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“Utilisation of diversity in land use systems:  
Sustainable and organic approaches to meet human needs”

## **Increasing Vegetable Production and Consumption in Africa: Averting the Downward Trend of Malnutrition and Poverty**

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### **Abstract**

Although vegetable production, marketing and consumption has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of especially the rural and poor population in Africa, its role is neglected in the nutritional and development discussions, especially that of African indigenous vegetables. Consequently, the production and consumption of vegetables in Africa is lacking far behind the world-wide average. Not only in the consumption (which is less than the WHO/FAO recommended minimum uptake of 200 g of vegetables/day/person), but also in the production of vegetables, Africa is bringing up the rear by producing annually app. 50 kg of vegetables per capita, which is less than half of the rate in most of the other regions of the world.

Based on the Asian experience, positive health and economic effects can be projected by increasing vegetable consumption and production in Africa: Increased consumption will reduce the devastating health effects of insufficient vegetable intake. Increased consumption will lead to an increase in production. Hence, an increase in employment is forecasted through the high labour demand for cultivation as well as the possibilities of food processing. Higher production and adding value to the produce on site will lead to increasing incomes for the producers.

These opportunities for Africa can only be yielded, if decision makers are willing to invest to improve the vegetable production, marketing and consumption. To increase the demand of vegetables, promotion and awareness raising has to take place, to increase the supply, improved technologies have to be offered and propagated. These investments will have a high return in improved health status of the population as well as being a motor for economic development, thus breaking the downward trend of malnutrition and poverty in Africa.

**Keywords:** Health effects, income and employment, pro-poor growth, value adding, vegetable consumption and production