

The role of markets in food availability and market integration among smallholder farmers: the case of Western Kenya

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Key messages

- Smallholder farmers are rarely involved as sellers in the local markets, yet most of the products are locally available.
- Local market traders source most of their products from outside the study area.

Background

- Smallholder farmers produce food for both home consumption and for commercial purposes (Fig.1), but often they are also net buyers of food.
- Markets play a key role in ensuring year-round food availability and food security.
- Smallholder farmer participation in markets is important for economic growth and poverty reduction.



Fig.1: Some of the products sold in local markets

Research questions

- What are the links between food items available in local markets/from own production and diversity of food consumption at the household level?
- Are local farmers integrated into the market trading networks for selling their produce in the study area?

Methodology

• Purposive sampling of available food products was done on three and four markets near the surveyed farms in Mumias and Vihiga districts (Western Kenya), respectively.

• All present plant and animal species grown/reared for food were inventoried on 30 purposively selected smallholder farms in six villages of Mumias and Vihiga districts, Western Kenya

Markets



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Smallholder farms



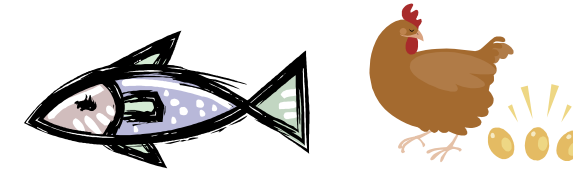




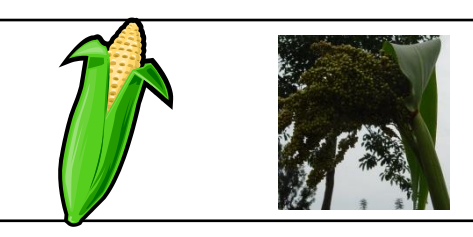






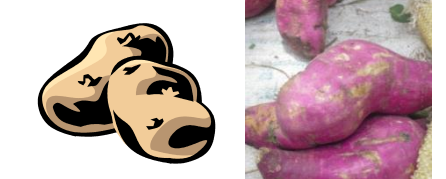

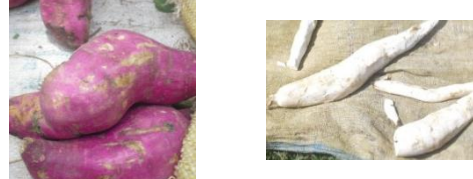



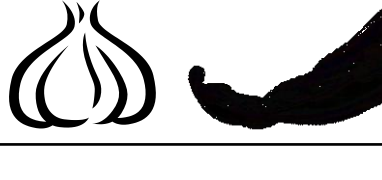




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Fig.2: Interview with a market trader and a smallholder farmer, respectively

Results & discussions

- 59 plant and animal species were represented in market products, 68 were seen on the farms surveyed (Table 1).
- Diversity of foods consumed at household level was not only influenced by foods available in local markets.
- A minor share of the 59 market food products were either grown by the interviewed market trader or sourced from neighbouring farmers, while most products were sourced from outside the study area (Fig.3).

Table 1: Main foods (top two) available in markets and home production and those consumed at household level

Food Category	Availability in markets	Availability through home production	Food consumption
Animal source foods			
Cereals			
Fruits			
Pulses/nuts/seeds			
Starchy roots/tubers/green bananas			
Vegetables			
Spices/condiments			
Sweets (sugarcane)	None		

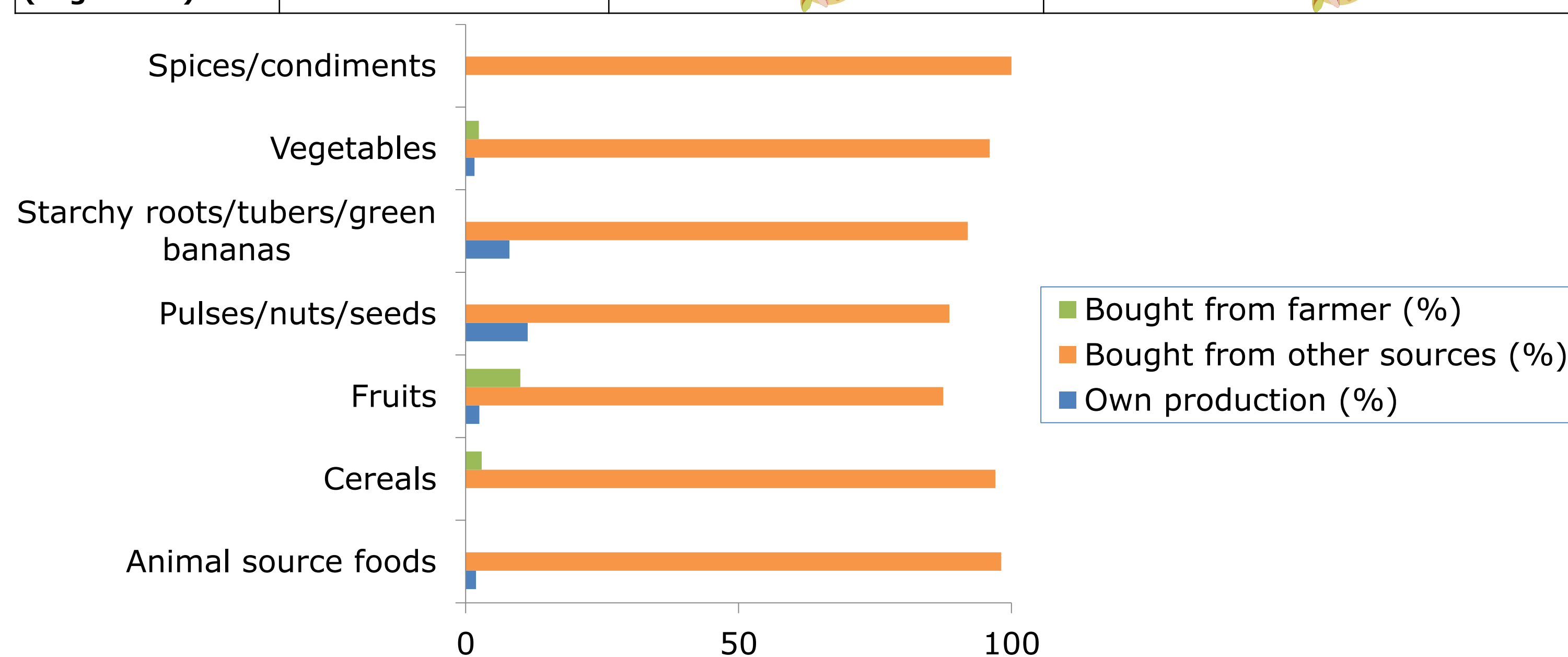


Fig.3: Different sources of main food groups, based on market traders surveyed in the seven markets in Mumias and Vihiga districts, Western Kenya

Conclusions & recommendations

- Diversified food products, from multiple sources are required to achieve dietary diversity, food and nutrition security.
- Smallholder farmers can, and **need** to be integrated better in the local market system to improve rural livelihoods.

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