

Perceived Benefits, Existing Opportunities, and Barriers of Using Avocado in Agri-Food Systems in Lemo Woreda, Hadiya Zone, Southern Ethiopia

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1. Introduction

- The overall dietary diversity in Lemo *woreda* is limited among rural households. Therefore, agricultural crop diversification is necessary to promote food security, nutrition, and income.
- Currently, there are efforts to enhance avocado production and marketing in different parts of Ethiopia.
- The Africa RISING project has managed to increase the number of smallholder farmers growing avocado tree by introducing high-yielding varieties in southern Ethiopia.

2. Objectives

To explore the potential benefits of incorporating avocado into the agri-food system, considering the value chain among smallholder farming communities.

3. Methods/approaches

- A qualitative study with a total of 10 FGDs (Farmer Group Discussions) with beneficiaries and 7 KIIs (Key Informant Interview) were conducted in Lemo *woreda*.
- Data collection was led by an expert who is experienced in conducting nutritional and agricultural studies.
- Probing questions such as 'What?' 'Why?' and 'How?' were used.
- Information was gathered until a saturation level was achieved.
- All the discussions were recorded, and the study team read the transcription and listened to the recorded discussion several times.
- Analysis was conducted thematically.
- Transcripts were reviewed to develop codes related to the topics of the research questions.
- Based on conceptual similarity, codes were divided into categories and subcategories.

6. Acknowledgement

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4. Findings

The findings were organized into three themes

- 1) Avocado production opportunities and challenges - include environmental, individual, and institutional factors that threaten avocado production and existing opportunities for production sustainability.
 - Suitable environment and climate were the opportunities identified by all participants.
 - Water shortages, climate change and animal/insect/pest meddling were main challenges under economic factors.
- 2) Avocado production benefits and consumption challenges

Table 1. Avocado production benefits and consumption challenges

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Codes
Avocado production benefits and consumption challenges	Economic Benefit	Significant source of HH income	- A good source of income especially for women - The income used to buy food and non-food item - The income generated saved selling of livestock
	Household level (HH) consumption	Recognized as HH meal	- Consumed as primary food alone - Helped to consume staple foods (Enset) - Replaced cabbage and kale as a side meal
	Perceived health benefit	Avocado health benefits	- Provide good growth and strength for children - Consumed without any risk by diabetic and people with blood pressure
	Challenges	Small production Lack of adequate money Poor storage facility	- Mainly consumed at household level - Available but expensive - High price during dry season - Difficult to keep fresh for longer period once ripen - Manage the fruits while on the tree - No modern mechanism to improve the shelf life of ripen fruit

- 3) Market opportunities and challenges

Table 2. Market opportunities and challenges.

Theme	Category	Sub-category	Codes
Market opportunity and challenges	Opportunity	Encouraging market demand	- Proximity and road access to market - No significant problem to sell the fruit with partial negotiation - Sell to Juice Houses in the nearby town
	Challenges	High transportation cost Poor market network	- High cost of transport to the town - No attractive price during production season - Prefer to consume it in the house when the cost is low - Cost fluctuates seasonally - Feed to livestock during surplus production - Inadequate ripen technique

5. Conclusion/messages

Africa RISING introduced avocado varieties helped farmers in Lemo district to diversify their source of income and changed the household level food consumption habit. However, there is a gap in the market system establishment for avocado sales. Therefore, creating market opportunities is vital to rip the benefits.