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“Solidarity in a competing world —
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Seasonal Food Availability Calendars for Designing Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture in Ethiopia

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Abstract

While cropping calendars are a common tool in agricultural production, seasonal food availability calendars are less used. Yet, they could contribute to agricultural production in a more nutrition-sensitive way as they show when which food is actually available for consumption. This includes the time when food is available fresh, from the market, or from storage. The latter in turn reveals whether storage facilities or preservation techniques are successfully used to make food available during all seasons. The NutriHAF project on “Diversifying agriculture for balanced nutrition” in the Yayu Coffee Forest Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia, collected baseline information through five focus group discussions, one with female and four with male farmers from two different *woredas* (districts). A calendar showing the availability of typical foods within eight different food groups for each month was generated, including foods from own production and the market. The calendars show differences for the two *woredas* situated in the same agro-ecological zone suggesting that markets might source food from different areas. In Hurumu, there were hardly any availability gaps for fruits and vegetables. Yet, less starchy roots and tubers were available from March to September while cereals were less available in July/August. Pulses were available to a lesser extent from April to November except for faba beans. Within Yayu, there was a gap for vegetables from December to March and for fruits from August to October. Pulses were hardly available from May to October, starchy roots and tubers less from June to November and cereals, similar to Hurumu, had an availability gap from June to August. An additional survey within the project is exploring the sub-species level to determine whether different cultivars might be available during different months of the year; and the exact source of the food (own production or market) and the food condition (fresh, from storage or preserved). The final calendar will show during which months certain food groups providing a unique combination of nutrients are lacking. Strategies for filling these seasonal gaps, e.g. through preservation, improved storage facilities or adding late/ early maturing varieties, are available but not yet consequently pursued and applied.

Keywords: Food availability gaps, fruits and vegetables, market, nutrition