

Beyond yield: Exploring gendered adoption pathways of plantain innovations in Ghana

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Introduction

- Plantains are a central staple in Ghanaian diets and agriculture
- Cacao major commodity in southern Ghana, usually managed by men
- Plantains usually managed by women used to shade new cacao plantations
- Two key innovations in Ghana's Central Region:
 - High-yielding hybrid varieties (greater yield and fruit size)
 - Macro-propagation techniques to reduce pest incidence

Aim: Assess to what extent the introduced hybrid varieties are still in use and which characteristics were important for their adoption

Conclusion

Development projects and researchers: underlying assumptions not aligned with farmers' priorities

- Focus on higher yields neglected key aspects:
 - Taste and cooking quality
 - Gender dimensions (heavier workloads for women, low storability, poor market acceptance)
- Reflexivity is needed: assumptions underlying interventions must be critically examined
- Qualitative, gender-sensitive, and interdisciplinary approaches are key to designing interventions that meet people's needs

Results

Characteristics of introduced hybrid varieties

- Heavy bunches with large hands and fingers, but fewer overall
- High water content
- Poor taste (locally called "the tasteless ones")
- Low pounding qualities
- Poor texture (softness) when cooked (not suitable for "fufu")
- Reduced shelf life

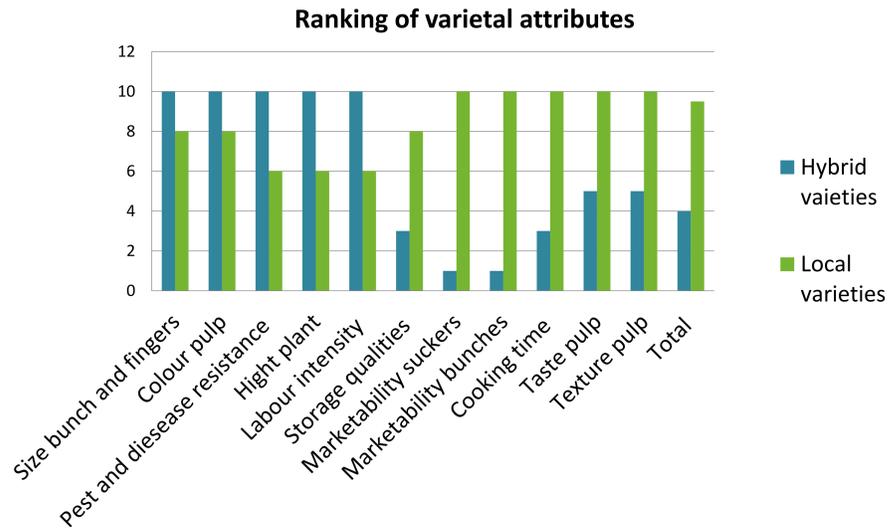


Figure 2: Farmers ranking of hybrid and local plantain attributes

Characteristics of new propagation techniques

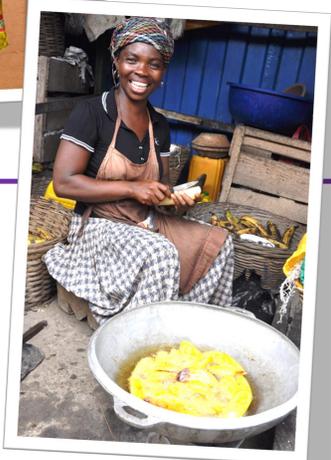
- Very labor-intensive: not the propagation itself, but creating the right environment (small greenhouse + sterilized substrate)
- High natural availability of suckers
- Perceived low pest/disease pressure reduce adoption

Adoption results of introduced hybrid varieties

- Farmers maintain a few plants in their backyards, mainly out of respect for the ministry that introduced them
- Due to their taste, the varieties are neither marketable nor suitable for home consumption
- Their high water content leads to spotting during transport and a shorter shelf life, making them unattractive to traders
- While the plant height was appreciated for cacao farms, women found it unfavorable as it made harvesting more difficult

Adoption results of introduced propagation techniques

- Only the low resource intense macro-propagation techniques are still in use
- However, the interventions are still promoted by development and research institutions



Study area

- Central Region – District of Assin Fosu
- Cacao production area
- Bimodal rainfall regime 1,400 -1,600 mm



Source: Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) (www.crop-mapper.org/banana/)

Figure 1: Plantain growing regions of West Africa

Methods

- Focus group discussions
- Participatory rural appraisal tools (e.g., ranking, timelines)
- Key informant interviews with farmers, NGO members, government, and research institutions



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