GFAiR-Ibadan Hybrid meeting: Forgotten foods and the research - private sector nexus

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# Overview

The GFAiR-Ibadan Hybrid meeting on "Forgotten foods and the research - private sector nexus" brought together experts and stakeholders in African nutrition to explore the vital role of forgotten foods in enhancing food security and nutrition. Dr. Habiba Hassan-Wassef emphasized tailoring approaches to various ecological zones and integrating forgotten foods into the food industry, while Robert Fungo discussed the private sector's potential in adding value through collaboration and market assessments. Dr. Stella Iwuagwu shared insights on the intersection of nutrition and local farming, promoting the "food as medicine" concept and addressing challenges in urban agriculture. The panel highlighted the importance of innovation, youth engagement, and stakeholder collaboration in revitalizing forgotten foods, alongside actionable steps to enhance visibility, production, and marketing efforts. The meeting concluded with a call for greater civil society awareness and private sector involvement to advance these initiatives sustainably.

# Notes

## Dr. Habiba Hassan-Wassef's Presentation

Different priorities for forgotten foods in various ecological zones of Africa

* Different ecological zones in Africa have unique agricultural practices and food preferences, leading to varying priorities for forgotten foods.
* The nutritional value and cultural significance of forgotten foods differ across regions, necessitating tailored approaches to promote their consumption.
* Climate resilience and adaptation strategies should be considered when addressing forgotten foods, as different ecological zones face distinct environmental challenges.

The importance of food industry in integrating forgotten foods into the food chain

* The food industry plays a crucial role in integrating forgotten foods into the food chain by:
* Encouraging innovation in food processing and product development, making forgotten foods more appealing and accessible to consumers.
* Facilitating partnerships between farmers, researchers, and chefs to promote the use of forgotten foods in modern culinary practices.
* Raising awareness and educating consumers about the nutritional benefits and cultural significance of forgotten foods, thereby increasing demand and consumption.

Need for modernizing the way forgotten foods are eaten

* The modernization of forgotten foods can enhance their appeal and consumption among younger generations.
* Innovative recipes and contemporary cooking methods can help integrate these foods into modern diets, making them more accessible and enjoyable.
* Collaboration with chefs and food influencers can promote forgotten foods through social media and culinary events, increasing awareness and demand.

Evolution of research criteria to include impact, uptake, and socioeconomic impact

* Research criteria have evolved to prioritize not just scientific outcomes but also real-world applications and benefits.
* The inclusion of impact and uptake measures ensures that research findings are effectively translated into practice and reach the intended beneficiaries.
* Socioeconomic impact assessments help to evaluate how research contributes to community well-being and economic development, fostering sustainable practices.

Changing cultural context in rural areas, acquiring urban habits

* Rural communities are increasingly adopting urban dietary preferences, leading to a decline in traditional food practices.
* The shift towards convenience foods and fast-food options is impacting nutritional health and food security in these areas.
* Efforts to promote forgotten foods must consider these changing habits to effectively engage rural populations.

## Robert Fungo's Presentation

How private sector can support adding value to forgotten foods

* Private sector can invest in research and development to innovate processing techniques that enhance the nutritional value and marketability of forgotten foods.
* Partnerships with local farmers can create supply chains that ensure consistent sourcing of forgotten foods, while also providing farmers with fair compensation and training on sustainable practices.
* Marketing campaigns can be launched to raise awareness and promote the culinary potential of forgotten foods, targeting both local consumers and international markets to drive demand.

Mapping existing locally processed foods that contain forgotten foods can help identify:

* Identify and document traditional recipes that utilize forgotten foods, showcasing their nutritional benefits and culinary versatility.
* Engage local communities and farmers in the mapping process to promote awareness and appreciation of forgotten foods, fostering a sense of ownership and cultural pride.
* Facilitate partnerships between food processors, researchers, and local markets to enhance the visibility and accessibility of forgotten foods in the supply chain.

Optimizing processing conditions, nutrient quality, and safety of existing products

* Enhancing processing techniques can lead to improved nutrient retention and bioavailability in food products.
* Implementing safety protocols during processing can reduce the risk of contamination and ensure consumer health.
* Collaboration between researchers and food processors is essential to develop evidence-based practices that optimize product quality and safety.

The importance of collaboration between processors, consumers, and researchers

* Collaboration fosters innovation by integrating diverse perspectives from processors, consumers, and researchers, leading to improved product development and market acceptance.
* Engaging all stakeholders ensures that the needs and preferences of consumers are understood and met, enhancing the relevance and appeal of forgotten foods.
* Joint efforts can streamline the food value chain, optimizing processing techniques and ensuring that traditional foods are safely and effectively marketed to a broader audience.

The need for rapid market assessment and consumer preference studies

* Identifying trends and demands in the market that can guide the development of forgotten foods.
* Understanding consumer attitudes and preferences towards traditional and forgotten foods, which can enhance marketing strategies.
* Facilitating collaboration between researchers, producers, and marketers to ensure that products meet consumer needs and preferences effectively.

## Dr. Stella Iwuagwu's Presentation

Personal experience of using nutrition to boost immune system for HIV patients

* Nutrition plays a crucial role in enhancing the immune system, especially for individuals living with HIV, by providing essential nutrients that support overall health and immune function.
* Incorporating foods rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants can help rebuild the immune system and improve the quality of life for HIV patients, as evidenced by successful dietary interventions.
* Personal success stories highlight the importance of tailored nutrition plans that focus on whole foods, balanced diets, and the inclusion of traditional foods to meet the specific health needs of HIV patients.

Sustainable Demonstration Farm to promote food as medicine concept

* The initiative emphasizes the use of traditional and indigenous foods to enhance dietary diversity and improve health outcomes.
* It promotes hands-on training and education to empower communities in sustainable agricultural practices and food preparation methods.

The importance of backyard gardens and growing own vegetables

* Backyard gardens promote food security by providing access to fresh and nutritious vegetables.
* Growing one's own vegetables reduces reliance on market produce, which may be expensive or of lower quality.
* Backyard gardening encourages sustainable practices and can improve mental well-being through connection with nature.

Challenges in urban farming, including environmental issues and power supply

* Environmental issues such as odour and noise pollution, which can lead to conflicts with neighbours and regulatory challenges.
* Inconsistent power supply affecting operations, particularly for refrigeration and irrigation systems, leading to increased costs and inefficiencies.
* Limited access to resources and funding for implementing sustainable practices and technologies, hindering the growth and scalability of urban farming initiatives.

The need for integrated research and collaboration with plant breeders

* Integrated research can enhance the understanding of the nutritional and agronomic potential of forgotten foods, leading to improved cultivation practices.
* Collaboration with plant breeders is essential to develop varieties of forgotten foods that are resilient to pests and diseases, ensuring higher yields and sustainability.
* Engaging farmers in the research process allows for the incorporation of traditional knowledge and practices, fostering innovation and adaptability in local food systems.

# Discussion

## Challenges and Solutions

Environmental challenges in urban farming, including smell and noise

* Implementing deep litter systems in poultry farming can significantly reduce odors by promoting natural decomposition processes.
* Utilizing lactic acid bacteria formulations can help control smells and improve the overall health of livestock, making urban farming more acceptable to neighbors.
* Creating noise barriers, such as fences or soundproof structures, can mitigate disturbances from urban farming activities, enhancing community acceptance.

Power and water challenges in sustainable farming

* Power shortages can hinder the operation of essential equipment for irrigation and processing, impacting crop yields and food quality.
* Water scarcity limits the ability to maintain consistent irrigation practices, leading to reduced agricultural productivity and increased vulnerability to drought.
* Investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar power, and efficient water management systems can enhance the sustainability and resilience of farming practices

The importance of solar systems and alternative packaging methods

* The use of solar systems can significantly reduce reliance on traditional power sources, making agricultural practices more sustainable and cost-effective.
* Alternative packaging methods, such as dehydrating food, help preserve nutritional value while extending shelf life and reducing food waste.
* Implementing these strategies can enhance food security and promote the consumption of forgotten foods by making them more accessible and appealing to consumers.

The challenge of competing with chemically grown produce in the market

* Farmers growing organic or traditional foods often struggle to compete with cheaper, chemically grown produce that dominates the market.
* The perception of organic foods as more expensive can deter consumers, leading them to choose lower-priced options despite potential health risks.
* Building consumer awareness about the benefits of organic and traditional foods is essential to create demand and justify higher prices for these products.

The need for better marketing and education about organic products

* Better marketing strategies can increase consumer awareness and demand for organic products, leading to higher sales and profitability for farmers.
* Educational programs can inform consumers about the health benefits and environmental advantages of organic products, fostering a more informed purchasing decision.
* Collaboration between farmers, marketers, and educational institutions can create a comprehensive approach to promote organic products effectively in local markets.

## Reflections and Further Discussion

The need to redesign production, processing, and packaging of forgotten foods

* Redesigning production methods can enhance the yield and sustainability of forgotten foods, making them more viable for farmers.
* Innovative processing techniques can improve the nutritional value and shelf life of forgotten foods, increasing their market appeal.
* Effective packaging solutions can help in branding forgotten foods, making them more attractive to consumers and facilitating their integration into modern diets.

The importance of creating new recipes with forgotten foods

* Creating new recipes with forgotten foods can help revive interest in these ingredients and promote their consumption.
* Innovative recipes can highlight the nutritional benefits of forgotten foods, making them more appealing to health-conscious consumers.
* By incorporating forgotten foods into modern culinary practices, chefs can create unique dishes that attract a wider audience and support local agriculture.

The role of Chef Associations in promoting forgotten foods

* Chef Associations can help in standardizing recipes that incorporate forgotten foods, making them more appealing and accessible to consumers.
* They can collaborate with local farmers to source these ingredients, thus supporting sustainable agriculture and promoting local food systems.
* By featuring forgotten foods in high-end restaurants and culinary events, Chef Associations can elevate their status and increase public awareness and demand.

The need to identify and counteract factors that lead to neglect of traditional foods

* Identifying the social stigma associated with traditional foods as "food for the poor" and addressing this perception through education and marketing initiatives.

## PAFO's Perspective

The importance of promoting local food systems and creating demand for forgotten foods

* Promoting local food systems can enhance food security by ensuring that communities have access to fresh, nutritious foods produced nearby.
* Creating demand for forgotten foods can revitalize traditional agricultural practices and support local farmers, contributing to economic sustainability.
* Increased awareness and education about the nutritional benefits of forgotten foods can encourage consumers to incorporate them into their diets, fostering a cultural appreciation for local food heritage.

The importance of documenting farmer approaches to problem-solving

* Documenting farmer approaches to problem-solving can lead to the following benefits:
* Encourages the sharing of indigenous knowledge and practices that can enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability.
* Facilitates the development of tailored solutions that address specific local challenges faced by farmers, improving their resilience and adaptability.
* Provides valuable data for researchers and policymakers to inform future agricultural strategies and interventions, ensuring they are grounded in real-world experiences.

The need for integrating farmer innovations into scientific research

* Integrating farmer innovations into scientific research can enhance the relevance and applicability of agricultural practices.
* Collaboration between farmers and researchers can lead to the development of solutions that are tailored to local conditions and challenges.
* Documenting and sharing farmer-led innovations can contribute to a more sustainable and resilient agricultural system by leveraging traditional knowledge and practices.

# Final Reflections and Closing

Balancing nutrition security with commercialization

* Balancing nutrition security with commercialization is essential for sustainable food systems.
* It ensures that food production meets the nutritional needs of the population while also being economically viable for farmers and producers.
* This balance can lead to improved health outcomes, reduced malnutrition, and increased income for agricultural communities.

Private sector involvement in driving initiatives

* Private sector involvement is crucial for funding and scaling initiatives related to forgotten foods.
* Collaboration between private companies and local farmers can enhance the value chain and improve market access for traditional foods.
* Engaging the private sector can lead to innovative solutions and technologies that address production challenges and promote sustainability.

# Action items

* Create snippets of information about forgotten foods for young people to share on social media
* Develop an enterprise line for production, packaging, and marketing of forgotten foods
* Create a platform for farmers to produce, package, and market forgotten foods (01:25:49)
* Conduct a visibility study on the establishment of Pan African Development Farmers Development Fund
* Organize a conference with African Development Bank on scaling up finance for smallholder farmers in Africa
* Document farmer approaches to problem-solving and innovation
* Develop easily digestible 1-2 page notes on forgotten foods for civil society

# Annex: Speakers

1. **Dr. Habiba Wassef**(MD), ANS (African Nutrition Society) [Living Legend of the International Union of Nutrition Sciences](https://paepard.blogspot.com/2022/12/living-legend-of-international-union-of.html) ; Health and Nutrition Policy in Sustainable Development ; Chair, National Nutrition Sciences Committee **Egypt**
2. **Robert Fungo**, President, The Federation of African Nutrition Societies (FANUS), School of Food Technology, Nutrition & Bio-Engineering, Makerere University Kampala, **Uganda**
3. **Stella** **Iwuagwu** Manager Sustainable Demonstration Farms, Abuja, **Nigeria**

In person speakers (at IITA Ibadan):

* **Owole Fatunbi** - Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa: [FARA Forgotten Foods Dgroups](https://faraafrica.community/fara-net/forgotten-foods/join) / Community of Practice
* **Babafemi Oyewole**- CEO Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO) Kigali, Rwanda