

Home gardening as a sustainable nutrition and livelihood strategy: Farmers perspectives in rural Tanzania.

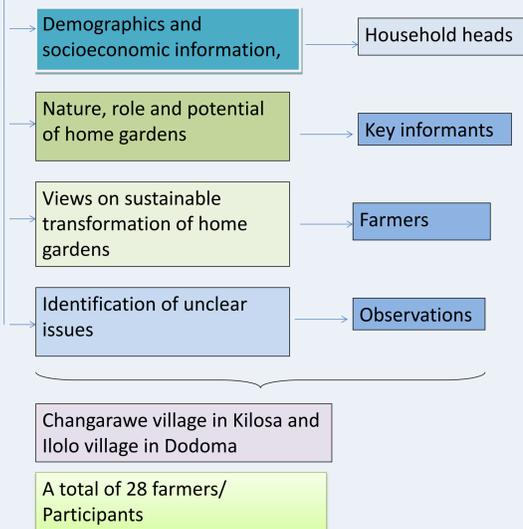
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Introduction

Malnutrition and food insecurity are major problems faced by most of the developing countries including Tanzania. Foods with high nutrient content (animal, vegetables, and fruits) are difficult to find in the poorer rural areas where most people are dependent on staple foods with little diversity. Home gardens play an important role in fulfilling dietary and nutritional needs. If production is diversified with more species and managed well, home gardens can increase dietary diversity. This study sought to investigate the perceptions and practices by farmers on how home gardening can be transformed into a sustainable nutrition and livelihood strategy in order to come up with information not only on socio-economic sustainability but also on the environmental sustainability of home gardens in rural Tanzania.

Methodology

Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, observations, secondary sources of data



The famous indigenous vegetable 'mlenda' commonly consumed in Iloilo and other villages



One of the very few households in Iloilo village practicing home pocket/bag gardening



A backyard vegetable garden in Iloilo

Results and Discussion

- Only 18% of households practiced home gardening.
- Sex of the household head places importance on the home gardening. Regarded as activity of women which impacts the transformation of home gardening into a sustainable nutrition and livelihood strategy. Involving men and other household members could make this practice a sustainable one.
- About 80% of the respondents did not have resources to buy seeds and inputs for home gardening, so the level of social capital and economic status of a household determines the readiness to engage in home gardening.
- 85% of farmers indicated that home gardening has a potential to be a secondary source of income. Surplus will be sold to increase household income.
- Water was cited as a limiting factor in practicing home gardening by 78% of the participants. This indicates unsustainability of the home gardening in its present condition in the study villages. The majority (65%) indicated that the use of pocket/ bag gardening has the potential to cover for water scarcity.
- About 80% indicated they did not possess radios, and 20% possessed radios but sometimes lacked money to buy batteries. This shows that the spread of home gardening information through media could be limited

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study confirms that home gardening can be changed into a sustainable nutrition and livelihood strategy in Kilosa and Chamwino districts and other similar environments if the farmers have access to training on the sustainable use of natural resources such as water and land and can afford adequate access to resources.