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Market Survey of *Garcinia Kola* (Bitter Kola) Seeds in Yaoundé City, Cameroon

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Abstract

Garcinia kola (Bitter kola) is a medicinal plant species, whose seeds are collected in the forests of sub-Saharan Africa mainly for subsistence and used as a treatment for stomach ache or as a stimulant. A little is known about the nutrition composition, domestication or market chain development of bitter kola. The seeds are however commonly traded at local markets and even attract the attention of consumers abroad. Thus, the aim of the survey was to document who were typical sellers of bitter kola seeds and what marketing practices they used. During June and July we initiated a survey in the streets of four different districts of Yaoundé city with increasing distance from the centre in order to identify suitable markets and respondents. Total number of 36 street vendors and 35 market-traders were interviewed via semi-structured questionnaires. Street vendors could be further divided into street mobile-vendors (24), predominantly boys (95.6 %) with average age of 15.6 (± 3.16) years, selling seeds close to the main streets to taxi drivers to cover their school fees, and stall-holders (12), mainly women (58.3 %) of average age 38.5 (± 7.56) years, situated far from main communications and selling seeds to passing-by people. Market-traders were again particularly women (86 %), 49.9 (± 9.92) years old, selling bitter kola to very a diverse group of customers, similarly to stall-holders. Nevertheless, different selling units were observed among both types of vendors, i.e. street vendors used three seeds at an average price of 100 FCFA (€0.15), while market-traders used mainly cups for 500 FCFA (€0.76) each. Majority of all vendors (87.5 %) sold seeds because of their medicinal ability. Selling bitter kola seeds represented good opportunity for targeted vendors, which could explain why most of them came from the same region as the majority of seeds. Survey points at relatively important role of collectors as 54.8 % of respondents purchased bitter kola from them, while all street vendors were buying the seeds from market-traders. Further studies should document whole value-chain, including consumer preferences, domestication and the role of middlemen.

Keywords: Mapping of market chain, medicinal plants, non-timber forest products, vendors