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Locally Produced Probiotic Yoghurt for Better Nutrition and Increased Incomes in Uganda

Nieke Westerik

In this PhD thesis, Nieke Westerik describes how we can increase health and wealth of people living in resource poor areas by supporting them to develop a local probiotic yoghurt business.

As in many developing countries, farmland per capita is steeply decreasing in Uganda. Hence, the stimulation of non-farm rural incomes for example through cottage industry businesses, is an essential driver for sustained economic growth. In terms of health, the poor are at increased risk of reduced quality of life as a result of various sicknesses. The research as presented in this thesis illustrates that thanks to the development of an affordable probiotic starter culture, production protocol and tailor-made educational program, many farmers and entrepreneurs could set up a business in probiotic yoghurt production. The locally produced yoghurt also became part of a regional school feeding program, in which parents paid for the product. Nutritional trails showed that daily consumption of the probiotic yoghurt enhanced the health of school-going children.

Nieke Westerik was born in 1991 in the Netherlands. In 2014, she completed her Masters in Food Technology, after which she started working for the Yoba for Life Foundation in Uganda. After two years of being immersed in the local culture and having obtained a very close feeling with the local production of probiotic yoghurt, Nieke enrolled for a PhD at the Free University of Amsterdam. Meanwhile, she maintained her job at Yoba for Life, and greatly contributed to the expansion of the activities of this organization. Nieke is a current resident of Uganda and supervises Yoba for Life activities in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania.