

Chapter 65

The Potential of Traditional Leafy Vegetables for Improving Food Security in Africa

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ABSTRACT

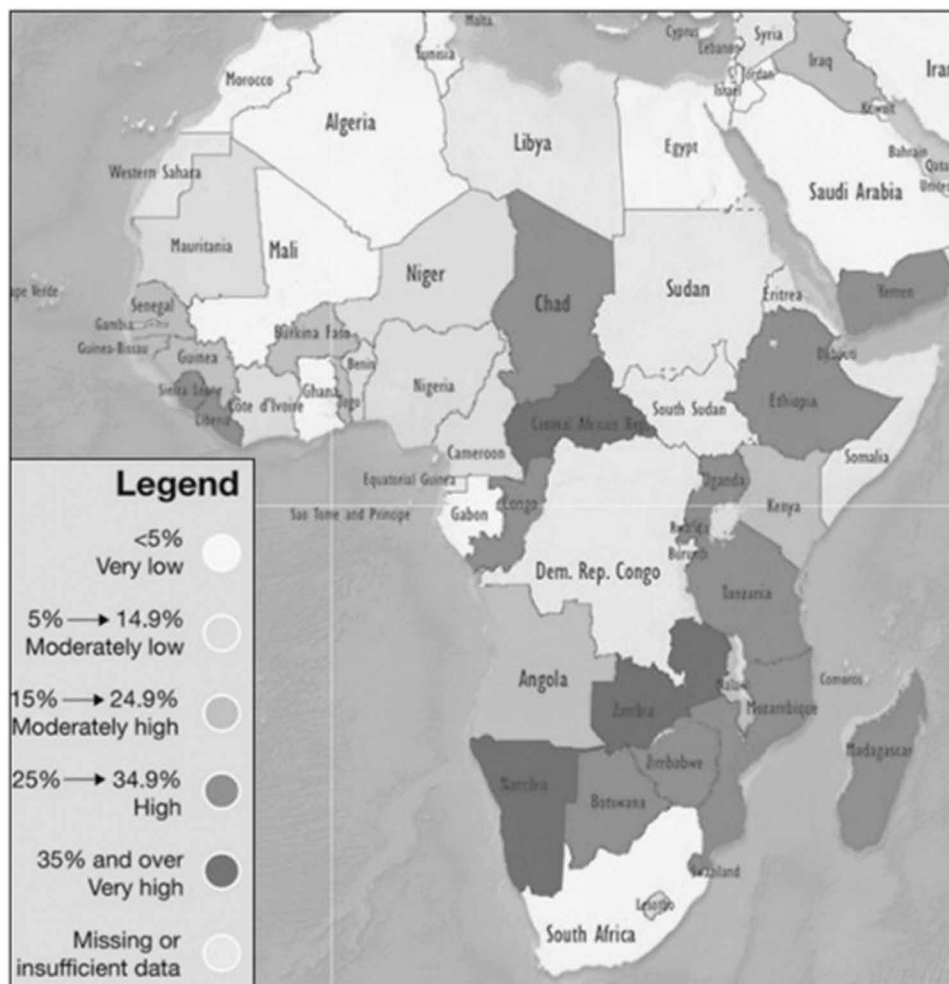
Feeding the quickly growing population in Africa remains a global challenge. As the demand for food increases, climate change, on the other hand, poses more challenges to agricultural productivity, implying that the provision of sufficient quantities and qualities of food is threatened. Traditional leafy vegetables (TLVs) in Africa are resilient to adverse weather conditions and are naturally rich in nutrients including vitamins A & C, iron, protein and other micronutrients. The objective of this chapter is to assess the potential of TLVs improving food security in Africa. TLVs represent a robust local source of food, their consumption is crucial in complementing Africa's diet with micronutrients. TLVs have therefore the potential to play a major role in improving food security and facilitating food sovereignty. Research on seeds, developing seed systems, coupled by preparing and processing methods to TLV products like cakes or flour is needed to increase their consumption, particularly among the young, elite and urban dwellers.

INTRODUCTION

Feeding the quickly growing population in Africa remains a worldwide challenge. Globally, close to a billion people are hunger stricken (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2015) and approximately one-third of them live in Africa (Sasson, 2012). As the demand for food increases, climate change, on the other hand, poses challenges to domestic food production in Africa, implying that the provision of sufficient quantities of food of the necessary quality is threatened. A lack of sufficient quantities of sufficiently diversified food compromises human health, resulting in an increase in the risk of contracting diseases related to malnutrition, which affect one in every four people (FAO, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates the prevalence of hunger and the distribution of the undernourished population across Africa. The map reveals substantial differences between African regions. Sub-Saharan Africa is the most severely affected by the prevalence of hunger and undernourishment.

Figure 1. Hunger and undernourishment persistence in Africa in 2015

Source: FAO, 2015



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