

Promotion of traditional African vegetables (TAV) in Cameroon: the need for a post-harvest loss reduction strategy

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Abstract

Traditional African vegetables (TAV) receive little research attention despite their economic potential, their role in ensuring food and nutritional security, and their cultural acceptance. The enhancement of TAV system requires the characterization of the different actors involved in the sector and their interaction. The objective of the study is to identify and analyze constraints for innovation in the TAV system in Cameroon. Data on TAV value chain actors was collected through focus group discussions held with a mixed group of producers purposively selected in the South and the Southwest regions of Cameroon. Venn diagram was used to identify actors who have a direct or indirect relation with producers. The actors identified as directly active in the TAV value chain were invited to a one-day multi-stakeholder participatory workshop in each of the sites. The study revealed that TAV value chain is short and still poorly developed. Only five main actors interacting directly were identified: producers, Bayam Sellam (retailers), agro-dealers, consumers and transporters. All the actors identified the ignorance of storage and processing techniques as the main constraint for innovation in the TAV system. One solution to solve the constraint is the value chain based innovation platform which was set up as a result of the research action process. Reduction of TAV post-harvest losses is thus the entry point of this TAV based value chain innovation platform. Being very perishable, TAVs are often sold at loss during the season of availability, hence the need for appropriate postharvest loss reduction strategy.

Keywords: Cameroon, Traditional African vegetables, Innovation platform, Post-harvest losses.