

# Production and utilization of traditional African vegetables in Madagascar

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## Abstract

Traditional African vegetables (TAVs) are nutrient-rich and affordable sources of food contributing to healthier diets in sub-Saharan Africa. Madagascar is home to many TAVs, yet the country has high rates of malnutrition with 48.9% of children having a low height for their age (stunting) and anaemia affecting 36.8% of women of reproductive age. Against this background, the objective of this study was to understand the production and utilization of TAVs in Madagascar. Farm household surveys were conducted in Antsirabe and Itasy, two vegetable producing regions in Madagascar. A total of 396 randomly selected women were interviewed. The most common TAVs were leafy amaranth, African nightshade, blackjack, and African eggplant. On average, 0.16 acre was allocated for vegetable production per household. Household vegetable diversity was low, with an average of five vegetable types for both cultivated and wild species. Households consumed an average of 70 grams of vegetables per person per day which is below the recommendation of the World Health Organization of 3 servings (~240 grams) per day. About 78% of the households ranked TAVs as having a minor contribution to their income. On average, households earned 20 USD per season from selling African eggplant and 25 USD from African nightshade. Pests and diseases and lack of markets were the main constraints to vegetable production. There is a need to raise people's awareness of the nutritional and economic value of TAVs in the study area. Capacity building on production, handling, and marketing of TAVs could enhance utilization.

**Keywords:** Underutilized crops, nutrition security, rural economies, smallholder farmers.