

Scaling up Fish Processing Technologies, Marketing and Women Empowerment for Improved Incomes and Livelihoods of Fishing Communities in Uganda (NutriFishPLUS)

Background

The Small Pelagic Fishes (SPFs), including mukene, muziri, and ragoogi play an important role in nutrition, income generation and livelihoods of fishing communities in Uganda. However, actors involved in harvesting, processing and marketing of the SPFs face several challenges, including limited access to capital, appropriate processing technologies, and lucrative markets; inadequate technical training in processing, value addition and marketing; gender inequalities; and limited alternative livelihood options among fishing communities.

NutriFishPLUS implementing partners will work with diverse stakeholders and SPF value chain actors to enhance incomes and livelihoods of fishing communities through: i) increasing quantity & improving quality of SPF and fish products; ii) improving market access through diversified channels & supply chain linkages; iii) empowering men, women, youth and other marginalized groups in the SPF value chains; and iv) strengthening resilience of fishing communities through diversified income streams.

The challenge

The SPFs, including mukene, muziri, and ragoogi account for over half of the total annual fish catches in Uganda's three main lakes: Kyoga (59%), Victoria (63%) and Albert (70%), sustaining livelihoods of over 60% of the lakeside communities engaged in fishing, processing, marketing and other auxiliary services. The SPFs have historically been poorly handled, leading to poor quality fish and fish products as well as high post-harvest losses.



Actors involved in harvesting, processing and marketing of the SPFs face several challenges, including limited access to capital, inappropriate processing technologies and lack of lucrative markets; inadequate technical training in processing, limited value addition, poor business management and marketing opportunities; and limited awareness on the nutritive value of SPFs. In addition, social and cultural norms and power relations constrain engagement and benefits that would be derived from the SPF value chains, especially by women, youth and other marginalized groups. Moreover, limited alternative livelihood options make fishing communities highly dependent on fisheries as a primary source of income, yet overfishing and environmental degradation often reduce availability of fish.



To address these challenges, the initial NutriFish project (2019–2023) funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) through the Cultivate Africa's Future Fund Phase II (CultiAF2): 1) established group savings schemes to improve access to capital by women and youth; 2) introduced and piloted solar tent dryers for processing SPFs, resulting in doubling of women's incomes and tripling of the shelf-life of silver cyprinid fish (mukene) to almost five months; 3) developed and test-marketed certified, nutrient-enriched fish products, including baby food, sauce and maize meal; 4) conducted comprehensive social and behavioural change interventions, leading to increased women's participation in profitable ventures and 30% reduction in domestic violence in intervention areas.

While NutriFish registered significant achievements, gaps still remain with regard to increasing production of high-quality SPFs through adoption of solar tent dryers and raised drying racks; enhancing capacity of men, women and the youth in processing, packaging, branding and marketing; improving access to capital and lucrative markets for SPFs and fish products; empowering women, youth & other marginalized groups in the SPF value chain; and strengthening resilience of fishing communities through diversified income streams.

Research Action

NutriFishPLUS implementing partners will scale-up outcomes of the previous project

in collaboration with diverse stakeholders and SPF value actors using the Scaling Science Principles (justification, optimal scale, coordination and dynamic evaluation). The aim of the project is to enhance the incomes and livelihoods of fishing communities in Uganda by: i) improving the quantity and quality of dried small fish and fish products for local, regional and international markets through adoption of solar tent driers and raised drying racks; ii) improving market access for small fish and fish products through innovative marketing strategies and enhanced supply chain linkages; iii) increasing involvement of women, youth and other marginalized groups in SPF value chain; iv) strengthening resilience of fishing communities through diversified income streams.

Expected outcomes

- Enhanced incomes and livelihoods for marginalized fishing groups, particularly women and youth.
- Improved health and nutrition for vulnerable groups through diversification of fish products that are embedded in the market with strong supply chain linkages.
- Sustainable fish processing and marketing models that can be scaled across Uganda and the East African region.
- Improved women and youth participation in decision making and control of benefits in the SPF value chains.
- Improved socio-economic conditions and ecosystem health through participatory, scalable approaches.

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Implementing partners

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