

Role and responsibility international development agencies have to promote and incorporate consumption of indigenous vegetation in agriculture and nutrition programs throughout Africa

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Abstract

Africa is losing indigenous vegetables. Research demonstrates that indigenous crops are highly nutritious, however, the consumption and cultivation of leafy green African vegetables is dwindling. There are multiple factors that have caused the loss of indigenous crops. The research presented will address how the loss of indigenous crops is a result of the stigmatization of indigenous crops and the acceptance of “The West Knows Best” development practices.

Through documented interviews, the primary response as to why Africans are not consuming indigenous crops is because traditional vegetation is viewed as “poor man’s food”. In order to eradicate the negative stigma against indigenous crops, there is a need for policies and educational platforms to support the cultivation and consumption of indigenous crops. Additionally, international development agencies need to support African government structures in the promotion of indigenous crops in order to de-stigmatize traditional vegetables.

The presented research analyzes how indigenous crops and traditional African diets help build proper gut health thus leading to a healthy gut microbiome. Many indigenous vegetables provide essential micro-nutrients that allow Africans to maintain proper nutrition. When Africans are unable to eat traditional diets, essential nutrients that maintain a healthy gut microbiome and proper nutrition are lost, thus leading to malnutrition and increased instances of overall poor health among Africans.

Establishing policies that mandate international development agencies to promote and utilize indigenous crops in both agriculture and nutrition sensitive programming will destigmatize indigenous vegetation. Additionally, when international development agencies incorporate indigenous crops in development programs, the nutritional value of indigenous crops is shared with host country nationals; therefore, increasing the understood value of indigenous crops. By increasing knowledge, the desire to consume local vegetation will increase, therefore positively impacting the overall health of Africans.

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