

# Factors influencing consumption patterns of African leafy vegetables in Western Kenya

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## Abstract

In Kenya, as in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, African leafy vegetables (ALVs) contribute significantly to household food and nutrition security by adding diversity to cereal-based staple diets. However, the consumption patterns of the ALVs and factors that influence preference for ALVs in Kenya remain unclear. The objectives of this study were to evaluate frequency of household consumption of ALVs; and assess factors that influence preference for ALVs. Primary data were collected from a random sample of 324 households in western Kenya using a semi-structured questionnaire between June and July 2018. Data were collected on frequency of consumption of ALVs and reasons for preference ALVs and analyzed by descriptive statistics. The results showed that 40-50 percent of the households consumed one or more ALVs per week. Spider plant was the mostly frequently consumed daily by 36% of the households, followed by Amaranth (32%). Cow pea was the most frequently consumed in 3 or more times/week category by 29 percent. The main reasons for low frequency of ALV consumption were seasonal availability on farms (64%), high ALVs prices in the local market (54%) and undesired taste due to recipes used in cooking (42%). However, perception of health and medicinal values of ALVs influenced consumption by 48 and 51 percent of the households, respectively. The findings of this study call for the need to facilitate farmers to access key inputs, especially improved seed and water to minimize seasonal production and conducting of behavior change communication to promote consumption of ALVs.

**Keywords:** African vegetables, consumption, households, nutrition