CSONA (Civil Society Organization for Nutrition Alliance). DAES assumes an enhanced role in SUSTAIN and takes a lead extension role in districts where NGOs are not available. Key private sector partners include Konala Vines, a leading secondary multiplier, and Universal Industries.

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