



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Indigenous Vegetables

Indigenous and traditional leafy vegetables have been part of the food systems in Zambia for generations.

These vegetables are those that are naturally found in Zambia.

There has been rapid growth of interest in the indigenous and traditional vegetables over the past 10 years. This can be observed by the increase in trade and production of these vegetables in rural and urban gardens of Zambia.

These vegetables include types like “Delele” Okra and “Impwa” African eggplant. They are rich in protein, vitamins, iron and other nutrients and better able to endure droughts, pests and diseases.

However, they are threatened by deforestation and other types of land-clearing.

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

### Problem: Commercializing Indigenous Vegetables

Indigenous vegetables have gained the most notice, both in the marketplace and among researchers in Zambia for their nutritional value.

The list of challenges in promoting these vegetables include: appropriate farming practices -- from finding seeds to control pests. Another challenge is the limited distribution and marketing practices to satisfy the demand throughout the year.

The challenges have created difficulties in integrating these indigenous vegetables into the main stream in Zambia.

Crop yields have been low because there has been

limited research to improve productivity for most of these vegetables.

In spite the evidence confirming the nutritional contribution of indigenous vegetables to local diets, there has been very little concerted effort to utilize these vegetables and address the food, nutrition and health problems of Zambia.

There is very little published information or data on either the areas cultivated or the production levels of specific indigenous vegetables.

These vegetables, if seriously considered, could be an answer to better nutrition and serve as an adaptive measure in the face of climate change.

## Solutions: Activities for Journalists

The use of indigenous vegetables for nutritional benefits and their ability to adapt to climate change must be promoted.

Use your community radio station to help listeners understand the nutritional value of local indigenous vegetables.

Discuss preparation methods that maintain nutritional value of these vegetables -- including avoiding over-boiling.

Promote the use of plastic solar dryers to dry vegetables rather than direct sun drying that can damage the nutritional value of vegetables.

Are any farmers in your community growing indigenous vegetables? What has been their experience?

Consult local agriculture extension officers or Ministry of Health nutritional experts about best growing and preparation of these vegetables.

Encourage farmers to explore traditional methods of seed identification for propagation.

Use the community radio to promote more use of indigenous vegetables in the daily food diets for the peri-urban and urban populations. Ask listeners for their favorite recipes using indigenous vegetables.

Identify community women's groups, women's cooperative groups and other women's social groups to help create a cookbook of recipes using indigenous

vegetables.

Discuss with the listeners about how resilient indigenous vegetables are to the effects of climate change. Most of the traditional varieties are ready for harvest much faster than non-native crops, so they could be promising options if the rainy season becomes more erratic — one of the predicted outcomes of global warming.

Given the relative lack of research, perhaps the radio stations can engage local communities to lobby and demand policy makers to invest in improved seed quality, seed supply and improved agronomic practices for indigenous vegetables. After all, they are likely to yield a large return to the communities hit hard by poverty and malnutrition.

These vegetables provide an opportunity for sustainable production and good business for small-scale farmers because they are inexpensive to grow.

### Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia; +260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email: [makwetiskanu@yahoo.com](mailto:makwetiskanu@yahoo.com)

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, National Coordinator, Community-based National Resource Management Forum, Zambia; Email: [vinceziba@yahoo.com](mailto:vinceziba@yahoo.com). Phone: 0966-246-924

Good source of information; Mwape Sichilongo, WWF Conservation Manager. Email: [msichilongo@wwfzam.org](mailto:msichilongo@wwfzam.org). Phone: +260 966442540