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“Giving farmers the skills to grow traditional leafy vegetables boosts their self-confidence.”

Project “Diversity from field to fork” (started 2017)

The project encourages the growing of leafy vegetables in the Vihiga District of Kenya. Growing a wider range of vegetables protects biodiversity and ensures that farmers have a varied and balanced diet.

• Objectives of current project phase:

- Document the accumulated knowledge and improve the supply chain
- Provide training in the provision of healthcare advice
- Offer courses on all aspects of vegetable growing
- Set up resources centres

• Project budget 2017: CHF 66 700

• Account for donations: PC 87-193093-4

• Sustainable Development Goals:

Biovision is helping to bring about a shift to sustainable development in accordance with the UN Agenda 2030. This project is making a concrete contribution to three of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 1 (No poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger) and Goal 3 (Good health and well-being):



Variety makes us strong

Ugali made from maize, matoke from green bananas and chapatti from wheat flour: These side dishes, all rich in starch, dominate the daily diet of Kenyans. Biovision is encouraging a more balanced diet and supporting a project promoting a variety of traditional leafy vegetables.

Meng Tian, Biovision

The Vihiga District in Western Kenya lies close to the Equator. It is a hilly region and one of the most densely populated parts of Kenya. In an area where 87% of households work on the land and 45% of the population is under 15 years of age, Biovision and its partner Bioversity International are working with farming families on “Diversity from field to fork”, a project that covers the entire supply chain. Members of five farmer groups are learning how to produce high-quality seeds from traditional varieties of leafy vegetables and how to grow and market those vegetables. In addition, it trains Community Health Volunteers who then go into local villages and provide advice on what constitutes a balanced diet.

More vitamins means less illness

Most of the members of the farmer groups are women. Florence Oside from Masana explains that in the past she only cooked a few vegetables for her family; they did not grow vegetables and had to buy them from the market. Often she only bought sukuma wiki (African kale), a common vegetable throughout Kenya. As a result of the project, she now knows the importance of a varied

diet and today picks a wide range of leafy vegetables from her own kitchen garden. “Best of all, my children like ugali and vegetables such as saga (spider plant) from the garden. This gives them more vitamins, they are sick less often and grow more quickly,” she says.

Higher incomes boost self-confidence

Growing vegetables enriches the daily diet and saves money. For Eunice Kimiya from Wanondi, the produce from her kitchen garden has even become a source of income (see Page 8). This makes the fifty-year old very happy. “In the past I spent about 1000 Kenyan shillings every week on vegetables. Now I earn 400–500 Kenyan shillings every day”. Isaac Otieno, Research Assistant working for our partner Bioversity International confirms that giving farmers the skills to grow traditional leafy vegetables boosts their self-confidence. “They have a greater belief in their own ability,” he stresses; it’s a seed that will grow further in future. At present the farmers are only selling their produce to those who live in the immediate vicinity but all are keen to double their efforts. They want to professionalise their seed production and are planning to open Resources Centres by the end of the year. They can then offer training in the cultivation and marketing of a diverse range of vegetable varieties and disseminate information on healthy eating. In the next few years, the farmer groups plan to develop other ideas such as the creation of seed banks and improvements to product marketing.

For more information on the project see:
www.biovision.ch/vegetables