PROMOTING GOOD SEED IN EAST AFRICA

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), rich in vitamins and minerals, are 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 is increasing demand and creating opportunities for small-scale enterprises.

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 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

With CABI’s Good Seed Initiative (GSI), we would like farmers to judge the quality and value of the crop seeds they buy, which, in turn, will empower them to demand good quality seed, and enable them to improve their income by becoming suppliers of quality seed themselves.

Through this project, we want to promote African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) and increase their consumption by both rural and urban consumers to help improve the variety of people’s diets and, at the same time, create demand and market incentives for producers of AIVs.

Promotional activities will encourage the use of high quality seed and employment of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) by vegetable growers, leading to greater productivity and income for grower households, and create 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 is key. Furthermore, developing new varieties from landraces with characteristics that are desired locally that can be embedded in other varieties for further spread is important.

In order to influence a new policy that recognizes the need for a pluralistic model, lessons learnt from our advocacy activities were evaluated. 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) have been 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 Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) on their land.

Participatory field work with farmers collected and classified more than 100 local land races 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 production and sales of quality assured AIV seed. This document addresses some of the challenges identified in the seed industry, including details on lobbying efforts for a more formalized and expansion of seed business which are produced under QDS 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 also allows us to develop collective plans to address these issues, and to review their implementation.

Donors

Irish Aid

Partners

Mukono Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MuZARDI), National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRRI), The World Vegetable Centre – Eastern and Southern Africa (AVRDC-ESA), INADES-Formation Tanzania (IFTz), Horticultural Research and Training Institute Tengeru (HORTI-Tengeru)

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