

Home grown

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Linking farmers, indigenous
vegetables and schools in
Western Kenya

Overview

In Kenya, undernutrition, overweight and obesity exist side by side.

African Leafy Vegetables (ALVs) and other indigenous foods can provide ready and affordable access to **key macro-nutrients** (e.g. proteins, carbohydrates, fats) and **micro-nutrients** (e.g. vitamins, minerals and trace elements) for healthy, balanced diets for all ages.

Once perceived as “food for the poor”, these forgotten crops are making a comeback in Busia County thanks to the ACIAR/BFN Project, which is developing **markets and value chains** for these crops and using them in **school-feeding programs** to meet immediate food demands, but also provide **sustainable**, long-term support and **empowerment** to children, families and communities.

“There is nothing more important than seeing my boys fed on a nutritious and balanced diet. This will not only improve their health but also increase their academic performance and reduce absenteeism due to sickness and diet-related diseases”.

Mr Obonyo. School Principle, St. Mary's Mundika.

Research

The project is reviving interest in African Leafy Vegetables (ALVs) while addressing demand and supply-side constraints linked to the marketing of traditional crops.

30 farmer groups are being trained to sustainably produce and respond to market demands for ALVs from institutional markets (such as schools and clinics). At the same time, **nutrition education activities** are taking place in schools, **Food Fairs** are being organized, and **recipes** collected to increase the **appreciation and use** of local nutritious biodiversity to improve dietary diversity.



Indigenous vegetables are important for diversifying diets



Impact

- A contract was signed between one farmer group and a neighbouring school establishing the provision of ALVs to the school canteen. The farmer group grows the crops directly on school land.
- The school has a reliable and constant source of quality ALVs while the farmers have cut their transport costs and have a dependable buyer for their produce.
- 410 students are now consuming more diversified and nutrient-rich diets.
- The ALV plots, established on school land, are a useful educational tool for students who are learning about sustainable agricultural practices and are getting hands-on experience in growing and using local crops.
- The approach is raising the interest of nearby schools proving that healthy and balanced diets need not be expensive and that they can be easily introduced in school feeding programmes at little or no additional cost.