



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions
for the Sustainable Management
of Natural Resources”

Women’s Involvement Along the Supply Chain for African Indigenous Vegetables in Uganda and Kenya

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Abstract

African Indigenous Vegetables (AIV) are an integral part of the diet of the urban and peri-urban population in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Yet, little is known about the economic importance of AIV for income generation and livelihoods in urban and rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa. Writers have highlighted that indigenous vegetables are a valuable food source for the poor, but increasingly there is realisation that indigenous vegetables are a vital component of the rural economy, that they contribute to livelihoods both through their value for consumption and income, and also that there is a large and perhaps growing market for indigenous vegetables. For instance, in Nairobi it is estimated that now 30% of all vegetables sold are AIV produced in the vicinity of the city. AIV find their way from the field to the market through various channels and one can thus assume that AIV support a large number of small businesses along the supply chain in urban and peri-urban areas. Based on a survey conducted in 2007 that involved 815 respondents, we describe the actors involved, and provide an overview on the value and size of the market for indigenous vegetables in Kampala and Mbale, Uganda and Nairobi and Kisumu, Kenya. Our data shows that AIV provide an important means of livelihood and for many supply chain actors they are a major source of income. We find that women participate in all segments of the chain, and dominate wholesale and retail activities. Low capital requirements for entry allow even the poorest households to participate. Based on a multivariate regression analysis we show that women’s income along the supply chain is generally lower than that of their male counterparts. Women face various constraints in their activities and thus need support of policy and decision makers.

Keywords: African Indigenous Vegetables, gender, Kenya, supply chain, Uganda