

these phyto-chemicals scavenge for radicals in the body and make our bodies less predisposed to diet related diseases like diabetes and cancer. Generally AIVs have several other health benefits in particular extracts from bitter melon fruits, an indigenous fruit vegetable have been found to be beneficial to diabetics as they contain insulin and African nightshade and slenderleaf have been implicated in treatment of stomach related ailments like duodenal ulcers. Besides AIVs are well adapted to local climatic conditions, seed production is possible in the tropics, they have a short growth period and flourish under sustainable cropping systems and are stress tolerant.

Despite the advantages, optimal production and sustainable utilization has not been realized due to the following constraints: negative mindset and attitudes by stakeholders; inadequate knowledge sharing; inadequate quality seed and technical information for farmers and consumers; and



Prof Abukutsa's AIVs seed bulking at JKUAT farm

poor marketing channels. However, several strategies have been employed in the programme to reposition African indigenous vegetables locally, continentally and globally and these include:

- Identification AIVs on the African continent with nutrition, health benefit and economic potential
- Advocacy and

Promotion at the local, national and global level

- Involvement of stakeholders from the media, farmers, students, policy makers, other researchers from KARI and Universities, NGOs and private sector and using participatory, value chain approach in the research programme.

- Development

of diversified dissemination materials for different levels

- Development of seed supply system (community and research level)
- Capacity building at all levels (farmers, students, researchers, policy makers)

Research Programme which was initiated in 1991 at JKUAT and is ongoing today has over 300 contact farmers in Western and Central Kenya, several under graduate and postgraduate students. Some of the tangible outputs and outcomes include: availability of reference materials (papers, theses and technical reports, books and book chapters), quality seed, dissemination leaflets, good crop for farmers, availability of the vegetables in super markets, recipes and products, increased, production, popularity and consumption leading to improved health and income generation. This work has received national continental and international recognition



Prof. Abukutsa with student at Maseno University



Seed processing on farmers field in Siaya district



IK processed products in Siaya district



Prof Abukutsa with students

and accolades by the African Union, CTA, RUFORUM and Kenyan Presidential award in 2009 and 2010 to mention but a few. Local and international media also has greatly publicized and promoted the AIVs due to the results and outputs obtained from the programme. Following media coverage of Prof Abukutsa's AIVs project by the standard on 27th March 2012, 80 participants

of Strategic Leadership Development Programme (SLDP 52) at KIA of which Prof Abukutsa was one visited JKUAT On 26th of April 2012 to witness the programmes, innovations and technologies at the university. These senior government officials visited the tissue culture, the engineering workshop and the AIVs project and were

extremely impressed by the strides being made by JKUAT African indigenous vegetable potential as an export crop is high and currently value addition studies are underway so that these vegetables can be exported to Europe and USA where consumers in the diaspora have expressed interest in these

## PARTING SHOT

vegetables. More research is needed and promotion to ensure optimal utilization of African Indigenous Vegetables.

“African Indigenous Vegetable are High Profile Commodities with Nutritional and Unrivalled Health Benefits, they have a great Potential to Contribute to the Food Basket to Feed the World in the 21st Century”.

Welcome Aboard and Be Part of this Crusade

Prof Abukutsa Mary O.O., Professor of Horticulture: Department of Horticulture, JKUAT  
E-mail: mabukutsa@yahoo.com or Abukutsa.mary@gmail.com