

Strengthening capacity on Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato through training of trainers efforts in West Africa

Under the “Jumpstarting Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) in West Africa through Diversified Markets” project, we used a training of trainers (ToT) approach to build capacity along value chains in Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. Diverse training efforts ensured success of the project, and established a base for going to scale in each country.

SEPTEMBER 2017



Fig. 1 Business training for retailers in Burkina Faso (credit E. Abidin)

What was the problem?

Orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) can be effective at helping to combat vitamin A deficiency at the community level. Sweetpotato is a productive and versatile crop with great potential to contribute to profitable and sustainable farming and food systems. In West Africa, however, sweetpotato is mostly not among the major crops, and has been relatively neglected by agricultural research and extension services. Furthermore, while the crop is known, there was limited appreciation of the nutritional value and market potential of OFSP at the beginning of our project.

What did we want to achieve?

We wanted to demonstrate several sustainable and inclusive market-driven approaches for OFSP that would lead to increased incomes and

improved health through consumption of vitamin A-rich OFSP, especially for women and children in Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. This required identifying market opportunities and developing capacity of local farmers and other value chain actors to serve those markets (Fig. 1). At the end of the project, we wanted to have viable businesses that were capable of being scaled out and up.



Where did we work?

In Ghana, we worked in selected districts of the Northern, and Upper East Regions. In Nigeria, the project targeted Osun and Kwara States, and in Burkina Faso, we primarily worked in Kennedougou Province in the southwest. Efforts were not strictly confined to these pilot sites, however, as target markets and suppliers of inputs such as planting material were not always present in our target production zones.



How did we make it happen?

Capacity development was an essential component of our efforts at each location, beginning with project partners and others interested in OFSP, and extending to value chain actors including producers, processors, and consumers. To amplify our results, we consistently took a ToT approach based on established principles of behaviour-change communication and adult learning, so that our trainees could effectively train others with practical skills. We used existing materials or adapted them to develop our own. To meet the broad demand for general knowledge and skills on OFSP, we adopted the 10-day “Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato” course (Fig. 2). We also adapted information, education and communication approaches and materials used by UNICEF and the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement. Training efforts varied with the



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Reaching 10 million
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**Jump
Starting**

Orange-Fleshed
Sweetpotato
in West Africa through
Diversified Markets



Promouvoir

la patate douce à
chair orange en Afrique
de l'Ouest à travers
des marchés diversifiés



CIP

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Implementing partners:

NGOs

- iDE-Ghana
- iDE-Burkina Faso
- Association of Church-Based Development Projects (ACDEP)

Private Sector

- E-Darkey Association

National programs

Burkina Faso:

- Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA)
- CAP Matourkou, Burkina Faso

Ghana:

- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – Crops Research Institute (CRI)
- CSIR – Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)
- University for Development Studies (UDS)
- Ghana Health Service (GHS)

Nigeria:

- National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI)
- Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI)

market intervention we were targeting at each location, and included training on OFSP seed production, root production, postharvest handling, utilization, processing, and marketing.



What did we achieve?

- We trained relevant partners and actors in each country, introduced diverse OFSP enterprises, and left a competent cadre of trainers in place to meet future training and upscaling needs.
- We developed and used diverse training and promotional materials including materials and manuals for nutrition counseling, OFSP utilization, and planting material production, brochures on best practices for planting material and root production, an illustrated cookbook of OFSP recipes, posters of recipes, informative calendars, and marketing aids, such as t-shirts and umbrellas. In all, 47,773 items were produced and used.
- We introduced and implemented the “Everything you ever wanted to know about sweetpotato” course in Ghana and Burkina Faso, and sponsored participants to an existing course in Nigeria. In Ghana, the course was run twice at KNUST, the second time with fee-paying students from around the region. In Burkina Faso, materials were translated into French and the course was run twice at the agricultural training center in Matourkou (CAP-M), training national extensionists and fee-paying participants from around the region. About 183 participants either participated in the course or conducted step-down trainings as a follow up.
- We worked with NGO and extension partners across countries to train 121 farmers groups (60 for vine production and sales, and 61 groups of OFSP root producers) on production, marketing and record keeping. About 800 farmers were trained, adopting improved practices, such as fertilizer use. Forty-nine vine multipliers and extensionists were trained on quality declared planting material inspection practices.
- In Nigeria, we targeted school feeding and trained 776 caterers in 186 schools on OFSP preparation and nutrition. Teachers, students and parents were also informed of OFSP and its nutritional value.



Fig. 2 Trainees at ToT in Burkina Faso learn about different sweetpotato varieties



Fig. 3 Trained retailers sell OFSP roots using marketing tools for demand creation in Burkina Faso (credit E. Abidin)

- Across project sites in Ghana and Burkina Faso, 67 retailers, 25 wholesalers and 10 middlemen were trained on the nutritional value of OFSP and provided with market aids (Fig. 3), and twenty women were trained on nutrition, processing and hygiene in Burkina Faso (Fig. 4).
- In an effort with the Ghana Health Service, 332 Community Health Planning Services (CHPS) staff from 33 CHPS facilities were trained on nutrition counseling, utilization, and OFSP production. They shared this information with over 8,000 pregnant or lactating women, while providing OFSP planting material or roots to over 4000 women.
- An innovative training on entrepreneurship in value addition was conducted at the University for Development Studies in Ghana, where a competition was held to develop products and business plans for commercializing them. From over 20 entrants, three teams of finalists were awarded small grants to help fund their start-up enterprises producing OFSP products.

The success of our pilot efforts across countries, is indicated by the finding that 89% of producers interviewed still grew OFSP one year after receiving vines. Furthermore, a total of over 117,487 direct beneficiaries were reached with information and knowledge about the benefits of vitamin A and value of OFSP after just 2.5 years.



What are the next steps?

Needs and opportunities for capacity building are continually evolving as sweetpotato value chains strengthen in our target countries and around the region. The project partners stand ready to continue to strengthen capacity through ToT approaches.



Fig. 4 OFSP Processing training for food vendors-retailers (credit E. Abidin)