

The Sweetpotato Community of Practice Focuses on Sharing Experiences and Promoting Product Development

The 8th Annual Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI) Technical meeting was held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, aligned with an Exhibition held at the Mlimani Mall (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Learning about OFSP Exhibition at Mlimani Mall in Dar-es-Salaam (Credit J. Low)

► What is the problem?

The SPHI is now in its second five-year phase, with the ambitious goal of reaching 10 million households by 2020 with improved varieties of sweetpotato and their diversified use. By December 2017, 4.5 million households have been reached. While some governments recognize the potential role of sweetpotato to improve health and wealth across a range of agro-ecologies, the number of dedicated staff working on sweetpotato related research and dissemination is still limited. The diversified use of sweetpotato by private sector processors in SSA is growing but much more remains to be done.

► What do we want to achieve?

We want to see a growing and vibrant CoP, with sweetpotato researchers, development farmers, traders, private sector processors and consumers able to obtain and apply sweetpotato knowledge effectively. We want to see an ever growing number of organizations and governments committed to the SPHI goals and sharing their strategies and lessons learned with others. Sweetpotato Support Platforms (SSPs) at the sub-regional level (East and Central Africa; Southern Africa; West Africa), started in 2010, continue to support breeding and germplasm exchange.

► Where are we working?

SSPs have been established within each major sub-region of SSA. For East and Central Africa, the SSP is hosted at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) in Uganda and the Kenyan Plant Health Inspection Service (KEPHIS). For Southern Africa, the SSP is based at the Agrarian Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM) in Maputo. The West Africa platform is located at the Crops Research Institute (CRI) in Kumasi, Ghana. CoP groups are currently targeting the 17 SPHI countries¹.

► How are we making it happen?

The **SPHI Steering Committee (SSC)** comprises five donor organizations and 11 other research and development organizations committed to achieving the SPHI goal². Development organizations share the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries reached annually, which are reported in the annual Status of Sweetpotato in Sub-Saharan Africa report.

Knowledge and best practice is shared through the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal, which anyone can register and contribute to, the development of tools and toolkits to facilitate standardized data collection across projects and countries, the annual production of update progress briefs on research achievements and projects, and support to four CoP technical working groups. The four CoP groups are: 1) Breeding and Genomics, 2) Seed Systems and Crop Management, 3) Marketing, Processing, and Utilization, and 4) Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MLE). Each group meets annually and a sub-group of the Seed Systems CoP focused on pre-basic seed has one additional meeting. We also have active information exchange through Facebook (sweetpotatoknowledge) and Twitter (@oursweetpotato).



CIP
INTERNATIONAL
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RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Roots, Tubers
and Bananas

SPHI

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.

¹ Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Benin.

² The organizations are CIP, FARA, the CGIAR Roots, Tubers and Banana Program (RTB), HarvestPlus, the Natural Resources Institute, PATH, Farm Concern International, Helen Keller International, and North Carolina State University (NCSU), Catholic Relief Services, and Farm Africa. The five donors are: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UKAid, USAID, Irish Aid, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).



Fig. 2 Perfect Farm Group displayed their OFSP crisps and flour at the exhibition (Credit J. Low)

► What have we achieved since June 2017?

- Over 500 people attended the half-day *Learn about Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato* Exhibition at Mlimani Mall in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. The 20 booths highlighted achievements across the SPHI, with 6 private sector processors displaying their wares (Fig. 2).
- 105 participants (41 of whom were women), representing 42 different organizations attended the 2 day 8th Annual SPHI Technical Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. Annual briefs prepared include: 17 for SASHA project updates and 29 for other sweetpotato projects plus the third Status of Sweetpotato in SSA report.
- At the SPHI meeting, we launched the OFSP Passport to Good Health (Fig. 3). This 39-page booklet is the size of a passport and contains key facts and figures about orange-fleshed sweetpotato as well as contact information concerning where to get access to varieties and organizations belonging to the SPHI Steering Committee.

- This was the first year that awards were given from the Excellence in Sweetpotato Endowment Fund set up by Jan Low with part of her award from the World Food Prize. The \$500 Best Sweetpotato Scientific Paper of 2016 was awarded to Dr. Earnest Baafi of the Crops Research Institute (Fig. 4). The second \$500 award for Communication for Change went to a team from Helen Keller International and SPRING, for a community video produced both in French and English promoting the use of OFSP.
- SASHA and USAID sponsored a one-day OFSP Industry Forum in Blantyre, Malawi that attracted 79 participants to learn about opportunities to invest in OFSP process product development.
- The Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal now has with 661 registered users and 2,050 files. A new Dashboard feature was added to visual capture dissemination and varietal release progress by traits, and the location of vine multipliers. A monthly E-digest continues to be sent out highlighting recent content to 1,706 contact addresses.
- Table 1 summarizes the dates, venues, and gender of participants attending the CoP meetings during the past year. Minutes of these meetings and the associated presentations are available on the Portal. In addition, there were two training events: one on Statistics for Breeders and another on use of the statistical package STATA.
- Communications intern Sarah Westby produced three sweetpotato videos: one on OFSP processing and two on the Triple S method for assuring timely planting material in drought-prone areas. In addition, KEPHIS coordinated the production of a 7-minute video describe all activities involved in the pre-basic seed system.



Fig. 3 Cover for OFSP Your Passport to Good Health that contains key facts and contact information (Credit J. Low)



Fig. 4 Ernest Baafi won Best Scientific Paper for 2016 (Credit J. Low)



Led by CIP, the ten-year Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) project is designed to improve the food security and health of poor families in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by exploiting the untapped potential of sweetpotato.

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Table 1. Dates and attendance at SPHI Community of Practice meetings and Training Events in 2017/2018 (Year 4)

CoP Meeting	Date	No. of Women	No. of Men	No. of Organizations	Venue
Sweetpotato Seed Systems: 8 th Consultation- Sustainable Pre-basic Seed Production	21-22 Nov 2017	11	12	14	Nairobi, Kenya (Pride Inn, Rhapta Road)
Statistics for Applied Breeders	17-26 Jan 2018	3	12	2	Kumasi, Ghana (CRI)
4 th Monitoring, Learning & Evaluation	12 Feb 2018	7	25	4	Nairobi, Kenya (ILRI Campus)
Stata Training	13-18 Feb 2018	9	27	5	Nairobi, Kenya (ILRI Campus)
5 th Marketing, Processing & Utilization	23-24 Apr 2018	27	51	30	Blantyre, Malawi (Lotus Hotel)
9 th Consultation- Sustainable Pre-basic Seed Production	14 May 2018	12	13	14	Kigali, Uganda (Villa Portofino Hotel)
9 th Seed Systems and Crop Management	15-17 May 2018	17	45	27	Kigali, Uganda (Villa Portofino Hotel)
18 th Sweetpotato Speedbreeders and Genomics	5-8 June 2018	14	36	20	Nairobi, Kenya (Swiss Lenana Hotel)