

# Positioning Biofortification and HarvestPlus at the National Level in Uganda

SEP 2017

Under the USAID-funded project, Meals for Nutrition: Biofortified Solutions (MENU), HarvestPlus has reached a total of 10,358 farmers (8,912 females and 1,446 males) with orange sweetpotato vines in 13 districts between October 2016 and September 2017, through six partner NGOs. The Uganda Multi-sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Project is scaling-up the production and utilization of biofortified vitamin A orange sweetpotato and high iron beans in another 15 districts through schools.



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**Fig 1.** The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Uganda, Ruhakana Rugunda enquires about the value-added orange sweetpotato flour at a HarvestPlus stall during a parliamentary nutrition exhibition. (credit H. Tumuhimbise)

## What is the problem?

Micronutrient deficiencies constitute a major nutritional problem in Uganda. The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey report of 2011 indicates that 38% of children under five years of age are vitamin A deficient and 53% are anemic. This is high despite government efforts on supplementation and food fortification. Vitamin A deficiency increases the risk of blindness and susceptibility to diseases, mainly diarrhea and acute respiratory infections in children, while iron deficiency results in physical and cognitive impairment.

## Biofortification's impact

Research has proved that biofortified crops can address vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Uganda has recently released drought tolerant high iron beans and more improved vitamin A orange sweetpotatoes. However, uptake of biofortified crops is still limited to projects that

do not cover the entire country. There is, therefore, need to have biofortification incorporated in more key policy documents and government interventions and programmes for scale-out to the entire country.

## Where are we working?

Currently HarvestPlus works in 12 districts: Kamuli, Kibale, Kabaale, Masindi, Kanungu, Isingiro, Ibanda, Rakai, Lira, Dokolo, Mukono and Kamwenge.

## How are we working?

Being relatively new, the success of biofortification depends on persuading different stakeholders to embrace and incorporate it into their programmes for scale up. HarvestPlus has been engaging key stakeholders through a number of activities like policy dialogues, technical assistance to sub-grantees, exhibitions (Fig. 1), joint





**Fig. 2** Engaging Donors: UK Parliamentarians and Luwero district local government officials during a field tour to a local orange sweetpotato vine multiplier in Nyimbwa Sub-county, Luwero district. (credit H. Tumuhimbise)

monitoring, field trips and media advocacy to scale-up biofortification.

### What have we achieved so far?

In Uganda, biofortification has been endorsed by policymakers and other stakeholders at different levels, namely:

- Under the Uganda Multi-Sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Project, government is scaling-up the production and utilization of biofortified vitamin A orange sweetpotato and high iron beans in 15 districts;
- High iron beans were officially launched in Uganda by H.E President Yoweri Museveni Kaguta in July 2017;
- The Rt. Honorable Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, Rebecca Kadaga, has also been key in supporting the efforts to scale-up biofortified crops by calling upon all Ugandans to grow and eat orange sweetpotatoes;
- NGOs such as World Vision, Samaritans Purse, SNV, Lutheran World Relief (LWR), have taken up biofortified crops and spread them further beyond HarvestPlus implementation areas. Today, biofortified crops are distributed in Yumbe, Arua, Maracha, Bugiri, Tororo by LWR, World Vision, Samaritans Purse and the government multi-sectoral project;
- Under the MENU project, in the period October 2016 to July 2017, we have reached out to a total of 10,358 farmers (8,912 females and 1,446 males) with orange sweetpotato vines;
- At community level, HarvestPlus have trained a cadre of 343 Community Resource Persons, and 146 non-health professionals from government;
- HarvestPlus provided technical support to the Uganda Multi-sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Project on dissemination of biofortified crops;
- We are currently working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries to constitute a Biofortification Working Group that will consolidate efforts in advocacy and scaling-up biofortification in the country;
- Promotion of biofortified crops has been included as a priority activity in the Anemia Prevention and Control strategy and the draft nutrition policy;
- HarvestPlus signed partnership agreements with six NGOs to ensure effective integration, delivery, and uptake of biofortified crop varieties in the country.



**Fig. 3** HarvestPlus CEO Bev Postma (far right) having lunch with children in the community. (credit H. Tumuhimbise)

These are World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, VEDCO, Health Child Uganda, Africa 2000 Network, and Caritas-Hoima Diocese. We continue to collaborate with the International Potato Center on seed system and post-harvest management improvements.

### How are we working towards sustainability?

HarvestPlus' sustainability strategies are:

- Working with key government ministries (agriculture, health and education) to mainstream biofortification into their sectoral policies, plans and interventions;
- Working with local governments to include biofortification into the district plans and ordinances (Fig. 2);
- Working with different partners on nutrition and agriculture to scale-up biofortified crops;
- Empowering communities to produce, consume and market biofortified crops (Fig. 3).

### What do we want to achieve in Uganda?

- National Biofortification Working Group in place;
- National declaration of biofortification as one of the sustainable solutions to ending hidden hunger;
- A supportive enabling environment for scale-up of biofortified crops in terms of political will and leadership with friendly policies and budget allocations;
- Incorporation of biofortification in key national level nutrition and agriculture strategic plans and policies such as School Feeding and Nutrition Guidelines, Nutrition Policy, Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan, Health Sector Strategic Plan etc.;
- National visibility of HarvestPlus as a leader in biofortification;
- Evidence of a clear contribution of orange sweetpotato to the reduction of micronutrient malnutrition and improvement of the dietary intakes of vitamin A among 3,000,000 vulnerable households by 2021;
- A proven strategy for effective integration, delivery, and uptake of biofortified crop varieties in the country.

### CONTACTS

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