

Emergency Response with Potato and Sweetpotato among drought-affected farmers in SNNPR, Ethiopia

The Emergency potato and sweetpotato seed support enabled farmers in the Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) to restore the varieties they lost to a severe drought in 2015/2016, improving their household food and nutrition security. In one year, 9,779 farmers got sweetpotato cuttings and 23,594 were trained on sweetpotato agronomy and nutrition.

SEPTEMBER 2017



Fig. 1 Trainees at a sweetpotato Agronomy ToT course planting sweetpotato cuttings during a practical session at Wolaita Sodo (credit B. Lemaga)



What is the problem?

In 2015, Ethiopia experienced the worst drought in more than five decades, exacerbated by the phenomenon of El Niño. It caused significant crop and livestock losses, negatively affecting food security and nutrition conditions across the country. Nationwide, it left an estimated 15 million Ethiopians requiring food assistance during 2016. The SNNPR was one of the regions worst affected by the drought. Farmers lost their crops, including the most preferred potato and sweetpotato varieties and communities' access to nutritious food was reduced. The region is already facing deeply entrenched malnutrition, with 44% of children under two years of age

chronically malnourished. To restore the lost varieties and improve food and nutrition security of communities, the USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supported CIP to assist drought-affected farmers in SNNPR with sweetpotato and potato seed.



What do we want to achieve?

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to improving food and nutrition security of drought-affected farm households through providing immediate access to seed potato and sweetpotato planting material of productive and locally adapted varieties. The project began in June



CIP
INTERNATIONAL
POTATO CENTER
A CGIAR RESEARCH CENTER



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Partners:

- Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources Development (RoBANRD), SNNPR
- Southern Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)
- Regional Bureau of Health (RBoH), SNNPR
- Hawassa University





Fig. 2 Preparation of traditional food mixed with OFSP leaves and roots during a practical session of a ToT course at Wolaita Sodo. (credit B. Lemaga)

2016 and runs up to June 2018. The objective is to support 19,500 drought-affected potato and sweetpotato farmers in SNNPR through provision of emergency seed potato and sweetpotato planting material and training on production, and postharvest technologies and nutrition.

Where are we working?

The project is being implemented in the SNNPR in six potato growing and seven sweetpotato growing woredas (districts) encompassing 98 kebeles (villages), of which 65 are potato and 33 are sweetpotato kebeles.

How are we making it happen?

We seek to achieve the goal and objective of the project through emergency seed supply of potato and sweetpotato, and farmer training and awareness creation by working very closely with the key partner, Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources Development (RBoANRD), SNNPR. The roles of the partner include:

- Training of woreda agricultural experts and development agents on potato and sweetpotato agronomy, seed management, integrated pest management (IPM) and postharvest technologies using a training of trainers' approach (Fig. 1).
- Participation in the training of woreda health experts (WHE), rural women extension (RWE) experts, and health extension workers (HEW) on nutrition.
- Assignment of regional and woreda level focal persons to ensure timely implementation of activities
- Cascading of knowledge acquired by experts to beneficiary farmers and provide technical backstopping
- Design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities

We also collaborated with the Bureau of Health and Hawassa University on nutrition training and Southern Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) for quality starter planting material.

What have we achieved so far?

A total of 9,779 farmers received quality planting material of Kulfo (OFSP) and Awassa-83 (white-fleshed) varieties. They restored what they had lost and got high root yields. Foundation seed of Kulfo was given to two cooperatives with a membership of 29 farmers to renew their planting material and sell vines to the communities going forward. Sixty-one agricultural experts (55 M; 6 F) and 12,270 farmers (8,750 M; 3,520 F) were trained on sweetpotato agronomy and post-harvest handling. Similarly, 102 experts (30 M; 72 F) were trained on OFSP nutrition (Fig. 2). Nutrition education including preparation of OFSP roots and leaves either alone or in mixture with traditional foods, was given to 11,324 farmers (1,362 M and 9,962 F). Most of these farmers have started eating sweetpotato leaves for the first time, contributing to improved food security. Farmers add OFSP roots to their traditional foods and claim that the food has become more attractive to adults and children alike because of the orange color. Initially, farmers did not want to plant OFSP on fertile parts of their plots, but after seeing the benefits, they started growing it under irrigation and near homesteads.

What's next?

One of the major achievements has been using OFSP leaves as a vegetable; this will be promoted together with consumption of roots. In project kebeles, drought is a major constraint so emphasis will be given to multiplying sweetpotato vines using irrigation and conserving planting material from season to season using the Triple S method (Fig. 3). Efforts of the EU project in developing high dry matter OFSP varieties will be supported.



Fig. 3 A woman farmer demonstrating the Triple S method of conserving planting material in Durame (credit M. Hadush).