

PROFAV 2011

Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health



Anglophone Africa Regional Workshop on Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health

Mount Meru Hotel, Arusha, Tanzania
26-30 September, 2011

Draft general report, conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

The Anglophone Africa Regional Workshop on Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health (PROFAV) was held in Arusha, Tanzania from 26 to 30 September 2011. The workshop was organized at the Mount Meru Hotel under the patronage of the Honourable Minister for Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives of the United Republic of Tanzania. The event was supported by WHO, FAO, GlobalHort, CIRAD, NEPAD, TAHA and HODECT. Financial contributions provided by Belgium and France are gratefully acknowledged.

This workshop was organized in the framework of the FAO-WHO Joint Initiative on Fruit and Vegetables for Health. It brought together over 100 experts including policy makers, scientists and development practitioners, representing the sectors of health, nutrition, horticulture, agriculture and education from 20 English-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa which included: Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, The Gambia, Lesotho, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Seychelles, South Africa, North Sudan, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A participant from Madagascar also attended. Representatives from the technical, organizing and financing partners were also present, including FAO, WHO, Horticulture Development Council of Tanzania (HODECT), The Global Horticulture Initiative (GlobalHort), CIRAD, Tanzania Horticulture Association (TAHA). Tanzanian Ministries responsible for Agriculture, Health, Education, and Trade and Industry, HortiTengeru, Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre, Sokoine University of Agriculture, as well as representatives of the East African Community Secretariat (EAC), the International Potato Center (CIP), World Vegetable Center, and private sector entities: “A to Z” Co., Alpha Seed Co., Tanzania Seed Trade Association (TASTA), Tanzania Cluster Competitiveness Programme (TCCP).

Objectives

Within the overall aim of implementing the framework of action at national level for the promotion of fruit and vegetables in African countries, the workshop had the following objectives:

1. To map existing policies, and current programmes and activities for the promotion of fruit and vegetables in each country;
2. To document the production and the consumption of fruit and vegetables and their current position in the market;
3. To support the development of specific programmes and actions for each country, in order to implement the FAO - WHO framework for promoting fruits and vegetables at national level; and
4. To boost and strengthen the joint work amongst health, education and agriculture sectors for promoting fruits and vegetable production and consumption.

Workshop process

The workshop was conducted for five days, from 26 to 30 September 2011.

During the opening ceremony, the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Cooperatives, United Republic of Tanzania, FAO, WHO and the Regional Commissioner of Arusha welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of the subject, and the need for an integrated and interdisciplinary effort.

The themes were introduced in plenary sessions by invited participants and followed by presentations on specific topics that were then discussed.

Three Case Studies were presented on (a) Small-scale horticulture interventions in Ghana; (b) Small garden networks in Zimbabwe; and (c) Implementation of the programme for Promotion of F&V (PROFEL) in Madagascar. The workshop was also presented with the results of the pre-workshop questionnaire on the status of fruit and vegetable production and consumption.

Two plenary working sessions were also conducted on specific topics: (a) Prevention of under-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies; and (b) Prevention of childhood obesity. Hortivar training was facilitated as a side event of the workshop. Two field visits were conducted as part of the workshop programme.

Three working groups were setup according to geographical proximity. These working groups were conducted during the second and third day for the discussion of selected topics to contribute to the accomplishment of the objectives of the workshop.

Conclusions

According to WHO STEPS surveys on chronic disease risk factors conducted in several African countries and in line with existing FAO data, F&V consumption levels are below the recommended daily intake of 400 g/person. This low consumption of fruit and vegetables is a major risk factor for NCDs and for micronutrient deficiency-related health problems.

Precise and location-specific data on production, consumption and availability of fruit and vegetables are lacking or weak for many African countries.

Vitamin A deficiency, an indicator of low fruit and vegetable intake, although decreasing in Africa is still of great concern particularly for children in almost all African countries and much work needs to be done to eliminate it.

There is also increasing concern with the rise of unhealthy consumption patterns and obesity in sub-Saharan Africa considering their links to NCDs. Excess consumption of calories co-exists with under-nutrition and it is recognised that they are inter-related and constitute the so-called double burden of malnutrition.

In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, it was found that putting vegetables before fruit in the slogan of the initiative is appropriate (i.e. **Vegetables and Fruit for Health - PROVAF**), in view of considerations about relative ease of access and availability for the poor and the diversity of species and types.

Integration of efforts among horticulture, nutrition, health and education stakeholders is considered essential for the effective promotion of V&F for health particularly in a multi-sectoral approach. There is also the need for joint efforts between the public and private sectors towards commercialising and modernizing horticulture. Public-private partnership is an important mechanism in the promotion of the production and utilisation of V&F.

Promotion of V&F has been going on for a long time within general nutrition education and now there is the need to focus on promoting availability and consumption of V&F. This should not be treated as a pilot programme but integrated with existing nutrition and public health programmes aiming at preventing NCDs and malnutrition and reducing the economic burden of public health care. There is the need to properly articulate the argument to promote V&F consumption to reflect the priority and therefore to justify adequate funding allocation within Government and international support programmes and to identify relevant projects as part of development aid initiatives.

It was considered essential to make use of existing structures for promoting regional collaboration in the health sector to promote vegetable and fruit consumption - such as the International Heart Federation, the NCD Alliance for Diabetes, Cancer and Tuberculosis, etc.

At national level, use should be made of existing national commemorations and international ones like the Child Health days and weeks, the World Breastfeeding week, the International Women's Day, the African Food Security and Nutrition day (with NEPAD) and the World Food Day to promote V&F consumption. Equally, collaboration with professional health, nutrition and horticulture bodies existing in various countries and at regional level, as well as integration with existing movements like SUN (Scaling Up Nutrition) and REACH (Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger) could be part of a strategy to achieve greater coverage and impact with V&F campaigns.

The workshop recognised the importance of advocacy, information and community education in changing mindsets in order to enhance the appeal of V&F as an eating choice. It is equally important to reverse the negative attitudes and stigma associated with producers, sellers and consumers of vegetables, in particular, in the context of many African countries. In particular, men's customary reluctance to consume vegetables and fruit and the association of traditional vegetables with "poor people's food" are issues that need to be addressed through targeted education campaigns. Many different approaches were considered to be useful in this connection, including:

1. Adopting the marketing expertise and strategies used by the commercial sector.
2. Mobilising mentors and champions - ranging from the President/Head of Government and the First Lady to children's "heroes" - was considered to be a potentially very useful strategy in the promotion of V&F consumption.

3. Making schools and workplaces healthy by serving vegetables and fruits in school meals and canteens deserves a strong place within such campaigns. School gardens are also considered to be an important entry point for developing healthy diets.

Simple messages like “**eat plenty of vegetables and fruit every day**” and “**eat a yellow and a green vegetable with your main meal of the day**” and “**eat x+y servings of different coloured V&F every day**” can help to bring the recommendations of national dietary guidelines down to a level of popular understanding.

Supply side interventions should promote adoption by the supply chain of approaches that make it easier for food preparers in the home and other eating places to include V&F in the family’s diet, like semi-processing, sale of ready-to-use produce, specifically for urban V&F markets.

Food safety of V&F produce is very important and must be addressed through integrated approaches from farm-to-fork, at the same time as promoting increased availability and consumption. This would require standards setting and compliance control so that consumers will gain a clear understanding as to what is good and safe to eat.

Various programmes are being promoted in different African countries on food-based approaches to Vitamin A provisioning. These are based on local production of carotene-rich vegetables and fruit, such as Orange Flesh Sweet Potato (OFSP), that aim at making prevention of Vitamin A deficiency more sustainable. These interventions provide examples that could be replicated and applied more broadly for encouraging higher production and consumption of a range of V&F.

There should also be an effective and sustainable use of biodiversity (including the use of indigenous vegetables and fruits and adapted cultivars), as this could enhance resilience to climate change, while increasing dietary diversity, and contributing to reduced use of pesticides.

Efforts for promotion of V&F need to be highly gender-sensitive. For example, policy changes are necessary to break the gender barrier to women’s access to land/land title, to agricultural credit and to skills and knowledge. It is also important to overcome traditional prejudices against consumption of vegetables and/or fruit by men, women, children, and also get more men involved and targeted in V&F promotion campaigns.

There are a number of meetings, symposia and workshops that can be used to propagate the agenda of “**PROVAF**”, for example the upcoming 2nd All Africa Horticulture Congress (AAHC) in 15-20 January 2012 in South Africa, the International Conference on Nutrition ICN+20 in 2012, the International Society for Horticultural Science-ISHS and its Commission on Fruit and Vegetables-FAV for Health, the International Congress of Cardiology in 2012 focussing on obesity prevention, the International Health Promotion Congress in 2012 and the Conference for Improving School Health, Nutrition and HIV in October 2011 in Kenya.

Recommendations

To participants:

To report back to their respective ministries with the view to establishing a multi-stakeholder country team that would be tasked with spearheading implementation of the workshop recommendations.

To establish a facilitating process that will enhance the interaction across sectors (horticulture-health-education) in-country and among countries on PROVAF using tools such as an e-newsletter-based communication strategy.

To follow up on the activities and time line that the multi-stakeholder teams identified during the workshop.

To governments of participating countries:

To identify a focal person in a strategic ministry, like health or agriculture, to be responsible for convening meetings on PROVAF and tracking progress on implementation of workshop recommendations.

To promote and support sustainable small-scale horticulture systems, including home gardens, in rural , urban and peri-urban environments, in order to facilitate the availability, marketing of and access to V&F for a larger number of consumers. Linked to this, targeted efforts to build capacity on improving good practices across the value-chain, quality seed and planting material, marketing techniques and reduction of post-harvest losses should be intensified.

To promote the PROVAF agenda in the context of regional high level inter-governmental fora, both in Africa and globally, e.g. the WHO Regional Meeting and FAO Regional Conference, the Committee on World Food Security, the Ministers' regional conferences under ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, COMESA, AU/NEPAD and regional platforms such as FARA. Specific policies and resolutions made at this level will assist countries to adopt effective strategies reflecting the elements of the PROVAF initiative.

To implement the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (WHA57.17) and specifically article 41 which states that national food and agricultural policies should be consistent with the protection and promotion of public health.

To follow up on the political declaration in September 2011 of the United Nations high-level meeting on non-communicable disease prevention and control which encourages "Member States to develop policies that support the production and manufacture of and facilitate access to foods that contribute to healthy diet, and provide greater opportunities for utilization of healthy local products and foods, thus contributing to efforts to cope with the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities posed by globalization and to achieve food security" and to take advantage of this declaration to promote the increased production and consumption of fruits and vegetables

To internalise the PROVAF message in all relevant national policies, especially those guiding health, agriculture, education and trade development, and ensure V&F is linked to MDG implementation strategies at national level.

To integrate a specific component on vegetable and fruit promotion in the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) process and WHO Country Cooperation Strategies (CCS) by individual countries to ensure priority is given to this initiative, along with guidance to development partners.

To build and strengthen human resources and institutional capacities that will be required to implement the PROVAF framework. This could also be a potential area for development assistance.

To utilise surveillance and monitoring systems in the development of strategies, plans and programmes on V&F and in the evaluation and impact assessment of such programmes.

To development partners and philanthropic foundations:

To support in multiple forms the planning and implementation of national and regional horticulture, education and health policies, including the implementation of the outcomes of the political declaration of the United Nations high-level meeting on non-communicable disease prevention and control and the PROVAF framework.

To Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations:

To join the PROVAF initiative and become active stakeholders in the definition and implementation of the PROVAF agenda.

To sponsor and partner organisations of PROFAV/PROVAF:

To encourage and support Member States to develop and update sustainable surveillance methodologies and systems which can provide data on production, availability and consumption of V&F.

To facilitate the completion of the PROFAV/PROVAF assessment through the questionnaire and its analysis.

WHO and FAO HQ, regional and country offices to support countries in taking forward the PROVAF agenda and the country plans identified during the workshop.

To encourage new partners and philanthropic foundations to join and support countries in the implementation of the PROVAF agenda.

To bring the countries and stakeholders that were unable to participate in the Arusha PROFAV workshop up to date and engage them in the follow up process.

To facilitate and support follow up of the PROFEL and the PROVAF initiative during a special session on nutrition of the 2nd AAHC.

To continue collaborating and networking to support country partners in the development of a regular newsletter for PROFEL and PROVAF.

Agreed today 30th September 2011 in Ausha, United Republic of Tanzania