



Nutrition Knowledge, Attitude and Practices among Small-holder Farmers Supported by Sasakawa Africa Association in Nigeria

Introduction

Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) supports smallholder farmers along the agricultural value chain to increase their income and food and nutrition security. In Nigeria, the association is planning a campaign to promote improved nutrition practices amongst small-holder farmers who are receiving agricultural-related interventions. IGNITE project is supporting SAA to tailor its nutrition awareness campaign content to different audiences. To obtain baseline data on knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards nutrition among SAA's farming households in Nigeria, IGNITE conducted a study between June and July 2021. This summary highlights the key findings from the study.

Research methods

- Phone survey with 351 small-holder farmers from Gombe, Kano and Jigawa states in Nigeria
- Sample comprised 50% female and 50 % male farmers
- 95% of the male farmers and 15% of the females were heads of their households
- Secondary data was used to complemented interview data.

Key Findings

1. Nine in 10 farmers are aware of malnutrition:

- 74% consider 'not getting enough food' as the reason for malnutrition.
- 72% believe that malnutrition is a serious problem in their community, and estimate that 4 in 10 households in their community

are likely to have at least one undernourished member

- 35% of the respondents think that their own household is likely to be one such household.
- Majority believe that children younger than 5 years are most vulnerable to malnutrition.

2. Low level of awareness of micronutrients among both men and women:

- Over half of all farmers did not give a correct example of any micronutrient.
- Only 1 in 10 women farmers could correctly name a source of iron; knowledge of Vitamin A and its sources was particularly low among men.
- Although 6 in 10 farmers knew about protein, 40% thought it was difficult to cook food rich in protein because of high cost and unavailability.
- 40% of the respondents did not know what iodized salt was, and only 3 in 10 of the farmers had used iodized salt the previous day.

3. Respondents thought their community was either very or likely to consume fruits and vegetables.

- 49% and 63% thought their community was very likely to consume fruits and vegetables, respectively. 62% said the households were likely to buy the fruits and vegetables.
- Majority of respondents were aware that one is likely to fall ill from eating spoilt food. Four in

10 farmers said they do not store perishable food like raw meat, poultry and seafood, and a refrigerator is used in households of only 17% of the respondents.

4. Men make the final decisions about type of food the family consumes:

- In 62% of the households, the man makes the final decision about the type of food the family consumes, either because they are the household head or the main income earner. Women are main decision maker in households where food is considered a woman's responsibility.

5. Starchy staples contribute largely to diets in the farmer households.

- The staples include corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, and millet. Dark green vegetables (the most common source of Vitamin A) and legumes were consumed in 6 out every 10 households in the previous day, while 56% of the households consumed haem-iron rich foods (organ meat, flesh meat, fish, seafood).

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on these findings, SAA should consider the following recommendations while implementing a nutrition social behaviour change intervention in Nigeria:

- Include malnutrition messaging such as causes and consequences of malnutrition among children and adults; how to identify cases of malnourished household members; diverse diets; promotion of micronutrient intake among children, pregnant and lactating women; sources, preparation, handling and storage of nutrient-rich foods; and technologies that can support farmers to store perishable foods.
- Create awareness of macro- and micro-nutrients and sources, specifically iron, Vitamin A and Iodine, and the need for diet diversity. Promote micro-nutrients intake among the vulnerable members of households (children, pregnant and lactating women).
- Provide information on sources, preparation methods, handling and storage of nutrient rich foods, and disseminate messages on proper washing of fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Promote other technologies that can help farmers to store perishable foods for a longer, to address availability in different seasons.
- Provide messaging to encourages collaborative decision-making on food to increase women's input into food related decisions.