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## Close the Gaps!-Losses in Local Food Systems: Evidence from Smallholder Vegetable Farmers in Southwest Nigeria

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### Abstract

The demand for richer and better quality diets in Africa is increasing with the emergence of a larger middle class. This puts pressure on current production practices to deliver outputs sustainably; but can the current local food systems and supply chains support the increase in production that could occur? This study provides some evidence by examining the vegetable supply chain in Oyo state with a focus on the production node; output was assessed against Post-Harvest Loss (PHL); the PHL value was computed and its effect on the poverty status of farmers was examined. A two-stage sampling technique was used to select 120 vegetable farmers in peri-urban communities of Oyo state from whom data were collected through oral interviews with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Foster-Greer-Thorbecke Index, gross margin and regression analyses. The results indicate that the node was dominated by men (94 %). The mean age was 44 years and average farm size was 3 hectares. Almost all (96 %) depend on vegetable production as the only source of income. At least 50 percent of the farmers experienced High-Post Harvest Loss (over 40 percent of output). The tobit analysis shows that PHL was likely to worsen the poverty status of farmers. The study recommends intensive training of farmers on harvesting and postharvest handling techniques; and the need for technology in processing and preservation techniques. Additional research to examine other sources of leakages across the supply chain and the interventions required to close the gaps is recommended.

**Keywords:** Farmers, livelihood, post-harvest loss, poverty, supply chain