

# Reflecting on the Farmers survey pilot in Busia, Kenya as part of SDC's NICE project

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The Nutrition in City Ecosystems (NICE) project had its global project launch on 14 October 2021 in the participating six secondary cities across Bangladesh, Kenya and Rwanda. One of the project's objectives is to make food value chains more nutrition-focused to contribute to better health, while also facilitating increased agroecological production.

To initiate this work, there is a need to assess the current status and potential of the smallholders and farmers in the cities' food sheds to cultivate diverse, agroecologically produced foods for the city populations. Therefore, the project developed and piloted a "farmer's survey" in the participating city of Busia, Kenya, with a view to then taking stock of the lessons and rolling out the survey to the other five cities in March 2022.

## **The survey's content**



The questionnaire is an adapted version of the Self-evaluation and Holistic Assessment of climate Resilience of farmers and Pastoralists (SHARP) tool, which is an open-source tool developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 2014, with updates in 2016 and 2018.

It is both an assessment and a monitoring and evaluation tool built on thirteen agroecosystem indicators relevant to assess resilience and sustainability of farms. Its focus is to identify the main weaknesses and strengths of farming systems and agriculture-based households by building on farmers' learning, knowledge and flexibility.

Watatsi Self Help Farmers Group showing their vegetable fields with kales (left) and a mix of jute and crotalaria (right) © SDC NICE Project

The tool was consequently adapted to fit to the study's objectives which are to identify the farming practices, to investigate the role and involvement of women and youth in the farming activities, to understand the level of adoption and potential for agroecological farming practices, to understand the connections between the farms and the (local) market in terms of selling opportunities, setting prices, engaging in post-harvest activities, and finally, to determine their overall farmers' resilience.

The farmers' resilience is computed through a score connected to a set of questions within the survey. This allows us to understand across the six cities the extent to which the farmers in the food sheds are resilient to disturbances and shocks that could occur in the (near) future. In that way, the NICE project can shape the context-specific interventions based, apart from the strengths of the farming systems in the cities' food sheds, on the weaknesses too, underpinning the incremental and long-run impact perspective of the project.

## A nutrition-sensitive value chains approach

Specific value chains were selected, differing for each of the cities, resulting from a nutrition-sensitive and health benefits focused value chain analysis, supported by the IFAD framework for nutrition-sensitive value chains and confirmed by locally-led workshops. Following this approach, we will be able to integrate nutrition even more in the agroecology focused interventions.

In the case of the pilot in Busia, farmers engaging in at least one of the selected value chains: orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, African leafy vegetables, indigenous poultry or fish, were sampled.

## A few insights on the results

Agroecological farming practices are not unknown to the sampled farmers. On the contrary, some of the practices, such as crop diversification, understood as the cultivation of a diversity of crops and species in a farming system (at least 5) impacting not only the soil fertility but the ensuring balanced diets too, is practiced by as much as 43% of the sampled farmers. Overall though, it seems that these are not newly introduced practices but rather build on indigenous knowledge of the farmers.

## Outlook

The full findings from Busia will be made available soon for further discussion and decision-making with the city leadership and other stakeholders. The wider findings from all 6 cities will be consolidated and released later in 2022.

On 19 April ETH Zurich will be discussing the adaptations made to the SHARP tool with international experts with a view to get feedbacks, share experience and to wider disseminate the results.



*Omena* (local name) or *dagaa* are small fish caught by the Bunyala fishermen in Lake Victoria. They dry for the day on the fishing nets in the village and are commonly eaten in stews  
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