



## OFSP Takes Off as Part of the New Accelerated Value Chain Development Program in Kenya

During the first 11 months of this program, we have reached over 9,000 households with OFSP planting material. The total vine multiplication area under Decentralized Vine Multipliers has increased to 6.2 hectares. We have trained 772 health workers and they have started reaching out to child care givers and pregnant mothers to improve infant and young child feeding practices.

### What is the problem?

Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) is a significant public health problem in Kenya affecting approximately 84% of children under five years of age and roughly 20% of women. While the orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) has potential to contribute to reducing VAD, and increasing food security and income, its production in Western Kenya still remains marginal for various reasons: socio-cultural negative perceptions about the crop (it is often referred to as a woman's crop and/or food for the poor); undeveloped seed systems; non-existence of long-term storage facilities; and inadequate market access. To address these bottlenecks, the project will help to create strong, sustainable OFSP value chains to increase productivity, incomes, and improve nutrition for 65,000 smallholder households over three years (October 2015- September 2018).

### What do we want to achieve?

As part of the Accelerated Value Chain Development (AVCD) Program, the sweetpotato component will use the integrated agriculture-nutrition-marketing approach, widely used by the International Potato Center (CIP), to increase productivity, production and consumption of OFSP among 65,000 smallholder households. Of these, 30,000 households will participate in root storage and marketing.

### Specific objectives include:

- 1) Dissemination of at least three best-bet technologies developed by CIP and its partners for improved seed systems. At least five vitamin A rich, orange-fleshed varieties will undergo participatory evaluation by farmers using the mother-baby model. At least 40 Decentralized Vine Multipliers (DVMs) will be mentored to conduct vine multiplication as a business. Vines will be made widely accessible in a timely manner through these vine multipliers.

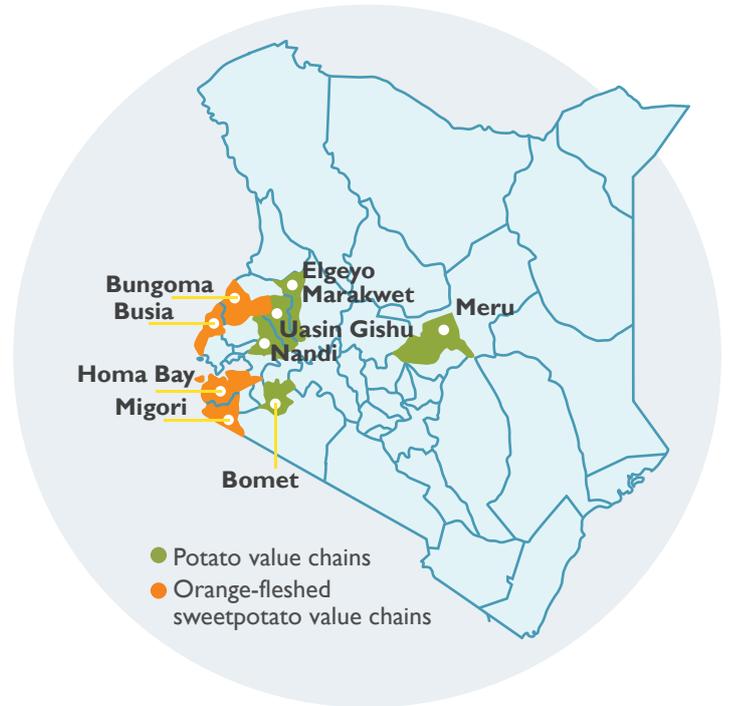


Fig 1. Where we are working

Specific efforts will be made to reach women and children under five years of age, who are most vulnerable to VAD.

- 2) Strengthening the existing health structures by integrating strong messaging and activities on maternal, infant and young child feeding practices with particular focus on vitamin A and OFSP. We will build the capacity of healthcare providers for increased uptake of agriculture-nutrition linkages for improved nutrition, focusing particularly on nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life (i.e. pregnant women and children under 24 months of age). OFSP will be integrated in common household foods; these will be analyzed at the Food and Nutrition Evaluation Laboratory (FANEL) at the Biosciences eastern and central Africa (BeCA) hub in Nairobi.
- 3) Improved storability of OFSP to assure year-round availability for trading either at formal or informal markets. This will enhance OFSP's contribution to diet year-round, not just when it is in season. Farmers' gross margins will be improved through training on good agronomic practices, collective action in production and marketing, use of Information and Communication Technology platforms to access market information and contractual linkages between farmers and buyers.



Fig 2. Beneficiaries of OFSP vines walk home after nutrition education session (credit T. Asiego)

### Where are we working?

We work in two sub-counties each in Homa Bay, Migori, Bungoma and Busia (Fig. 1)

### What we have achieved so far?

For the past 11 months, we have reached over 9,000 households with OFSP planting material (Fig. 2). We have also put in place vigorous seed bulking strategies in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture in respective counties, individual commercial vine producers and Farm Concern International (FCI) to generate sufficient amounts of good quality material accessible to farmers aiming to produce OFSP for household consumption as well as those looking to produce commercially.

16 DVMs were trained in OFSP vine multiplication and provided with pre-basic OFSP planting material, netting material and irrigation equipment support for expansion. Another group of 14 commercial DVMs have increased their acreage, bringing the total multiplication area to a total of 6.2 hectares. A total of 22 agricultural officers from the same wards were trained to backstop the DVMs. A further 161 Trainers of Trainers were instructed on OFSP agronomy and collective marketing to enhance agronomic support and collective marketing among commercial farmers producing OFSP storage roots.

We have completed a baseline survey that was administered using Open Data Kit. This survey has benchmarked our starting point and clearly picked the status of the key indicators of the Feed the Future program.

We have also completed a survey on knowledge, attitude and practice that documented perceived barriers to the uptake of OFSP by communities in the project sites. The survey findings will inform the Social and Behavior Change Communication strategy development process that will help us to develop audience specific messages and other information and communication materials.



Fig 3. Health care workers trained on integration of OFSP in maternal, infant and young child nutrition (credit D. Rono)

We have adapted a training tool for use by community health workers from the Mama SASHA project. We trained 772 community health workers (Fig. 3) on its use and they have started reaching out to child care givers and pregnant mothers to improve infant and young child feeding practices with particular focus on vitamin A and OFSP.

### Who do we work with?

CIP is partnering with FCI to enhance collective action at production and marketing levels so that farmers can benefit from economies of scale. The Natural Resources Institute of Greenwich University in the UK provides capacity building to Kenya Industrial Research Development Institute while establishing storage facilities for OFSP to ensure year-round availability of OFSP. We will work with the departments of agriculture, nutrition, public health and education at the county level (Fig. 4) to promote agriculture-nutrition linkages for improved nutrition and behavior change towards increased production, consumption and marketing of OFSP.



Fig 4. Awareness creation among policy makers of the role OFSP can play in complementary feeding (credit R. Chesoli)

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