

# Combating hidden hunger through nutritious food baskets

The Building Nutritious Food Baskets (BNFB) project is testing a scaling up model through a multiple crops “food basket” approach, drawing on complementary CGIAR expertise for scaling up biofortified crops in particular. The model being tested focuses on i) advocacy efforts aimed at catalysing policy change and mobilizing resource commitments; ii) strengthening community, national and regional institutional capacities; and iii) disseminating proven biofortified technologies ready for scaling up.

SEPTEMBER 2016

## The Building Nutritious Food Baskets (BNFB) Project

The three-year BNFB project (November 2015 – October 2018) adopts a multi-crop (‘food basket’) approach (Fig 1) and is being implemented in Nigeria and Tanzania. It builds on the success of the Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) project that tested innovative approaches to generate investment, reach policy makers and train advocates and implementers using nutritious orange-fleshed sweetpotato to combat vitamin A deficiency in selected African countries. BNFB advocates for increased investment in biofortified staples as a sustainable way to combat hidden

hunger, especially among young children under the age of five years and women of reproductive age. BNFB also focuses strengthening the enabling environment for increased investments in biofortified crops and developing institutional and individual capacities to produce and consume biofortified crops. Its efforts contribute to the broader Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI), which aims to improve the lives of 10 million African families by 2020 by increasing their access to improved sweetpotato varieties and their diversified use.



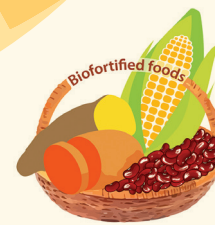
**Fig 1.** The portfolio for BNFB includes: Yellow cassava (above), orange maize with high iron beans (below), OFSP (left)



### Who are we working with?

BNFB is led by the International Potato Center (CIP), and is implemented through a consortium of partners with diverse expertise:

- the **International Center for Tropical Agriculture** (CIAT) - high iron beans;
- the **International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center** (CIMMYT) - pro-vitamin A (orange) maize;
- **CIP** - orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP);
- the **International Institute of Tropical Agriculture** (IITA) - vitamin A (yellow) cassava, pro-vitamin A (orange) maize;



Building  
Nutritious  
Food Baskets



**CIP**

INTERNATIONAL  
POTATO CENTER  
A CGIAR RESEARCH CENTER



**Sweetpotato  
Profit and Health  
Initiative**

Reaching 10 million  
African households by 2020



International Center for Tropical Agriculture  
Since 1967 / Science to cultivate change



International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center



Research to Nourish Africa



**HarvestPlus**  
Better Crops • Better Nutrition



**CGIAR**  
Science for a food-secure future



Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa





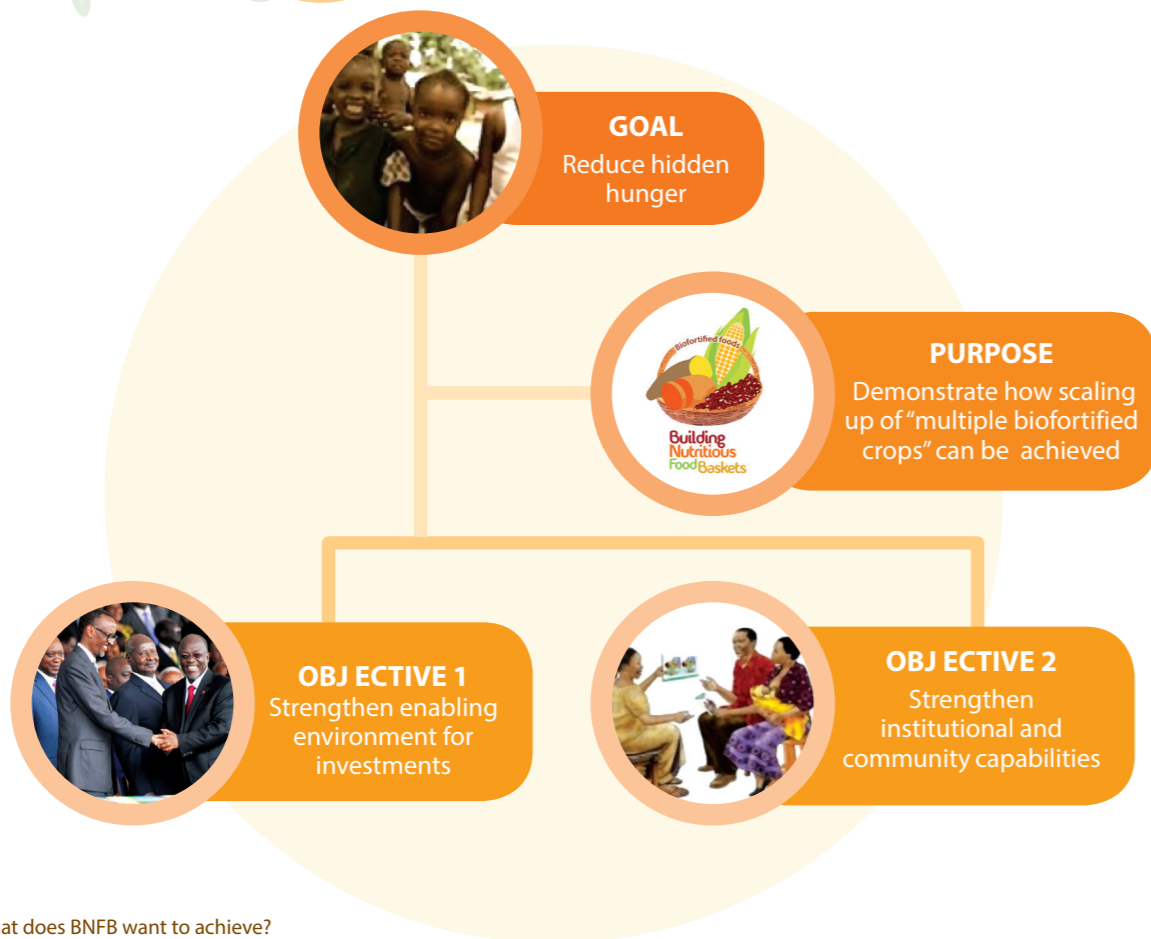


Fig 2. What does BNFB want to achieve?

- **HarvestPlus** - scaling up biofortification at country level;
- **Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)** - responsible for policy engagement and advocacy at regional level;
- the **governments of Nigeria and Tanzania** and
- a range of **national implementing partners** from public, private and civil society organizations.

The project builds on the experiences and lessons learned on advocacy, promotion, capacity development, seed systems, and dissemination under the RAC project, and leverages other projects on biofortified crops.

### What is the problem?

Hidden hunger is particularly severe in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), where many people do not consume enough essential micronutrients to lead healthy and productive lives. This is especially true among poor, rural, and other vulnerable populations. One person in four in this region is undernourished. There is need for scaling-up utilization of multiple biofortified crops to ensure access to affordable micronutrients to small-scale farmers and the poor communities in rural and urban areas who do not have access to diversified diets.



Fig 3. Use of Investment Guide developed under RAC will be scaled under this project

### What do we want to achieve?

The BNFB project is working on catalyzing sustainable investment for the utilization of biofortified crops at scale. A consortium of partners is working together on advocacy, policy development, nutrition education, and behavior change communication (BCC) for demand creation, capacity strengthening, and institutional learning to support the scaling up of multiple biofortified crops (Fig 2). Overall, the project impact will be demonstrated by a general increase in policy action in the national arenas of food production and nutrition, increased access and intake of biofortified foods that are rich in vitamin A and iron, and increased food and nutrition security at the household level. BNFB endeavors to create synergy with complementary ongoing projects and initiatives in order to add value and fill critical gaps. It is anticipated that 2,175,000 additional households will adopt biofortified crops in the two countries as a result of the BNFB investment over the next five years.

There are two major objectives:

#### (1) Strengthen the enabling environment for investments in biofortified crops

##### Advocacy efforts at country and regional levels.

Advocacy efforts aim at ensuring that biofortified crops are prioritized in the revised National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs) based on the post Malabo Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Roadmap and Strategy. Ultimately, this will catalyze policy change and help generate new investments -- by governments, developmental partners, and the private sector -- to scale up adoption and utilization of multiple biofortified crops. This will be demonstrated through strengthening the enabling environment for investments in biofortified crops in Nigeria and Tanzania in particular. In these two countries, BNFB aims to have at least 7 country policies/strategic plans developed and implemented that prioritize support to biofortification to accelerate the scaling of biofortified crops within wider agricultural and nutrition/health sectors.

Trained national advocates and champions will seek to influence leaders in the fields of agriculture, health, nutrition and education as well as NGOs, private sector and donor organizations to expand investment in the promotion, production and utilization of the multiple biofortified crops (vitamin A (yellow) cassava, vitamin A (orange) maize, vitamin A (orange) sweetpotato and high iron beans) as food-based interventions to combat hidden hunger in Nigeria and Tanzania. Our target is to raise at least \$10 million investment devoted to biofortified crops programs in Nigeria and Tanzania by public, private and NGO sectors in support of biofortification.

At regional level, BNFB will create a pool of champions who will ensure inclusion of biofortified crops as an integral part of strategies endorsed by regional and sub-regional bodies in SSA to address nutrition insecurity and micronutrient malnutrition. BNFB will work with regional champions from

diverse regional and sub-regional bodies to have at least 3 regional policies/strategic plans prioritize support to biofortification to accelerate the scaling of biofortified crops.

#### (2) Strengthen institutional and community capabilities to produce and consume biofortified crops

##### Develop Institutional and Community Capacity for Biofortified Crops.

The BNFB project will develop institutional and individual capabilities to produce and consume biofortified crops for increased income for farmers and improved nutrition, particularly for adolescents, women of child-bearing age and young children, in both rural and urban areas. The project will develop capacity of national implementing agencies to design and implement technically strong, gender-responsive programs and interventions that will drive uptake of biofortified crops. BNFB will support technical training and step-down modular courses in priority areas identified as key gaps to be addressed. We aim to strengthen the capacity of at least 10,000 change agents with skills to design and implement gender-sensitive projects/programs along the value chains that drive uptake of biofortified crops (Fig 3).

BNFB will catalyze impact-oriented seed systems. The project will work with on-going initiatives and add value by addressing prioritized key gaps along the seed systems value chains of iron rich beans and vitamin A yellow cassava, orange maize and orange-fleshed sweetpotato.

The project will assess and appraise the demand for seed/planting material of the selected biofortified crops, establish specific champions' platforms to spearhead production and marketing of biofortified crops; work with national seed agencies, the private sector; farmer/women/youth groups for strategic large scale production of biofortified crops and facilitate maintenance and continuous supply of breeder seeds.

### What have we achieved so far?

The BNFB project was officially launched during the inception workshop held in Arusha, Tanzania in March 2016 (Fig 4). Subsequently two planning workshops have been held with strategic stakeholders (August in Nigeria and September in Tanzania) to identify priority areas of intervention in the short-term.



Fig 4. Participants BNFB Inception Workshop in Arusha in March 2016





Fig 5. Biofortification display as part of FARA booth (credit S. Quinn)

**Promotion and Advocacy.** To create awareness about biofortification and nutritious food baskets, BNFB has held various promotion activities with national implementing partners, including government ministries and civil society organizations. BNFB has participated in exhibitions at key conferences, shows and fairs.

Advocacy efforts for biofortified crops have begun at country and regional levels. As an entry point to develop evidence-based advocacy for fundraising and policy change strategies, situation analysis (SITAN) studies have been commissioned in Nigeria and Tanzania and at regional levels to inform the development of advocacy strategies.

In Tanzania, BNFB actively participated in the development of a draft "Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Prevention of Micronutrient Deficiencies (NMNAP) 2," and biofortification was integrated in the implementation plan.

In Nigeria, a series of promotion and advocacy engagements have been carried out with development partners/donors and private and public sectors on biofortified crops, including the Department for International Development, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Dangote Foundation, and Civil Society Scaling-Up Nutrition in Nigeria, the Vice President and heads of 36 states.

At regional level, BNFB has participated in several regional meetings, conferences and side events and advocated

for biofortified crops (Fig 5). These include the African Task Force on Food and Nutrition Development, in Addis Ababa, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) Africa Science Week in Kigali (Fig 6), and the African Green Revolution Forum in Nairobi.

To support advocacy work, BNFB has developed a range of communication materials including flyers, fact sheets on the project, biofortification, food-based approaches (English) and a leaflet on OFSP in Kiswahili. BNFB has also developed a video on the project and published a few blog messages that are uploaded on the CIP website.

**Capacity Development.** BNFB has met with key partners and has conducted rapid needs assessments and identified gaps for learning materials and training. To date, BNFB has successfully built the capacity of representatives of 5 seed companies, 12 extensionists and 24 farmers in Tanzania.

Under seed systems, BNFB has facilitated national seed agencies to self-organize, multiply and test for large-scale production of seeds of biofortified maize and beans. BNFB has provided seed companies (Meru Agro, Tanseed, MAMS and Aminata in Tanzania and Premier Seed, Seed Co. and MASLAHA in Nigeria) with biofortified seeds to conduct multi-location trials to facilitate release of biofortified maize, beans and OFSP varieties. BNFB has also engaged processors on the processing of nutritious foods.

To facilitate systematic monitoring, data collection, reporting, evaluation and effective learning, BNFB has developed a monitoring, learning and evaluation (MLE) plan. A one day workshop for thematic leaders was held in Dar-es-Salaam in September 2016 to facilitate internalization and ownership of the plan.



Fig 6. Joyce Maru (CIP) and Nelson Ojijo (FARA) preparing exhibition at the African Science Week (credit J. Low)