

# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ORANGE-FLESHED SWEET POTATOES (OFSP) IN KENYA

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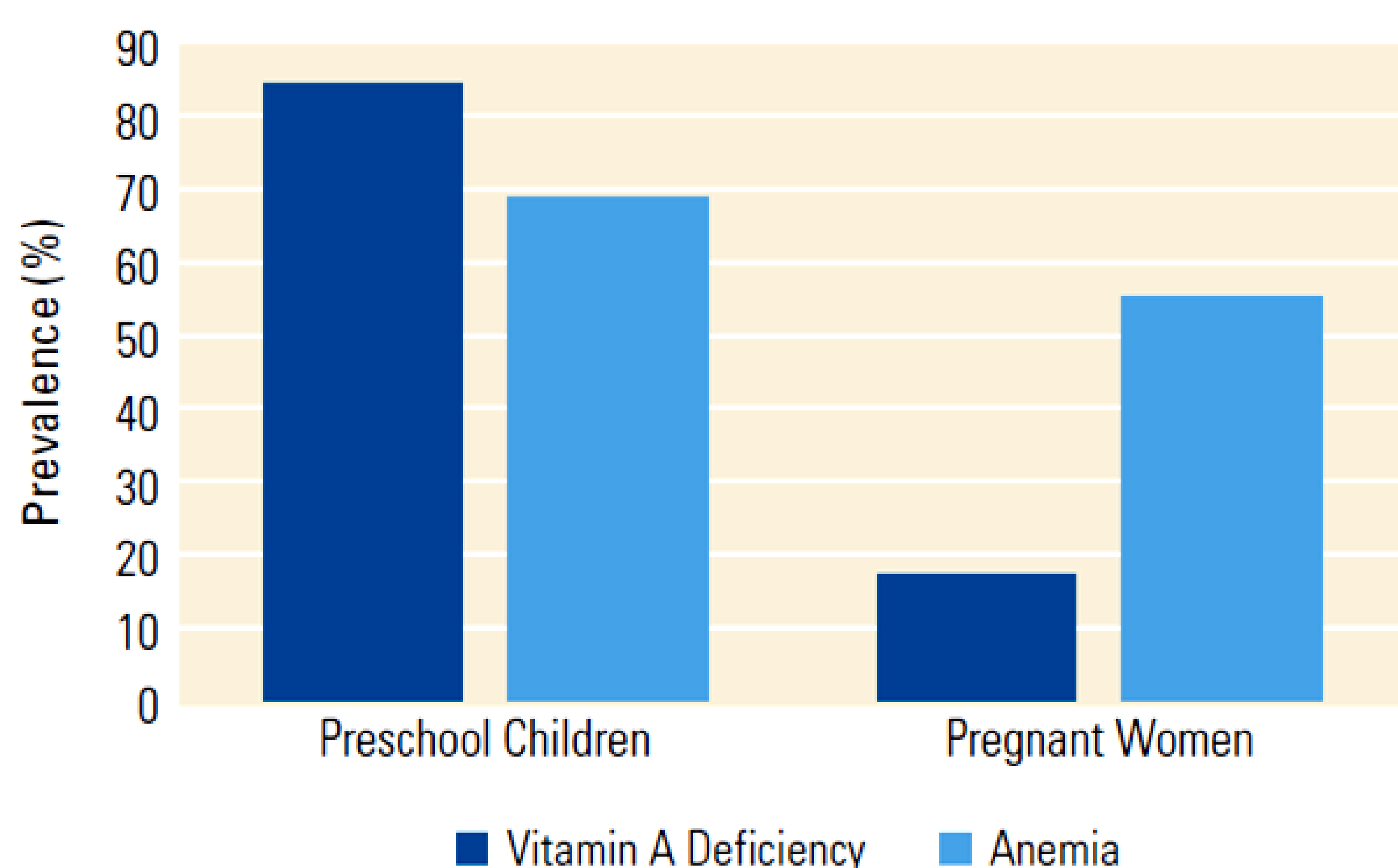
## 1. Introduction

- Sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), a warm season tropical tuber crop, is an important food, feed, health and vegetable crop in most tropical developing countries.
- The root tubers are consumed after boiling; when mixed with other food ingredients, while the leaves are consumed as vegetables and also as animal feeds.
- Improved cultivars and farming methods have resulted to the increase in production area which grew from 20,181 Ha yielding 527,470 tons (valued at KSh. 4 billion) in 2009 to 22,989 Ha in 2011 yielding 1,000,267 tons (valued at KSh. 7.6 billion).
- Distributed to the North Eastern, Coastal, Western and Nyanza regions where Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) is prevalent.
- Example of the OFSP variety developed is the Kenspot



## 2. Contributions of the OFSP in Kenya

- Food security strategy for Kenya as it is drought resistance and is a short term crop with flexible harvest time.
- A rich source of carotenes and Vitamin A hence contributing significantly to the drop in VAD
- VAD and malnutrition are widespread in developing countries. In Kenya, VAD affects 84% of children and 39% of women (pregnant women). Increasing the intake of OFSP, has helped in combating VAD.
- Farmers have embraced the growth of OFSP Leading to its spread in most parts of Western Kenya. This is through the support of the ministry of Agriculture which ensures distribution of quality vines farmers.



High Rates of Vitamin A and Iron Deficiency Contribute to Lost Lives and Diminished Productivity

Source: WHO Global Prevalence of Vitamin A Deficiency in Populations at Risk 1995–2005; WHO Worldwide Prevalence of Anemia 1993–2005.

## 3. Initiatives to promote OFSP breeding in Kenya

- OFSP is highly rich in Vitamin A. There is need to introduce other nutrients e.g iron and zinc, to cater for the nutritional requirements of the population.
- Major constraints to high yield production in OFSP are pests and diseases.
  - Diseases vary from region to region & include about 20 virus and virus-like diseases, 35 bacterial and fungal diseases, 20 nematodes and about 20 insect pests.
- Variation in shelf life exists among the different OFSP cultivars. This is with the dry matter(DM) content, whereby, those with low DM tend to have shorter shelf life.



## 5. Prospects of sweet potato in Kenya:

- Through research, breeders are increasing iron and zinc content in OFSP in partnership with nutritionists who assess their bioavailability when target levels are reached.
- Researches in Kenya by research Institutes e.g KALRO, in partnership with projects e.g SASHA and CIP, ensure constant development of good cultivars and farming methods.
  - ✓ Micro-propagation of pathogen tested tissue culture plantlets of OFSP are produced, acclimatized then hardened for normal plant growth under green house conditions
- Storage facilities provided, extend the shelf life of the tubers
- The government trains farmers, vine multipliers and promoters on the different products that can be made out of OFSP, contributing to value addition.



## Acknowledgment

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- Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization
- Food Science and Technology Platform of Kenya (FOSTEP-K)

## References

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