

Farmers and smallholders in the foodsheds of Rwandan secondary cities: Understanding beliefs and practices to bolster agricultural interventions for increased production and consumption of nutritious and agroecologically produced foods.

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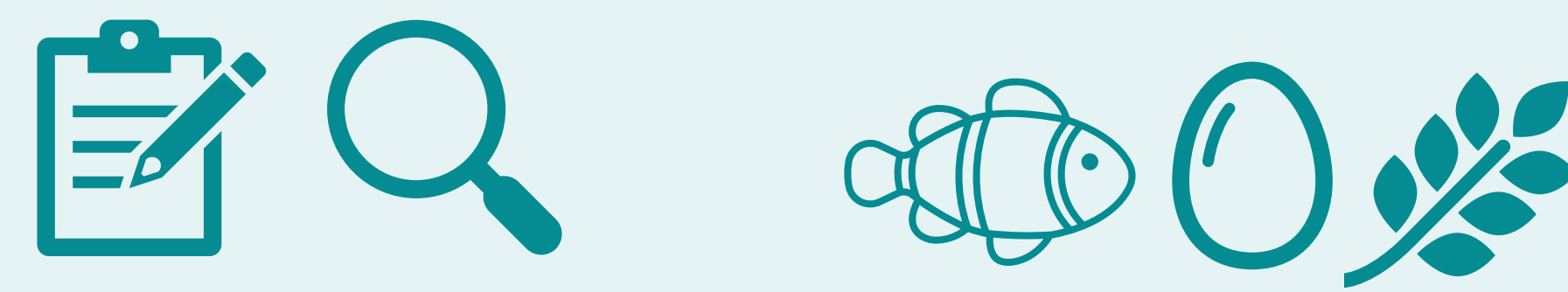
Introduction

The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project works in the urban food system to improve nutrition and health and reduce poverty by increasing the local demand and supply of nutritious and agroecologically produced foods in Bangladesh, Kenya and Rwanda.

The NICE project, develops participatory process with different sectors including city officials, local businesses, farmers, civil society and consumers to select the NICE value chains, as well as efforts for demand generation.

Methods

Qualitative research to identify core values, beliefs, and attitudes to farming practices to inform a compelling social marketing campaign motivating female and male farmers to adopt more agroecological farming methods in city foodsheds in Rusizi and Rubavu, Rwanda.



Sample: 15 smallholder female and male farmers



Findings and interpretations



Motivations

- Self-development and financial progress.
- Empowerment regarding new knowledge and innovative skills.
- Growth of the community by serving wider markets.
- A lucrative livelihood for the youth.



Barriers

- Expensive inputs.
- Limited options to buy inputs such as seeds, animal feed, etc.
- Low market prices.
- Lack of technological innovations
- Unpredictable climate patterns.
- Lack of proper post-harvest management.

"I plan to have a good harvest to feed my family and sell the surplus to earn money and use the money to raise the living standards at home."
-Crop farmer, Rusizi

"Natural disasters damage crops so even pesticides are not enough to fight the crops' diseases."
-Crop farmer, Rubavu

"When many minds unite, ideas flourish as each individual brings their unique knowledge, offering diverse pathways to achieve a common goal."
-Poultry farmer, Rubavu



Women crop farmer in Rubavu



Fish farmers in Rusizi



Poultry farmer in Rubavu

Key learnings:

- Farmers value serving social needs and being part of the community; very few farmers work independently or operating in isolation.
- Farmers learn from other local farmers and farmers from Uganda or Tanzania.
- Farmers are open to implementing new farming practices but have limited knowledge about agroecology principles.

Social marketing campaign



Farmers activation



3
MONTHS
HINGA
NEZA
="FARM WELL"

1,037
FARMERS WERE REACHED

through 8 activations to increase awareness and learn about agroecological practices through other champion farmers' experiences.



NEEZA Campaign poster



nice-nutrition.ch

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Conclusions

This formative research helped to:

- Understand farmers' current beliefs and practices when selecting value chains.
- Identify how to position agroecology principles among farmers, such that it appeals to them as an exciting, relevant new solution.
- Focus on agroecology as a social movement, since farmers learn from one another in a peer-learning process and can relate strongly.
- Reach out to 1037 farmers in Rusizi and Rubavu, Rwanda in just 3 months.