

# Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato on the Home Grown School Feeding Menu in Nigeria and Ghana

Starting in early 2015, under two projects, orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) was included on the menu once a week at eight schools in Osun State, Nigeria. In September 2015, the number of schools was increased to 17, and in September 2016 an additional 100 were added. Local farmers are supplying over 8 tons of OFSP weekly to feed 41,216 pupils. Further, nutritionally enhanced bread made with OFSP is being offered at 10 schools. In Ghana, pilot school feeding efforts began in July of 2016 with a nutritious OFSP meal offered one day a week to students at 2 schools in Kumbungu District in the Northern Region.

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Fig 1. School feeding programs using orange-fleshed sweetpotato continue to expand

## What is the problem?

School feeding programs, which provide children with a nutritious meal daily, are recognized as an effective means to increase access to education and learning, and improve children's health and nutrition. When these programs source foods from local farmers, so-called homegrown school feeding (HGSF), they also support local agricultural economies. The African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security have endorsed HGSF for these multiple benefits. While OFSP is not yet a commercial crop in many places in Nigeria and Ghana, its inclusion on HGSF menus would help provide stable markets to stimulate OFSP production and nutrition value chains.

## What do we want to achieve?

We are interested in including locally-produced OFSP on the menu in schools throughout Nigeria and Ghana, starting in Osun State in Nigeria and at pilot locations in Kumbungu District in the

Northern Region of Ghana. The inclusion of OFSP on the menu provides students with nutritious meals and with the knowledge to stimulate demand for OFSP and improve nutrition security in their homes with non-school-going members of the household. This will work only if OFSP is an affordable and acceptable alternative to meals currently offered to students under the school lunch programs. To achieve this, we are working with relevant stakeholders from farmers and state extension services, to marketers, school and school feeding program administrators, caterers, students and parents.

## Where are we working?

In Nigeria, we are working in Osun State, where the O-Meals HGSF program was established in 2004. The program feeds roughly 225,000 meals per day to children in kindergarten through grade 4 in 1,375 schools. More than 3,000 vendors prepare and serve meals, procuring supplies with funds deposited by the O-Meals program into their bank accounts. We are currently working with 117 schools (Fig 1) in 25 of Osun State's 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs).

The Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP) began in 2005 and currently the program serves over 1.7 million meals per day and is operated under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Our effort is underway at 2 schools in Kumbungu District where 788 children receive an OFSP meal once a week.

## How are we making it happen?

Both in Nigeria and Ghana, current efforts are the result of a concerted investment since 2011 by CIP and by partners that included institutional



### Implementing partners:

- Partnership for Child Development (PCD) in Nigeria and Ghana
- Osun Elementary State School Feeding and Health Program (O-Meals)
- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI)
- Osun State Agricultural Development Programme (OSADEP)
- Osun State Youth Empowerment Scheme (O-YES)
- Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)
- Association of Church Based Development Programmes (ACDEP)
- Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)





Fig 2. Testing acceptability of sweetpotato leaves among Ghanaian school children (credit E. Abidin)

advocacy coupled with development of production and supply capacity. In September 2014, a visit by a delegation of the partners to the office of the Deputy Governor of Osun State, Nigeria resulted in high-level endorsement for the “carrot potato” and its inclusion on the menu. Then an easy to prepare sweetpotato pottage recipe (peeled OFSP root, cut into chunks, cooked with palm oil, pepper and onion, and served with fish provided by the government to ensure pupils’ intake of protein) was developed in consultation with the O-Meals and PCD staff. Community sensitization meetings were conducted to discuss the benefits of OFSP and to present the recipe to the stakeholders. In January 2015, we started piloting OFSP pottage in the school menu of eight schools in Osun State, which has since expanded to cover 117 schools. The *Sweetpotato for Health and Wealth in Nigeria* contributed at the inception phase, along with *Jumpstarting OFSP through Diversified Markets in West Africa*.

In Ghana, as in Nigeria, the process of laying the groundwork for the ongoing pilot effort in two schools was a multi-partner, multi-year effort requiring advocacy, and development of production capacity to be able to supply OFSP for the meals once the program started.



### What have we achieved so far?

- By mid-2015, 17 elementary schools in Osun State, Nigeria, were included in the HGSP program, with over 8,000 pupils receiving an OFSP meal once a week.
- 1,910 students in 13 Osun State schools receive OFSP bread once a week.
- In addition to private farmers, the Osun State Youth Empowerment Programme (O-YES) recommended that its youth groups invest in sweetpotato farming. Now groups in each LGA in the state are engaged in OFSP production.

- In September, 2016, O-meals decided to include OFSP on the weekly menu of 100 additional schools around the state, with the possibility of further increase. At the moment, a supply of the more than 10 tons of OFSP is required to feed 41,216 students weekly.
- In Ghana, the pilot program at 2 schools which ran from late June through July was also deemed to be a success (Fig 2). Supply was adequate to meet school demand during the dry season when the pilot started, and the program is set for expansion when school resumes. Caterers were happy with OFSP prices and the recipe used, and there was high acceptance of the meal by students (Fig 3).
- Both in Nigeria and Ghana, there is a willingness to consider OFSP as a seasonal menu offering if price and supply become problematic compared to other meals.



### What are the next steps?

Both the nutrition and business cases for OFSP in the school feeding programs in Nigeria and Ghana are strong, but we must continue efforts to ensure the nutritional benefits at the household level, and to expand production and encourage market linkages as the programs expand. O-Meals plans to expand coverage to all of the schools in the state, and there are emerging opportunities to extend the program to other states in Nigeria. Similarly, in Ghana, expansion is anticipated. We recognize that the school feeding market must be complemented by other markets since schools do not require OFSP during holidays and unpredictable events such as teacher strikes.



Fig 3. Enjoying a OFSP-based dish at Kumbungu school in Ghana (credit E. Abidin)