



Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition

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Pulses: Innovations from the field to the cooking pot

About this online discussion

This document summarizes the online discussion *Pulses: innovations from the field to the cooking pot* which was held on the FAO Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum) from 14 October to 4 November 2016. The discussion was organized in the context of the International Year of Pulses, and was facilitated by Sieg Snapp from Michigan State University and Karen Cichy from the United States Department of Agriculture.

In this second discussion on pulses, participants explored innovations to encourage and sustain pulse production and consumption. In addition, they discussed the roles pulse can play in the sustainable intensification of agriculture, and what is needed to strengthen pulse value chains. Furthermore, some participants used this discussion as a chance to share pulse recipes.

Over the three weeks of discussion, participants from 22 countries shared 44 contributions. The topic introduction and the questions proposed, as well as all contributions received, are available on the discussion page:

www.fao.org/fsnforum/activities/discussions/pulses2



Pulses: challenges and opportunities

Although the global demand for pulses has increased, per capita consumption has seen a significant decline in recent decades (Kadambot Siddique). The low level of pulse consumption has mainly been attributed to their status as "the protein for the poor" (Said Zarouali, Stella Kimambo, Peter Steele, Jane Sherman, Cynthia Donovan, Sarah Najera, Priya Rampal). In general, rural populations tend to abandon their traditional dietary habits when other products become available and accessible (Pierrette Mubadi), and rising incomes lead to shifts toward food derived from livestock (Peter Steele, Cynthia Donovan,

Jane Sherman). In addition, inadequate information on the advantages of pulses (Pierrette Mubadi) and their long preparation time (Stella Kimambo) – which is especially discouraging for working women (Kafilat Oloyede) – limits their consumption. Also, existing food cultures determine what people are ready to accept, and thus a lack of familiarity with pulses and their different types may play a role (Jane Sherman, Lawal Musibau Olajire). Furthermore, cereals have traditionally received more government support, which has promoted cereal production and, consequently, cereal-based diets.

In general, pulse cultivation is limited, and yields are low – farmers prefer to sell green pulse products, such as broad beans, at higher prices (Said Zarouali). Limited access to quality inputs like seeds keeps productivity from improving (Cynthia Donovan). In India for instance, seeds are often only available at state research institutes, which are not very accessible to smallholders (Mahesh Maske). In Malawi, pulses are mainly available at local markets, but these have often been mixed for consumption, making them unsuitable for production (Vicki Morrone).

However, pulses can be crucial in addressing a number of challenges. First, they have substantial beneficial characteristics in terms of environmental impact. The most important aspects are their potential for adapting to changing climatic conditions, and also the fact that they nourish the soil by naturally fixing nitrogen (Elizabeth Mpofu, Kafilat Oloyede, Aqleem Abbas,

Said Zarouali) – also for crops to be cultivated subsequently, and in this way contributing to securing future food supply (Kafilat Oloyede). In addition, their beneficial nutritional characteristics – inter alia being a source of protein, having a low glycemic index and a low fat content – can offer a food-based solution to malnutrition and decrease the risk of non-communicable diseases (Peter Steele, Kadambot Siddique, Cynthia Donovan, Stella Kimambo).

Hence, in order to fully tap the potential of pulses, policies and strategies to enhance their production and consumption in developing as well as developed countries are needed (Kadambot Siddique). However, the current level of research funding into pulses is only US\$175 million per year (Hakan Bahceci); urgent investment in research, development and extension is needed to increase production, improve the value chain, and enhance the nutritional properties and overall consumption of pulses (Kadambot Siddique).

Promoting and sustaining consumption

Until recently, the international focus has been on supply and access rather than on consumer behaviour – hence concentrating more on the field and the market (Jane Sherman). Yet, in this discussion, participants also focused on the "path to the cooking pot", and shared the following suggestions to promote pulse consumption:

- **Strengthen awareness-raising efforts on the different types of pulses and their benefits** (Said Zarouali, Lawal Musibau Olajire, Mahesh Maske, Aqleem Abbas, Elizabeth Mpofu, Lal Manavado, Priya Rampal). Pulses have to compete with alternative animal-based foods when only proteins and amino acids are considered. Yet they also have other important nutritional characteristics (Lawal Musibau Olajire). Awareness-raising efforts should particularly target children and youth in schools (Elizabeth Mpofu), and also entail educating influencers who are reaching consumers to help realize behaviour change (Patricia Siwajek). The Global Pulse Confederation has for instance published a nutrition guide for dieticians and nutritionists to highlight the weight loss benefits of pulses (Huseyin Arslan).
- **Develop new pulse-based recipes**, especially in regions where they are not a dietary staple (Karen Cichy). Most people are used to a few traditional recipes (Salvador Peña); these could be reintroduced as updated versions (Karen Cichy), but modern recipes and techniques should also be considered (Salvador Peña).

These recipes should then in turn be integrated into mainstream culinary-oriented media. The objective should in particular be to introduce and promote the use of pulses in the diets of children (Aliya Bakry).

- **Invent ways to make the cooking process of pulses easier**, especially in order to increase the use of pulses among city-based consumers (Kadambot Siddique). In particular, techniques to reduce pulses' cooking time deserve attention (Stella Kimambo). Especially for developing countries, the "one-hour soak" could be an effective tool to increase pulse consumption (Michelle O. Fried).
- **Increase knowledge on healthy pulse utilization**. Research could for instance focus on cooking methods and breeding efforts to reduce the anti-nutritional aspects of pulses and enhance their nutritional benefits (Cynthia Donovan). Regarding informing consumers, knowledge on traditional cooking techniques such as soaking, germination, fermentation and pounding, which help in addressing the issue of anti-nutrients, could be promoted. In addition, information on combining pulses with other foods that enhance the nutritional value of pulses as well as the capacity of the body to absorb their nutrients should be disseminated (Stella Kimambo).
- **Invest in product innovation** (Brenda Iliana Gallegos López, Aliya Bakry, Stella Kimambo), in particular high-



quality branded products (Kadambot Siddique). Pulses could be added to current and new products, especially when taking into account taste, convenience and nutritional value (Karen Cichy). Biscuit manufacturers could for instance use pulses (Said Zarouali), and pulses could replace egg whites in confectionaries (Lawal Musibau Olajire). In addition, one could focus on specific target groups, like athletes. Most of the products athletes consume are not natural; however, limited pulse product availability has limited the possibility of pulses becoming a first option for them (Sarah Najera).

Pulse promotion initiatives

ECUADOR

A big campaign was held around the nutritious benefits of lupines, and doctors have started recommending them to women and athletes. Product innovation allowed lupines to be made available in a ready-to-eat version in all supermarkets. Currently, domestic production cannot fulfil the country's demand (Sarah Najera).

EL SALVADOR

The Agricultural Technology National Centre has produced snacks based on the different varieties of beans in the country (Brenda Iliana Gallegos López).

GUATEMALA

The USAID MASFRIJOL programme works with the Feed the Future Legume Innovation Lab to promote the consumption of common beans, emphasizing that this "heritage food" should be treasured for the nutrients it brings to soils and human health (Cynthia Donovan).

INDIA

Promoting red gram, green gram and chickpea is part of the Farming System for Nutrition study of the Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia programme. The aim is to realize greater dietary diversity and improve nutrient intake among smallholder families (Mahesh Maske).

Pulses' role in agriculture and their potential for sustainable intensification

With regard to production, there is a large gap between pulses' potential for meeting global sustainability challenges and the current capacity to realize this (Hakan Bahceci). In particular, the issue of climate change was mentioned: while posing a challenge, it simultaneously offers opportunities for pulses (Kadambot Siddique) inter alia because of their role in reducing carbon emissions, their relatively low water footprint, the use of inorganic fertilizer in their cultivation, and their ability to adapt to changing climatic conditions (Cynthia Donovan). In this regard, the importance of mapping the genomes of pulse varieties was emphasized, as this will allow for innovations to respond to challenges like climate change (Randy

Duckworth). In addition to considering pulses as "climate-smart crops", their contribution to "climate-smart soils", increasing climate change resistance and improving ecosystems services should also be valued (Dhanya Praveen). Specifically, pulses' ability to fix nitrogen was mentioned (Aqleem Abbas, Said Zarouali, Lawal Musibau Olajire). With regard to sustainable intensification of agriculture, pulses can be grown only for nitrogen fixation and to enrich the soils during spring, in particular on wastelands. However, farmers often choose to produce cereal crops alternating with fallow land, thereby ignoring pulses (Said Zarouali).

The fact that pulses are not given significant attention is also reflected in the poor state of pulse statistics: much is unknown regarding where they are grown and which varieties are cultivated (Sieg Snapp, Dorian Kalamvrezos Navarro). What is however well known is that the varieties produced are largely non-selected and low yielding (Said Zarouali), and that they are usually grown as secondary components of cereal-dominated production systems. Consequently, they are often displaced from their optimum growing environment and receive less research attention. Knowledge on how to maximize pulse productivity does exist, but it has not sufficiently reached farmers (Kadambot Siddique); information is often scattered or presented in a format or language that is difficult to understand (Hanna Weber).

Hence, in order to increase pulse cultivation and yields, an enhanced farmer-participatory approach is needed (Kadambot Siddique). This also implies a shift from an on-station to an on-farm focus for pulse research; an important aspect in this regard is focusing on feasible solutions within the resource limitations of the farmer. Farmers should be included in the research process, also to increase the likelihood of widespread adoption of successful practices. A group of farmers and researchers could for instance be created, one that uses ICTs to facilitate data collection, analysis, interpretation and communication of outcomes back to farmers. However, this holistic approach would

require a massive reorientation of current agricultural R&D regarding resource-poor agriculture, from the replication of simple, comprehensive recommendations to confronting the realities of local adaptation in diverse socio-ecological environments (Kadambot Siddique, Elizabeth Mpofu). In addition, taking a holistic approach also means integrating external factors affecting production (Kadambot Siddique). For instance, it was suggested that the support the cereal sector receives should be also provided to the pulse sector (Said Zarouali). In addition, input availability and market opportunities should be considered (Kadambot Siddique, Stella Kimambo, Lawal Musibau Olajire).

Policy initiatives in India

A few Indian states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Chhattisgarh have included pulses in the Public Distribution System (PDS), which provides poor households with food items at subsidized prices. Yet for many states, distributing pulses through the PDS remains a challenge. These subsidies are however very important because pulse prices are very volatile primarily due to a late announcement of the Minimum Support Price, which does not incentivize an increase in their production. In addition, once imports reach the market, prices start to fall (Priya Rampal).

Strengthening pulse value chains

In thinking about how pulse value chains could be strengthened, different models of agricultural production should be taken into account; in particular, smallholder subsistence agriculture and commercial agriculture should be considered (Stella Kimambo). Participants also identified gender as a dimension to be looked at: especially with regard to smallholders, women control the production and exchange of pulses (Elizabeth Mpofu, Sieg Snapp). Hence, they are usually most interested in information about how to grow and process pulses (Sieg Snapp).

The following specific actions were suggested in order to strengthen pulse value chains:

- **Establish an effective pulse producers' network** to plan sector development and coordination, and to develop public-private partnerships. The network would also serve as an entry point for traders and investors; capacity building of members and strengthening the market development capacity of the sector as a whole are crucial (Stella Kimambo).
- **Form pulse commodity associations** (Elizabeth Mpofu).
- **Enable and stimulate the development of agribusiness services to support smallholders** to increase production and improve quality. Partnerships with agribusiness services will be essential to ensure easier access to mobile units, mechanization, hermetic cocoons, silos and threshers (Stella Kimambo).
- **Improve input distribution linked with access to finance** for farmers (Stella Kimambo).
- **Improve seed quality, availability and accessibility** by focusing on farmers' selection of appropriate varieties for local quality seed production (Mahesh Maske, Cynthia Donovan, Vicky Morrone, Elizabeth Mpofu, Lal Manavado, Stella Kimambo), providing trainings in seed production and multiplication, developing community seed banks, and holding community seed fairs (Elizabeth Mpofu). Investment and public-

private partnerships regarding the development, local production and distribution of higher-yielding varieties are especially crucial (Stella Kimambo).

- **Encourage the development and supply of tools for producing and processing legumes** (Elizabeth Mpofu), such as low-cost pulse processing machines (Mahesh Maske).
- **Develop storage warehouses and logistics.** Storage units could be connected to structured trading platforms and serve as reserve stocks for supplying large orders or as collateral with the commodity exchange (Stella Kimambo).
- **Control the role of intermediaries** to make prices more consumer- and producer-friendly (Lawal Musibau Olajire). In particular, food processors should avoid intermediaries and buy their food products directly from producers (Salvador Peña).
- **Add value to legumes** (Lawal Musibau Olajire) and collaborate with the food and nutrition sector to develop products, hold food fairs and promote pulse-based recipes (Elizabeth Mpofu).



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ANNEX: Recipes

Parippu pradhaman (green gram kheer) (Dhanya Praveen)

INGREDIENTS

200 g of cherupayar parippu / moong dal
400 g of jaggery (sharkara)
1 heaping tsp of ghee
1–1.5 cups of thick coconut milk
3–4 cups of thin coconut milk
Dry roast spice garnish:
1 small piece of dry ginger/chukku, lightly crushed
10–15 pieces of cardamon
Half tsp of jeera

Spice for seasoning

1 tsp of raisins
Cashew nuts
1 handful of finely sliced coconut pieces
1 tsp of ghee for roasting

PREPARATION

- Heat a pressure cooker and the ghee. Lightly roast the parippu and pour 3–4 cups of thin coconut milk into the cooker. Pressure cook for 5–6 whistles.
- Meanwhile, put the jaggery into a deep-bottomed pan, add 1/2 to 1 cup water and melt it. Once it boils, it will foam out, so stay close; after boiling, simmer and switch off the fire. Allow it to cool slightly and then strain it into a metal strainer to remove any dirt. If you are very sure that your jaggery is clean, just melt it in 1/2 cup water and set it aside.
- Open the cooker and mash the green gram lightly, adding the melted jaggery and mixing well. Bring it to a boil and simmer for 20–30 minutes, stirring all the while and taking care that it does not stick to the bottom. The melted jaggery will be reduced by half. While it is simmering away, dry roast the cardamon, jeera and dry ginger.
- Cut the coconut pieces into thin strips. Powder the dry-roasted spices. Add the thick coconut milk into the cooker, but do not allow it to boil as this might make it curdle. Once it starts to boil switch off the fire and add the ground spices. Finally, heat a teaspoon of ghee in another pan and fry the coconut pieces until they are lightly browned, then add the cashew nuts and raisins. Sprinkle them on top of the payasam.

Vegan beany brownies (Sarah Najera)

INGREDIENTS

2 cups beans (red kidney beans or black beans – canned or freshly cooked)
2 tbsp flax seeds
4 tbsp water, boiled
1/2 cup peanut butter
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 cup quick oats (flakes or pulverized, both work great)
2/3 cup coconut sugar
1/4 cup coconut oil
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 tsp baking powder
Dash of salt

* If the dough is too dry add 1/4 cup of bean water

Optional for frosting

1/3 cup unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1/4 cup almond milk
1/2 tsp margarine
1 tbsp powdered sugar

PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 350°C and let the magic begin.
- Mix together the flax seeds and water, then set aside.
- For this step, using a food processor is optional but highly recommended since it helps the dough become creamier. Combine all the ingredients in the food processor: beans, peanut butter, cocoa powder, quick oats, coconut sugar, coconut oil, vanilla, baking powder and salt. Pulse until smooth and creamy (if your food processor is too small, make sure you divide the ingredients to mix them up equally).
- Add the flax seed mixture into the dough.
- Pulse the food processor again until everything is well mixed.
- Grease an eight-inch cake pan and pour in the beany dough.
- Bake for about 15–20 minutes until it sets.

Optional directions for frosting:

- Mix all the ingredients together: chocolate, almond milk, margarine and powdered sugar.
- Microwave for 40 seconds. Stop every 10 seconds to stir the mixture until you complete the 40 seconds. (If you prefer, you may melt the chocolate and butter over a hot-water bath, and then add the rest of the ingredients).
- Cover your beany brownies with the chocolate frosting.

Cevichochos [\(Sarah Najera\)](#)

Cevichochos is a typical dish prepared in the Ecuadorian Andean highlands. This dish can be found either in parks or restaurants, and is consumed by locals as a snack or main dish during lunch time. The name cevichochos comes from *cevi* (ceviche) and its main ingredient, *chocho* (as the Andean lupine is known in the region).

The dish is made with lemon juice, tomatoes, onions and cilantro. Once prepared, it can be served with *chifles* (fried plantains), *tostado* or *chulpi* (fried maize), avocado and/or *ají* (spicy sauce).

INGREDIENTS

1.5 cups chochos (with the seed hull: all the important minerals are found within)
2 medium tomatoes: 1 chopped in squares, 1 to make juice
Juice from 6–8 lemons
1 medium red onion, chopped into thin slices
1/3 cup cilantro, chopped
1 tsp olive oil
1 cup water, boiled
1 tbs salt
Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Wash chochos thoroughly and set aside.
- Combine the onions, boiled water and salt; set aside for at least 10 minutes. This process will remove the strong flavour of the onion.
- In a blender, add one tomato with the juice of 3 lemons. Blend until it reaches a juicy consistency.
- Strain the onions and wash them thoroughly.
- In a separate bowl, combine the remaining lemon juice, tomato juice, chopped tomatoes, strained onions, olive oil, cilantro and chochos.
- Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside for 15 minutes either in the fridge or a fresh area.
- You may serve this dish with *chulpi*, *tostado*, *chifles*, avocado and/or *ají*.

Tsertsvis shechamandi (broad bean meal) [\(Mariam Jorjadze\)](#)

INGREDIENTS

0.5 kg broad beans
4 onions
5–6 cloves of garlic
250 g oil
100 g coriander
100 g parsley
Salt and black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Soak the washed broad beans in cold water for 5–6 hours in a lidded pot, then rinse. Add enough water to cover them and boil. When the broad beans are well cooked, remove the pot from heat and rinse, leaving them a bit damp with liquid. In the meantime, fry the finely chopped onions and cloves of garlic in the oil and add to the broad bean mass in the pot. Add finely chopped coriander and parsley, then season with black pepper and salt. Finally, mix everything together.

Mukhudos katleti (chickpea cutlet)

[\(Mariam Jorjadze\)](#)

INGREDIENTS

1 kg chickpeas
3 onions
4 cloves of garlic
250 g wheat flour
500 g oil
50 g coriander
50 g parsley
1 tsp of dried basil
Salt and black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Wash the chickpeas, pour enough cold water to cover them and let them soak in a lidded pot for 4–5 hours. When the chickpeas have absorbed all the water, mince them together with coriander, parsley, onions and cloves of garlic in a mincer. Add dried basil and 100 g of wheat flour, mix all the ingredients together thoroughly by hand, and season the mass with black pepper and salt. Then, form the mass into small balls giving them the shape of cutlets, roll them in wheat flour to coat all sides, and fry them in a pan with oil. Cook them until their bottom surface turns golden brown, then flip them over and cook the other side until they turn golden brown. You can sprinkle the sliced onions between the cooked chickpea cutlet layers.

Tsulispiras shechamandi (grass pea meal) (Mariam Jorjadze)

INGREDIENTS

0.5 kg grass pea
200 g walnuts
100 g plum or cherry plum dried juice (fruit leather)
1 tsp of ground blue fenugreek
1 g ground marigold
Salt to taste

PREPARATION

Wash grass peas, pour enough cold water to cover them and boil. Meanwhile, grind the walnut kernels and add some boiling water from the grass pea pot in order to dissolve them. When the grass peas are well cooked add the walnut mass, finely chopped plum or cherry plum dried juice (fruit leather), ground blue fenugreek and ground marigold. Mix well and season with salt to taste. Bring the mass to a boil before removing from the heat. The seasoned dish must have a little water.

Ospis shechamandi (lentil meal) (Mariam Jorjadze)

INGREDIENTS

1 kg lentils
5 onions
5–6 cloves of garlic
200 g oil
50 g coriander
50 g parsley
20 g dill
2 crocus leaves
Salt and black pepper or chili pepper to taste

PREPARATION

Wash lentils, pour enough cold water to cover them and boil. In the meantime, fry 3 finely chopped onions and the cloves of garlic in the oil, and then add these to the lentils in the pot. When they are well cooked, add finely chopped coriander, parsley and dill as well, then season with black pepper or finely chopped chili pepper and salt to taste. Bring the mass to a boil before removing from the heat. Finally, add the remaining 2 onions (sliced) to the hot meal and mix well. The seasoned dish must have a little water.

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