

Improving Food Security, Nutrition and Gender Empowerment

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Background

In Malawi, about 60% of children under five, 57% of non-pregnant women, and 38% of men and school-age children have vitamin A deficiency (MoHP 2003). In 2009, CIP and partners through SPHI started implementing a 'Rooting out hunger in Malawi with nutritious OFSP project'. The project aims to improve vitamin A and energy intake for at least 70,000 rural households with women and young children using OFSP-based approaches, to ensure that at least 20% of households growing OFSP earn at least \$100 USD per year from OFSP sales, increase their average sweetpotato yields by 50%. By 2012, the project had registered tremendous progress including quantitative data on project outputs as captured by implementing partners in the respective districts.

A beneficiary assessment was conducted to assess the contribution of OFSP varieties on household food and nutrition security and the extent to which the project has empowered women in economic activities from beneficiaries' point of view. The study was also aimed at building on quantitative data by providing additional qualitative information and to inform future comprehensive quantitative data collection exercises.

Methodology

- Focused Group discussions (10)
- Key informant interviews
- Case studies and observations
- Literature review and secondary data collection

Table 1: Participants in FGDs

District	Partner	Group name	Group Type	FGD Participants		
				Male	Female	Total
Dedza	Concern Universal	Tikondane	Beneficiary	0	12	12
		Tsanjalare	Beneficiary	6	9	15
		Chibvano	Non benef	0	17	17
Zomba	Millennium Villages Project	Mwandama	Beneficiary	0	11	11
		Chisomo	Beneficiary	7	8	15
Phalombe	Concern Universal	Group 1	Non benef	0	16	16
		Group 2	Beneficiary	0	10	10
		Group 3	Beneficiary	12	0	12
Chikwawa	CADECOM	Mkata	Beneficiary	10	12	22
		Tome	Non benef	12	11	23
Total				47	106	153

Checklists were used to guide FGDs. Key issues and questions included;

- Knowledge of OFSP
- What are the benefits/changes of OFSP so far at household level?
- What main factors influenced OFSP adoption?
- Impact on gender empowerment decision making and control of income?
- Any potential for lucrative markets for OFSP fresh root?

Results

Knowledge of OFSP

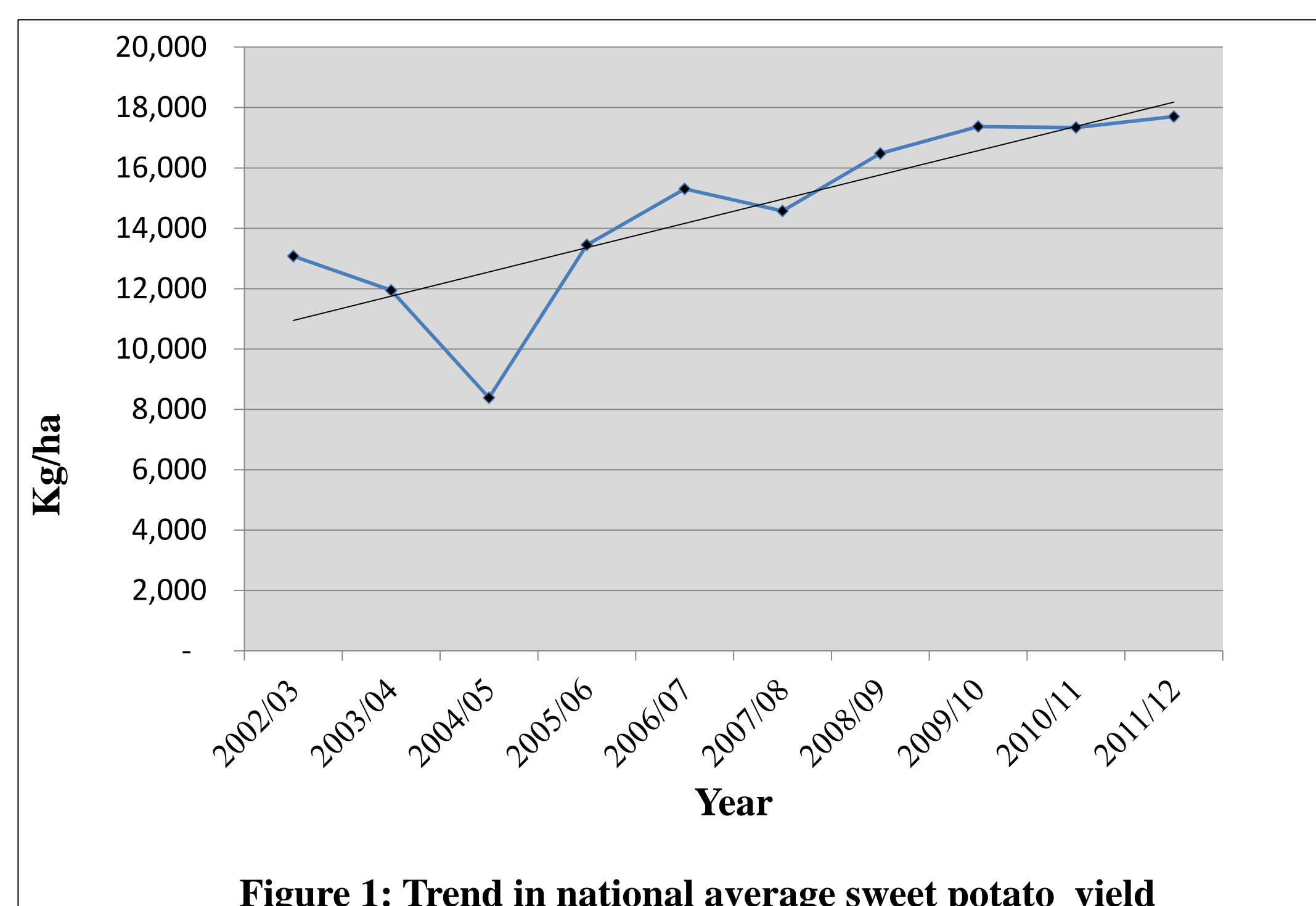
- Participants in all FGDs especially beneficiary farmer groups had good knowledge of OFSP through awareness creating demand and radio program
- Similar traits of OFSP variety were highlighted among participants

Table 2: OFSP preferred traits

OFSP trait	Farmer Experiences
Production	High yielding, produces big roots, early maturing than local
Cooking	Tasty, Sweet, High dry matter (Fills the stomach faster and you stay longer without going hungry again- good for manual work) Very appetizing to children Leaves can be used for relish (Softer and tastier than that of other varieties)
Processing	Puree is used for a range of products- doughnuts, bread, biscuits Chips, sweet beer, flitters, juice
Nutrition and Health	Has required vitamins which are good for children Improved sight for old people Provides special energy for doing work
Marketability	Finishes quickly at the market Fetches higher price as compared to white fleshed variety

Food Security

- Increased food availability especially during food lean months through maize meal substitution
- Positive food insecurity coping mechanism. In the past households reduced number of meals per day to 2 or 1 but now they consume OFSP to have 3 meals per day.
- Contributing to increased yields and production.



- Beneficiary groups also reported increased household income from sale of vines and roots. Especially Decentralized Vine Multipliers.

Nutrition

- Expanded knowledge on vitamin A, B, C and K and their importance in human nutrition due to awareness campaigns, training and mass media
- Older women participants in FGDs testified improved vision due to OFSP consumption
- Female participants reported that OFSP is appetizing for school going children and kids

Gender empowerment

- OFSP vines and products are creating business opportunities for women
- Women participants indicated that there is improvement in terms of decision making on use of household income



Figure 2: Women captured selling Zondeni vines at open market in Phalombe district-

Potential for lucrative markets

- Blantyre Market traders reported that OFSP is always in high demand among consumers and that sells fast and fetches high prices
- A visit to Shoprite revealed that white fleshed sweet potatoes price ranged from 1.1USD/ Kg to 3.5/ Kg where as farmers farm gate prices was about 0.16 USD /Kg
- Fresh mark of Shoprite indicated that they would be willing to buy from Malawian farmers as long as they meet quality standards and constant supply

Main drivers of adoption and use of OFSP

- Awareness campaigns and training on importance and use of OFSP
- Voucher system of seed dissemination
- High marketability of OFSP roots in local Markets
- Existence of DVM's in the local communities
- Strong Partnership

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the FGDs and key informant interviews;

- OFSP has repositioned the sweetpotato crop in Malawi to valuable crop due to multiple benefits
- Creation of effective market linkages for fresh root and private sector involvement could kick start sweetpotato commercialization in Malawi
- OFSP is becoming a strategic crop for food security, nutrition and gender empowerment
- The study also recommends consideration to capture communities perceptions on OFSP impact in future evaluations

References

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Figure 3: Three year-old Alinafe Chikwawa from Mwandama II village in Zomba enjoying OFSP product



Figure 4: Women group displaying OFSP products during open day in Dowa district