

SWEETPOTATO MARKETING INITIATIVES OF INNOVATION PLATFORMS IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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Introduction

The Dissemination of New Technologies in Africa (DONATA) was a five year project funded by FARA/ASARECA and managed by CIP in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. DONATA employed a multi-stakeholder approach where 21 Innovation Platforms for Technology Adoption (IPTAs) were formed to promote learning and innovations along Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) chains. IPTAs comprised of Research Institutes, extension providers, NGOs, chain actors, and the private sector. Initially, IPTAs addressed seed related challenges, root production and processing. With increased production, a new challenge of markets for the products surfaced. CIP hence undertook a study to identify market opportunities and strategies to harness them.

Methods

Participatory action research was employed. Approaches used included interviews with key informants, workshops with traders, farmers and IPTA members; and focus group discussions. Data were collected on the following themes: (i) main products and market outlets, (ii) chain organization, actors and functions, (iii) chain support functions (iv) market opportunities. 185 respondents were interviewed comprising of 3 District officials, 51 IPTA members, 8 processors, 19 vine producers, 84 root producers, and 18 traders.

Findings

Vines chains:

IPTAs had established a three tiered seed system in a quest to improve availability of quality vines to farmers and buyers (Table 1). Challenges identified included (i) inability to gauge vine demand (ii) low willingness to pay (iii) lack of a certification system and (iv) high maintenance costs. Market opportunities included: (i) high demand by development institutions (ii) demand by producers in drier areas. (iii) demand by root producers who supplied processors.

Roots chains:

3 supply chains were identified. Challenges included bulkiness, perishability, limited acceptability, and low awareness of the nutritious attributes of OSP. Market opportunities identified included (i) dry season sales (ii) demand by large processors (iii) demand by non-farming communities' e.g. fisher-folk (iii) existence of school feeding programs.

Processed products chains:

Larger processors facilitated forward and backward linkages in the chain, aimed at improving root supply. Challenges observed included inadequate roots, high assembly costs, poor quality roots, cash flow constraints and quality certification. Smaller processors experienced challenges of standardizing products, and maintaining market presence. Opportunities identified included: (i) High demand for flour and chips and (ii) demand for OFSP based snacks.

Strategies identified:

Rapid market assessment to ascertain market prospects, production and marketing plans to align demand and supply; and linkage to Business Development Services providers. Others were awareness creation and promotion, formation of production clusters, establishment of selling points, and research-trader-commercial farmer linkages; among others. IPTAs employed the strategies resulting in 10 successful contracts valued at \$500,000. Vine producers in Kenya and Uganda sold over \$50,000 worth of vines to large buyers. Sales of processed products doubled in Rwanda. A new factory in Tanzania led to increased demand for flour.

Discussion and conclusion

IPTA utilized multiple strategies to engage chain actors, supporters and policy makers in order to harness market opportunities. This was aided by CIP, NARIs and other IPTA members with marketing expertise, who acted as 'innovation brokers'. In the process, several champions emerged who promoted chain linkages and complemented the brokerage function. Growth of the processed products markets is anticipated to drive development of the root and vine chains. Innovation platforms are indeed a novel approach to upgrading value chains. The ability of the platform to perform however depends greatly on its leadership, membership, harmonization of roles and responsibilities and focused vision.



Large Vine Multiplier - Lira, Uganda



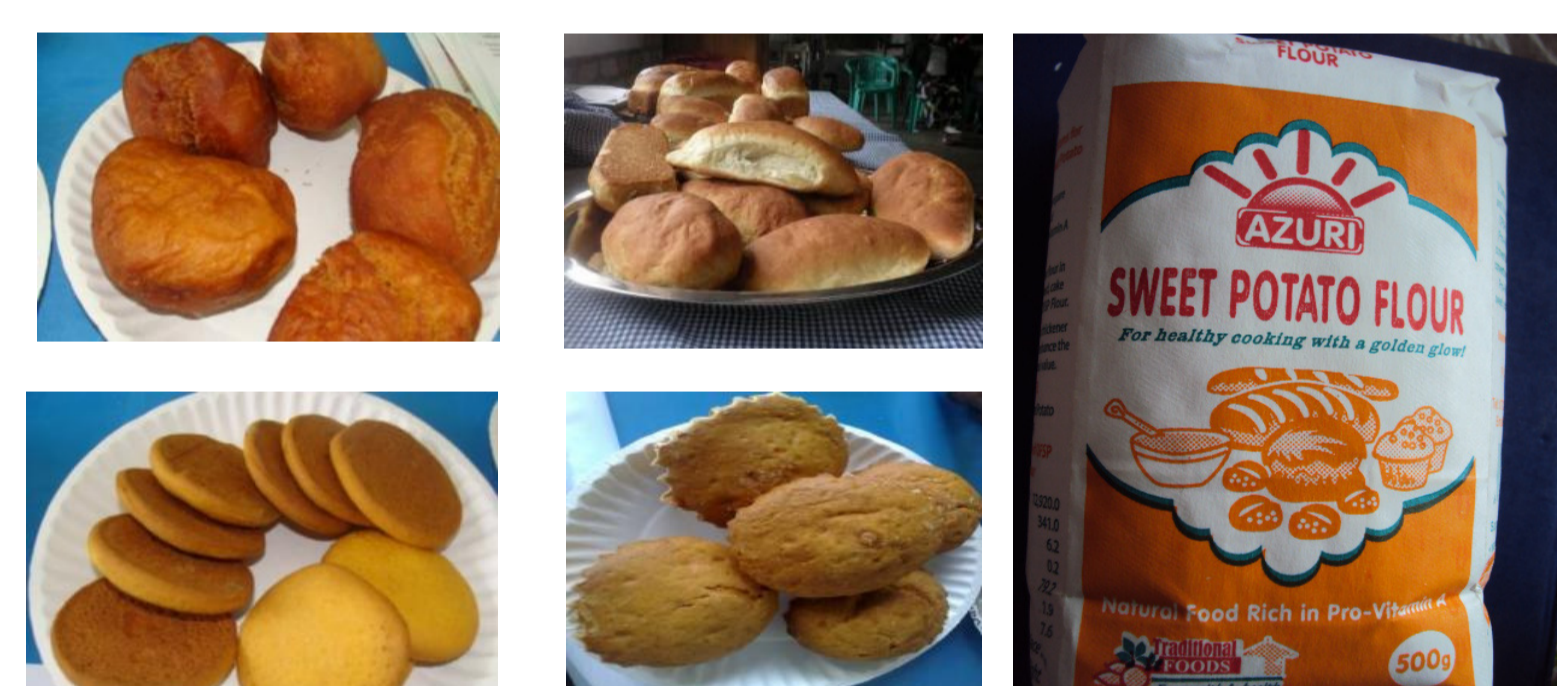
Sorting roots for sale - Kenya



Weighing roots for sale to processor



Sales Point - Uganda



OFSP Processed products on the market - Rwanda and Kenya

Table 1: Area and Varieties Under OFSP Multiplication

Country	Multi-Level	Hectares					Varieties Under Multiplication
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Kenya	TC						Kabode, Vita
	PMS	1	2.9	1	1.2	1.2	Ejumula, Kabode, Vita, SPK031
	SMS	10	3.2	3.6	9	9	
	TMS	25	35.7	n.a.	80.6	6.2	
Uganda	PMS	0.6	0.9	1.825	0.52	0.8	Ejumula, Kakamega, Vita and Kabode
	SMS	5.7	1.6	1.75	1.1	Na	
	TMS	1.8	14.3	2.5	Na	Na	
Tanzania	PMS	0.3	1.5	2.5	1	1	Ejumula, Carrot-C and Jewel
	SMS	2.2	8.2	11.8	30.9	8.5	Carrot C has replaced Carrot-Dar
	TMS		7.7	Na	9.3	12.7	
Rwanda	TC						Caceopedo and 97-062
	PMS	0.8	1.5	0.8	3.4	3.6	Caceopedo and 97-062, Kakamega and Ejumala
	SMS	10.2	13	21.65	41.3	44.3	
	TMS		4	40.5	-	3.5	
Ethiopia	TC						Kabode, Vita, Tulla Kulfo, Koka 12
	PMS		1.8	3.0	1.75	Na	Tulla and Kulfo
	SMS		.25	2.15	-	Na	
	TMS			n.a.	-	Na	
Total	PMS	2.7	8.6	9.1	7.87	6.6	
	SMS	28.1	26.5	41	82.3	61.8	
	TMS	26.7	61.7	43	89.9	22.4	

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