



PAEPARD



Documenting postharvest practices along *S.aethiopicum* and *A.lividus* leafy vegetable supply chains in Central Uganda

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Background

Postharvest loss in leafy vegetables has currently become an area of concern in Africa especially for *Solanum aethiopicum* and *Amaranthus lividus* which are important local vegetable species. There is limited information, however, on postharvest handling practices for leafy vegetables

The aim of the study was three fold: i) establishing the nature of supply chains for *S. aethiopicum* and *A. lividus* leafy vegetables ii) assessing gender participation in the vegetable value chain and iii) documenting the postharvest practices along these supply chains.

Methodology

This study was set up in Wakiso district as a descriptive exploratory study with both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection. Key informant interviews (n=7) and personal interviews (n=40) were conducted including farmers and traders.

Results and Discussion

1) **Supply chains:** The supply chains were characterized by small scale farmers, poor postharvest practices and distribution facilities. Two supply chains (short and long) were identified as illustrated below.

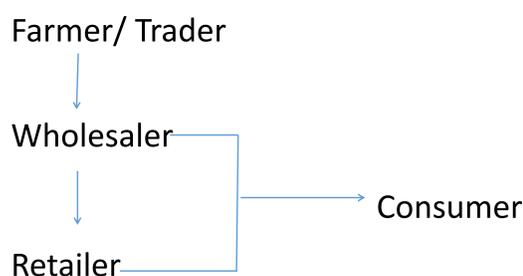


Fig. 1. Short supply chain

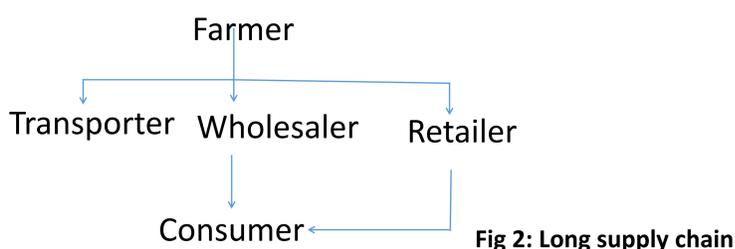


Fig 2: Long supply chain

2) **Gender roles along the supply chain:** Production is mainly done by men (90%) whereas in the markets 86.6% of women participated more than the men.

3) Postharvest Practices on farm and in the market.

- a) **At Harvest:** Vegetables were always harvested late in the afternoon to early evening. The average maturity period reported for harvesting of *S. aethiopicum* and *A. lividus* was 5-8 weeks and 3-4 weeks, respectively. The vegetables were uprooted whole with their roots intact and soil removed.
- b) **Handling:** No packaging material was observed for the vegetables. Instead, vegetables were bundled in bales ranging from 20-150kgs, tied at stem level using ropes, packed on trucks with roots facing each other and the leaves on the outside.
- c) **Transportation:** Open trucks were commonly used to transport the vegetables from farm to market.
- d) **Storage:** No storage practices were observed both on farm and in the market besides routine sprinkling with water to maintain freshness during the day.
- e) **Hygiene and sanitation:** Trimming of roots was commonly done.



Figure 3: An open truck with vegetables.

Conclusion

There are few stakeholders engaged in the supply chain of indigenous vegetables. A surprisingly high number of men are engaged in production in Wakiso but not marketing. There is limited or no processing of indigenous vegetables. Handling, packaging and storage practices are generally rudimentary. Trimming of roots was a good hygiene practice on farm to avoid soiling of the leaves.

References:- Ssekabembe & Odong, 2008

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