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The Contribution of a Small Scale African Leafy-vegetables Processing Unit for a More Resilient Future of Women Gardeners in Togo

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Abstract

African leafy vegetables (ALVs) are outstanding sources of micronutrients in the world. This makes them helpful in alleviating micronutrient deficiencies common in sub Saharan Africa. The increasing consumption of ALV across Africa is because people have been recently aware health protecting attributed to the compounds they have (vitamin A, calcium, manganese, magnesium and iron).

African leafy vegetables are underutilised in Togo because the gardeners are deficient in the strategies on processing excess produce. Of a production of 40,000 tons of vegetables, almost half has been lost in 2019 (Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques et Démographiques, Togo).

With restricted movement in most west African countries and inside of the country because of COVID-19, many markets for fresh food are closed. This impacts more gardeners, which has difficulties to sell their products and are even force to throw the ALVs due to their perishable nature. Looking at women gardeners more closely become a necessity, due to their principal role in the production of these leaves and the poverty situation generated by the crisis.

Within the frame of a contribution that seeks to ensure a stable revenue to women gardeners and reduce their post-harvest losses, our project aims at developing feasible small-scale ALVs production with improved product quality and expanding marketing possibilities together with a women’s cooperative in Togo. From June to September, we were able to work just with two women products and process, in a simply furnished room, their two first harvests (approximately 100 kg of amaranths and 100 kg of jute leaves) for sales as precooked frozen vegetables.

The next planned step is to put the focus on selected cooperative as well as the invest in a processing unit, the technical and financial support, and conduct additional marketing analysis.

Keywords: African leafy-vegetable, food processing, gardeners, resilience, women