

Cabo Verde Workshop on Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health

PROFAV-Cabo Verde 2015



Summary report

Introduction

Cabo Verde Workshop on Promotion of Fruit and Vegetables for Health (PROFAV-Cabo Verde 2015) was held in Praia, Cabo Verde, from 16 to 19 November 2015. The workshop was organized at the Hotel Praia-Mar by FAO and was supported by WHO, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Health of Cabo Verde.

This workshop was organized in the framework of the FAO-WHO Joint Initiative on Fruit and Vegetables for Health. It brought together 50 participants from the Agriculture, Health and Education sectors. The workshop also included one participant from Mozambique, two participants from Sao Tome and Principe, and two participants from Equatorial Guinea. Representatives from the organizing, supporting and technical partners were also present, including FAO, WHO, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Health, National Agricultural Research Institute, Food and Drugs Regulatory Agency, School Feeding Programme, and the meeting was opened by the Minister of Rural Development.

Objectives

Within the overall aim of implementing the framework of action at national level for the promotion of fruit and vegetables in Cabo Verde, and building on the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition, the workshop had the following objectives:

1. Create awareness about the FAO-WHO joint initiative on fruits and vegetables for health;
2. Document the production and consumption of fruit and vegetables and their current position in the market in Cabo Verde;
3. Stocktaking existing policies, and current programmes and activities for the promotion of fruit and vegetables in Cabo Verde since the first PROFAV workshop in 2009;
4. Assist in developing specific programmes and action plans relevant to Cabo Verde in order to implement the “Kobe framework” for promoting fruits and vegetables at national levels; and
5. Strengthen collaborations amongst Portuguese speaking countries in Sub Saharan Africa, as well as Equatorial Guinea, with sectors promoting fruits and vegetable production and consumption in the region.

Workshop process

The workshop was conducted for four days, from 16-19 November, 2015. The last day was a field trip visiting the National Centre on Hydroponics, Poilão Dam, and S. Domingos school feeding programme.

During the opening ceremony, the Minister of Rural Development and the representatives of FAO, WHO and Ministry of Health welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of the subject, highlighting the low consumption of fruits and vegetables in Cape Verde, and the challenges such as water, shift in diets, undernutrition, and accessibility of fruits and vegetables. The recently approved FAO project on urban and peri-urban agriculture aims to address some of these issues. Food security and nutrition needs to be seen as a shared responsibility, as the issue requires an integrated approach for improvement. The recently set up National Council for Food Security and Nutrition incorporates civil society, consumer organization, etc. for this reason.

The FAO/WHO framework was introduced, followed by presentations by the central services. This included agribusiness services, policy and strategies for production and consumption, national nutrition programme, horticultural sector's contribution to nutrition, pesticide residues and food safety, and school feeding programme.

Two sets of two working groups were composed to brainstorm on below topics:

1. Policy and Strategy Environment
2. Challenges for increasing fruit and vegetable supply and consumption
3. Promoting coordinated action among the islands
4. Promoting coordinated action among Portuguese speaking countries in the region, including Equatorial Guinea

These working group sessions were conducted during the second and third day, with a shared understanding of the current situation in the country with increasing levels of non-communicable diseases and obesity, to orient the development or strengthening of national-level initiatives and regional coordination to improve availability and consumption of fruit and vegetables and thus contribute to the accomplishment of the objectives of the workshop.

Conclusions

According to information available from WHO, non-communicable diseases are on the rise. Vitamin A and iron deficiencies are still of a concern for children under 5 years old, as well as in pregnant women. Based on FAOSTAT, fruit and vegetable supply in Cabo Verde is above the minimum requirement of 400g/person/day, however, a recent study conducted by the Ministry of Health indicates that consumption of fruits and vegetables is well below the recommended minimum amount.

Low consumption of fruits and vegetables is a major risk factor for NCDs such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, and also for micronutrient deficiency related health problems. Precise and location specific data on production, consumption and availability of fruits and vegetables are weak.

Food safety in relation to fruits and vegetables is also a concern. A study conducted by the Food and Drugs Regulatory Agency in 2012 revealed that there were pesticide residues found in various locally produced fruits and vegetables sampled from markets. Imported crops

also had pesticide residues, and a system to monitor needs to be strengthened. Farmers need to be better trained on the use of chemicals. Currently, this is the responsibility of the chemical dealers to inform producers on how and when to use the pesticides, but proper training should be done with farmers. Better control of illegal importation of chemicals is also needed.

Main constraints of fruit and vegetable supply and consumption identified were the following points:

For producers

- Limited access and availability of water for the farmers
- Limited access to land by small scale producers
- High cost of inputs and lack of access to credit by farmers
- Limited access to improved technologies
- Limited capacity for processing
- Post-harvest loss is high due to lack of appropriate packaging or cold chain

For consumers

- Low purchase power and limited access to fruit and vegetables
- Lack of knowledge regarding nutritional value of fruit and vegetables, and its impact on health
- Limited knowledge on how to prepare and consume certain vegetables
- Behaviour change is required for increased consumption

In general, there is an issue of transportation between the islands for effective exchange of supplies and market access. Each island has its own characteristics, thus with its own types of fruits and vegetables production. But due to the difficulty with transportation between the islands, often times people don't have access to produce from other islands in the country.

Cost of energy is also an issue for farmers. Electric pumps are used for pumping water in many cases, and the farmers pay the same price as general consumers. This results in the high cost of products.

There is a gap in the data available regarding consumption. Some household surveys are underway, however, there is a need to better document the production and consumption of fruits and vegetables. There is a need to engage the National Statistics Institute (INE) and the direction of statistics of the Ministry of Rural Development.

It emerged that there are various laws, policies and programmes that deal with elements related to the importance of fruits and vegetable production and consumption for health, but some are not connected in this broader context, and some legislations are not implemented.

Nonetheless, strengthened efforts and greater integration of activities among horticulture, nutrition, health and education stakeholders is considered essential for the effective promotion of F&V for health, particularly in a multi-stakeholder approach.

NGOs, civil society, religious organizations and consumer organisations can play a key role among stakeholders in increasing awareness and facilitating programmes to improve availability and consumption of F&V, and should be engaged through inclusive consultation mechanisms. The National Council on Food Security and Nutrition can play that role.

The workshop recognised the importance of stepped-up advocacy, information and community education in changing mindsets in order to enhance the appeal of F&V as a healthy diet choice. Efforts are being made through the school feeding programme, and incorporating nutrition education and school gardens for pedagogical purposes. Community engagement is also key for a successful nutrition education programme.

Food safety of F&V produce is very important and must be addressed through integrated approaches from field to table at the same time as promoting increased availability and consumption. This would require standards setting, compliance control, and also education so that both producers and consumers will gain a clear understanding as to what is good and safe to eat.

Emphasis needs to be given to encouraging capacity building through farmer training on good agricultural practices (GAP), including integrated pest management (IPM), for sustainability and food safety along the value chain. Useful approaches include farmer field schools, demonstration-based training and the use of farmer-to-farmer mentoring.

There should be greater use of available biodiversity enabled by research, capacity building and local selection and breeding programmes.

More work needs to be done to promote knowledge about food preparation and health benefits of local, traditional and indigenous F&Vs.

It is important to address prejudices against consumption of vegetables and/or fruit and also to ensure men are targeted in F&V promotion campaigns along with women and children.

It is important to integrate with, and add value to, existing programmes run by agriculture, health and education, especially those focused on NCD prevention and F&V supply chain efficiency improvement.

A cross sectoral coordination mechanism is needed to foster information exchange and monitor and evaluate production and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The established mechanism can inform each institution on policy gaps with regards to fruit and vegetable production, distribution and consumption, and its enabling environment.

Recommendations

Key messages for policy makers

1. Increase production, access and availability of fruits and vegetables through:
 - a. Improved productivity
 - b. Improved post-harvest practices (cold chain development, processing, etc) to reduce loss and waste
2. Improve statistics on production and consumption of fruits and vegetables
3. Prioritize nutrition education
 - a. Importance of fruits and vegetables for food security and health (NCDs)
 - b. Engage various actors such as religious institutions and NGOs
 - c. Incorporate promotion of fruit and vegetables into school curriculum
 - d. Develop communication campaign to reach targeted audience
4. Foster international cooperation between CPLPs (and others) on

- a. Information exchange
- b. Capacity building
- c. Technology
- d. Trade (tax incentives)

National priorities for Cabo Verde

1. Access to water
 - a. There is a need to implement or scale out alternative/adequate technologies:
eg. Desalination, waste water recycling, watershed management, new appropriate irrigation technologies, etc.
 - b. Extension activities to disseminate adequate technologies
2. Access to energy
 - a. Implement or scale out new technologies for alternative energy source
3. More regular and appropriate transportation between islands is necessary.
4. Communication campaign on nutritional values of fruits and vegetables and its consumption
5. Scaling out of existing initiatives and programmes such as the school feeding programme