

PDF - PROFITABILITY OF BIO-FORTIFIED CASSAVA FARMING IN IKOT EKPENE LOCAL
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Bio-fortification is the enhancement of micro-nutrients levels of staple crops through biological processes such as plant breeding and genetic engineering (Bious, 2002). Bio-fortification is otherwise a biotechnological approach which serves as an advanced means of increasing crop yield, improving the maturation of farm produce and enriching crops, livestock and fisheries with macro and micro-nutrients as a method of solving malnutrition. It presents a major strategy to tackle the problem of micro-nutrient deficiency and enhance the availability of vitamins and minerals for people whose diet are dominated by less dense nutrient food (Meenakshi, Johnson, Manyong, Degoroote, Javelosa, Yanggen and Nahar, 2010). Globally, one out of the three people is micro-nutrient deficient which poses a negative health implication (Kennedy, Nantel, Shetty, 2003; FAO, 2015). Micro-nutrient deficiencies are prevalent among women and children in low- and middle income countries. An undernourished mother is likely to give birth to an undernourished child thus furthering the vicious cycle of under nutrition and poverty.

According to FAO, (2003) cassava is a cheap and reliable source of food for more than 700 million people in the developing countries, and Nigeria leads the global market share with about 21 percent of the world's cassava production (FAOSTAT, 2013). Bio-fortified cassava variety popularly known as vitamin-A cassava was developed and its delivering in Nigeria is ongoing and is intended to complement existing national strategies of Combating nutrient deficiency. Vitamin-A cassava helps supplement vitamin A in human system. About 84% of cassava produced in Nigeria is consumed as food while 16% production is utilized for industrial purposes in the proportion of 10% as animal chips in animal feed, 5% as syrup concentrate for soft drinks while less than 1% is processed into high quality flours used in biscuits and confectioneries, dextrin pregelated starch for adhesive, starch for pharmaceuticals and seasoning (Komawa and Akoroda, 2003). Deficiencies in key vitamins and minerals pose a serious problem to human health and development (Kennedy, Nantel, Shetty, 2003; FAO, 2015). Vitamin A (VAD) has been identified as one of the major factors of early childhood mortality. The development of bio-fortified crops will help complement efforts made by Nigerian government to address vitamin A deficiency.

Bio-fortification changes the colour of cassava from white to deep yellow, due to the increase of pro-vitamin A content. Not only appearance, taste can be influenced due to lower dry matter concentration associated with higher pro-vitamin A concentration (Chavez and Sanchez 2005). Vitamin A Cassava is nutritionally beneficial as it helps in the proper functioning of the eyes, cell differentiation, synthesis of glycoprotein, reproduction and overall growth and development of the human body (Woolfer, 1992). Enhancing immune system, prevent deadly diseases like measles and diarrhea (West and Darnton-hill, 2008). Cassava can be processed into different forms like Garri, fufu, cassava flours, powder which is used in the manufacture of cosmetics, chips and tapioca. The leaves are used to prepare soups especially in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The peels can be used as animal feed. It can also be processed into starch for textile use. It is used as bio-fuels in other countries and a major source of carbohydrate (Alvees, 2002, Nweke, 2004). Planting materials like the stem of bio-fortified cassava can be sold out after harvest to farmers for replanting and leaves given to farm animals. All these are the uses and profitability potentials of bio-fortified cassava. Farmers stand to gain more from planting cassava.

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