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Delivery of Clean Planting Material of Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato to Smallholder Farmers through Decentralised Vine Multipliers in Uganda

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Abstract

Crop biofortification is one of the most promising approaches being used in recent years to fight hidden hunger among resource-poor communities or persons in fragile environments. Vitamin A rich orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) has proven to be effective in improving the health of children below five years and pregnant women in many sub-Saharan countries. However, access to improved and clean OFSP varieties has limited realisation of the full benefits of this crop. To increase the availability of disease-free and high yielding planting material of OFSP, CIP together with partners have identified, recruited and trained more farmers in 12 districts of Uganda to start the production of pest and disease-free planting material of selected OFSP to increase its consumption within households in areas with the highest Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) in the country. It is believed that making the planting material of this nutrient-rich crop readily accessible to local communities will go a long way in increasing consumption of OFSP roots hence a reduction in VAD. The training was conducted in December 2019 and January 2020 and involved a total of 81 stakeholders and only 48 farmers were selected to become vine multipliers. During the training, perceptions of the stakeholders on effective ways of increasing OFSP consumption in their communities were also captured. Challenges, opportunities, and experiences of producing, marketing, and consumption of OFSP were also discussed. Community sensitisation, nutritional education, timely availability of improved OFSP varieties, access to irrigation, and market availability were reported to be among the key factors that influence the consumption of OFSP.

Keywords: Biofortified crops, scaling-up, stakeholder perceptions, sweet-potato, vine multiplication