

The Feed the Future Rwanda Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) for Income and Nutrition Activity

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Fig. 1 Children tasting OFSP at a promotion event (credit A. Ndayisenga)

This three year project (2015 – 2018) aims to reach 200,000 households and 300,000 children under 5 years of age in ten districts of Rwanda, contributing to inclusive agricultural sector growth, income generation and improved nutritional status of women and children through the promotion of OFSP production and consumption. So far, 45,000 households have been reached.



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What is the problem?

Significant investment in Rwanda's agricultural sector has played an important role in the rapid and sustained economic growth which the nation has witnessed in recent years. This growth has benefited millions of smallholder farmers and contributed to the steadily declining poverty rate throughout the country. Despite these advances, however, the incidence of poverty remains stubbornly high. This is especially true of rural areas, where 24.1% of the population – classified as "ultra-poor" – still struggle to meet basic needs. Moreover, malnutrition remains widespread and it is estimated that 39% of children under the age of five are deficient in vitamin A and about 38% of them are stunted. Therefore, a comprehensive response is required to address rural poverty and malnutrition challenges. Approaches that combine interventions from a range of agricultural, economic, health, infrastructure, and social service sectors are key if Rwanda is to make further progress. Nutrition-oriented agricultural development can make significant contributions given the pivotal role of agriculture as the main source of food and income for the rural households, which comprise 70% of the total population. This is critical, since ensuring household food and nutrition security remains a priority for the Government of Rwanda.

What do we want to achieve?

The project, financed by USAID and implemented by the International Potato Center (CIP), is strengthening sector-wide human and

institutional capacity for nutrition-sensitive and market-oriented agricultural development. It also fosters linkages with the health and nutrition sector at national and local levels. The project will increase the demand for OFSP through public awareness campaigns and technical support to food processors. The project aims to reach at least 200,000 smallholder farming households with quality vines of improved OFSP varieties, equivalent to about 5-6% of the resident population in the target districts.

How will we achieve those goals?

There are two complementary streams of activities, namely:

1. Fostering partnerships: Eliminating malnutrition and laying the foundation for an increasingly prosperous rural economy requires a comprehensive approach which bridges government, civil society, and the private sector to achieve integrated agricultural, nutritional,

Fig 2. Integrating OFSP roots and leaves into lunches at nutrition trainings (credit A. Ndayisenga)



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Fig. 3 Preparing to collect cuttings to plant from a multiplier's field (credit A. Ndayisenga)

and market chain development. To this end, the project is building upon a long-standing partnerships between CIP and the Rwanda Agricultural Board (RAB), as well as other local- and national-level government bodies, national and international NGOs, farmers, and other stakeholders. These partnerships will strengthen human and institutional capacity, foster inter-sectoral linkages and achieve nutrition-sensitive and market-oriented agricultural development.

2. Cultivating Solutions: Local implementing partners, working closely with local authorities, community health workers and agricultural extension staff will select beneficiary households with children under five years of age to receive OFSP vines. They will work closely with local authorities, community health workers and agricultural extension staff to select beneficiary households with young children for nutrition interventions. Local partners will participate in OFSP vine multiplication, distribution, and demonstrations, as well as in nutrition education and counseling campaigns. At least 250 staff from Government of Rwanda institutions and NGOs will receive training in agronomic and nutrition extension related to OFSP. The project will also train at least 370 community groups in child health and nutrition interventions and demonstrations in food preparation and storage.

Where are we working?

The ten targeted districts are: Gatsibo, Bugesera, Burera, Musanze, Rubavu, Ngororero, Rutsiro, Karongi, Nyamagabe, and Nyaruguru.

Who are we working with?

Our key partner are the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, the Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) and Local Governments of Gatsibo, Bugesera, Burera, Musanze, Rubavu, Ngororero, Rutsiro, Karongi, Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru Districts. We are also

working with the following NGOs: DERN, OSPECCA, UNICOOPAGI, IMBARAGA, and YWCA and collaborating with HarvestPlus, Caritas, CRS, and FXB Rwanda.

What are the expected results?

- Improved utilization of OFSP among 200,000 households with at least 300,000 children under five; supported through demonstrations of safe and nutritious food preparation and storage, including options for OFSP utilization as a complementary baby food.
- Strengthened sector-wide human and institutional capacity for nutrition-sensitive and market-oriented agricultural development linkages with the health and nutrition sector at national and local levels.
- Consumer demand increased through public awareness campaigns and additional demand created through technical support to food processors to include OFSP as an ingredient in their existing and new products.

What have we achieved so far?

In year one the project provided OFSP vines and nutrition and agronomic messages to over 45,000 households. The project is identifying and establishing Decentralized Vine Multipliers (DVMs) in all districts to lead vine multiplication. These will be linked to RAB sweetpotato pre-basic seed program for access to disease-free planting material and improved OFSP varieties.

What's next?

As the project continues into year two, we are preparing to provide OFSP vines and agriculture and nutrition training to at least 80,000 households.

Fig. 4 Woman with boiled OFSP roots (credit A. Ndayisenga)



The Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI), launched in 2009, seeks to improve the lives of 10 million African households in 17 SSA countries by 2020 through providing access to improved varieties of sweetpotato and their diversified use.

Support for the establishment of the Platforms and the holding of CoP meetings is provided by the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) Project, led by the International Potato Center with over 26 collaborating partners.

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