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FOOD SAFETY EVALUATION FOR CASSAVA AND YAM PRODUCERS IN NIGERIA

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Cassava and yam are two of the most important crops in Nigeria; their cultivation and processing can affect the lives of millions of people. Both crops are produced and sold either by SMEs or in household environments.

Here we report a preliminary baseline assessment for food safety in the processing and sale of cassava and yam-derived products.

Sixteen producers, both SMEs and households, were visited and the possible elements of risk for safety were evaluated. Products such as high quality cassava flour, gari fufu (cassava-derived) and gbodo and elubo (yam derived) were considered in the assessment. Some of the elements considered were microbial contamination (with pathogen bacteria) and chemical pollution (pollutants in the water, from the workers and cyanide compounds in the case of cassava). Moreover, the safety level in 120 food street vendors was also examined.

Results showed that SMEs have a higher awareness level on food safety than the household producers; one reason for this is that people working in household producers do not have any training in food safety. At the same time, however, often for logistic reasons the production area is close to the living area; consequently the layout of the production line may not conform to the prerequisites required by proper food safety programme.

These results showed that to improve the safety level it would be crucial to give a proper training to the people involved in the processing of these crops and, at the same time, to implement some good manufacturer and hygiene practices according to the needs.