

# PROMOTING GOOD SEED IN EAST AFRICA

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| **Locations** | Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia |
| **Dates** | 01/01/2013 - 29/02/2016 |

**Summary**

African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) are key to food security and income generation in Africa and are increasing in demand. In this project, not only did CABI's project team promote their consumption and generate more demand, it also built awareness of the vegetables and seeds, improved access to them and developed new varieties.

**The problem**

African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) are rich in vitamins and minerals. They are also improving food security and generating income for rural and urban communities in Africa.

Awareness of their nutritional benefits is growing amongst many East African consumers, and research organizations are producing improved varieties which are increasing demand and creating opportunities for small-scale enterprises.

However, this increasing demand for AIVs is being limited by a lack of available quality seed. The majority of farmers use either seed saved from their crops over many years or from open-air markets, with problems of both purity and

germination. Relying on these seeds limits farmers' access to seeds of improved varieties that have attributes preferred by consumers.

Farmer-led seed enterprises (where farmers – often in collaboration with other stakeholders – manage the production and marketing of seed) can, and do, contribute towards food and nutrition security as they promote crop diversity, as well as improving livelihoods through income earned from the seed.

Making them sustainable requires a holistic approach looking at the whole value chain and this includes ensuring effective production and marketing of the vegetables, which can, in turn, provide and sustain demand for the seed.

Many countries are currently developing policies focused on highly regulated systems that make it difficult to integrate informal and formal sectors. So, there is a need to collate and understand farmers' roles in seed systems and the complementarity of informal and formal systems, to contribute to the policy debate.

**What we are doing**

CABI's Good Seed Initiative (GSI) ran between 2013 and 2016. Its aim was to help farmers judge the quality and value of the crop seeds they buy, which, in turn, would empower them to demand good quality seed and improve their income by becoming suppliers of quality seed themselves.

Through this project, CABI wanted to promote AIVs and increase their consumption by both rural and urban consumers, helping to improve the variety of people's diets and, at the same time, create demand and market incentives for producers of AIVs.

Promotional activities would be integral to encouraging the use of high-quality seed and the employment of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) by vegetable growers, of which, both would lead to greater productivity and income for grower households, and demand for AIV seed to help stimulate seed value chains.

Developing and carrying out training for AIV seed and vegetable growers in GAP, value addition and business skills were also key. Furthermore, developing new varieties from landraces with characteristics that are desired locally and that could be embedded in other varieties for further spread was important.

In order to influence a new policy that recognizes the need for a pluralistic model, lessons learnt from our advocacy activities were evaluated, recognizing that seed systems need to be able to deliver different seed to ensure local demand is delivered effectively.

**Results so far**

Over one million consumers and growers (a far larger number than anticipated) were reached indirectly through radio programmes, seed rallies, nutritional outreaches, cook shows, and agricultural shows and events.

The training programme demonstrated remarkable improvements in productivity; more than doubling in many instances when farmers adopted GAP on their land.

Participatory field work with farmers collected and classified more than 100 local landraces of AIVs in Uganda, and the development of new varieties is underway. In the long term, successful production of varieties from the landraces will benefit larger numbers of growers and consumers seeking to grow and consume AIVs.

We also developed and circulated a policy brief to stakeholders in Tanzania on the production and sales of quality assured AIV seed. This document addressed some of the challenges identified in the seed industry, including details on lobbying efforts for a more formalized and expansion of the seed business which are produced under a Quality Declared Seed system.

‘Innovation platforms’ have been established where groups of stakeholders regularly come together to identify bottlenecks or constraints throughout the whole value chains for AIV seed and crops. This allows collective plans to be developed to address these issues and to review their implementation.

A selection of videos from the Good Seed Initiative project are available on CABI’s YouTube channel.

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