



On Monday 27th March 2023, Kilimo Trust held a webinar dubbed, “**Bridging gaps between production and consumption of nutritious and healthy foods**” that was conducted on zoom from 2pm to 4pm EAT.

The main objective of this webinar was to share knowledge around what can be done to bridge the gap between production and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods and the key subtopics that were discussed included:

- i) Challenges and opportunities of achieving healthy, affordable diets,
- ii) Role of nutritional education in agriculture extension to improve production of nutritious foods,
- iii) Innovative post-harvest handling practices and,
- iv) Role of government and other stakeholders in closing the gaps in availability and consumption of nutritious foods.

The webinar featured speakers with a well-informed background in food and nutrition education. These included Dr. Julia Maria de Bruyn, a scientist in Healthy Diets at World Vegetable Center in Arusha, Tanzania, Prof. Ruth K. Aniang'o, Editor-in-Chief at African Journal for Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development (AJFAND) and Mr. Jean de Dieu Umutoni, the Enabling Environment Director at Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA).

Kilimo Trust as an implementor of the Good Food for Cities (GFC) project funded by Rikolto in Rwanda particularly in Rubavu District presented some of the interventions the organization is doing to educate farmers on how to grow nutritious foods like vegetables using regenerative agricultural practices and sensitizing communities on how to cook a balanced diet with readily available food in their communities to eliminate malnutrition and stunting which is a challenge in the district.

The webinar was attended by over seventy (70) partners from across East Africa. In her presentation, Dr. Julia shared with participants the nutrition landscape in Sub Saharan Africa. Since 2015, over 30% of people in East Africa are unable to meet daily minimum energy requirements over a period of one year and most of which still face serious hunger issues according to 2022 global hunger index rankings.

Urbanization, economic growth, technological changes, and mass media growth have been the drivers of dietary transitions. However, she mentioned that behavioral change such as shifting from ultra-processed to minimally processed foods, drinking water, low-calorie beverages, reducing sedentarism with purposeful activity and real food diet dominance will lead to extended healthy aging and reduced non-communicable diseases.

As she concluded her presentation, Dr. Julia presented that education and public awareness actions such as culturally appropriate nutrition, food literacy and skills training, dietary counseling to

women, mass media and behavioral change communication campaigns and promoting traditional foods cultures are important levers of change to achieving healthy diets.

According to Prof. Ruth K. Oniang'o, what makes food good is its quality. She mentioned that good food must be healthy, safe, and nutritious. She stressed that there is a lot of indigenous knowledge in our communities from people who are not even educated. Therefore, we should take advantage of that knowledge and disseminate it for further learning during nutrition education and extension. Prof. Ruth also talked about the importance of partnerships and culture in influencing healthy diets.

Mr. Jean de Dieu Umutoni in his presentation shared with participants major causes of postharvest losses which include premature harvesting, over-mature harvesting, mechanical damage, poor handling, improper management of temperature and related humidity and hygiene problems during harvesting.

He also recommended some of the innovative equipment and technologies that can be used in harvesting and post-harvest handling such as zero energy cooling chamber and cold room coolbots.

What came out clearly from the webinar discussions is that some of the roles of governments and other stakeholders in bridging the gaps between production and consumption of healthy and nutritious foods should include promoting school feeding programs, community utilization forums in dissemination of nutrition messages, utilization of fertile lands to produce nutritious foods and continuous learning from indigenous knowledge and extension.

Kilimo Trust will continue to organize webinars on a quarterly basis bringing together partners to discuss key alarming issues in the agriculture sector and share knowledge from some of the interventions being made by the organization across the East African region.