



Australia Awards



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

Australia Awards – Africa

2017 Agribusiness Short Course Award

JEI RIVER CABBAGE VALUE CHAIN, GHANA



PARTICIPANT: VIVIAN TURKSON

Vivian Turkson is a Women in Agriculture Development Officer with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana. Her role involves delivering projects that impact the life of women, especially in farming and agribusiness through income generation and empowerment. She has extensive background in agribusiness and almost 10 years' practical experience of working with women and the vulnerable in rural and peri urban society. She is passionate about transforming the livelihoods and promoting the wellbeing of women in farming and agribusiness. She does this through capacity building programs and facilitating market linkages along various value chains.

Cabbage farmer



AUSTRALIA AWARDS – AFRICA AGRIBUSINESS SHORT COURSE

Australia Awards – Africa, delivered under the Australia Aid program managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, are prestigious scholarships offered by the Australia Government to individuals who have the greatest potential to drive development in their country and become leaders in their chosen field.

The Agribusiness Short Course Award, designed by UQ International Development (UQID), provides learning experiences to enhance

participants' ability to engage with and influence challenges regarding sustainable economic development in their home country, profession, workplace and community. Participants develop a Reintegration Action Plan (RAP) which details a unique project outlining an area of change that they will address when returning to their organisation. These projects are devised with the expert knowledge and learnings gained from the course and enable to the Course Leader, UQID and Australia Awards to monitor and provide feedback during various stages of the project.

CONTEXT

Cabbage is one of the most popular exotic vegetables in Ghana, grown country-wide because of its adaptability to a wide range of climatic conditions, and most commonly used raw in salads; as a cooked vegetable, or preserved in pickles. Kasoa Jei River, in the Central Region, is a major peri-urban vegetable growing area, with water available year-round from a nearby dam. “However,” reports Vivian, “farmers grow with little or no knowledge of what consumers want, so their products do not reflect the specific requirements of particular market segments, resulting in consumers deciding what to buy mostly on price, rather than their preferences. Farmers in this area have low farm income levels, so to improve their livelihoods, chain members need to improve their individual and collective market alignment by delivering better service to each other and more value to the end consumer. To help in this, I needed to understand the entire system by identifying all the main activities undertaken by each actor.” So, Vivian walked the chain, starting with consumers and then working back upstream to producers and their input suppliers. She conducted 66 interviews, using an analytical framework which evaluated the material and information flows, and how relationships between chain actors help or hinder competitiveness.

HOW CONSUMER RESEARCH LED TO CRITICAL CONTROL POINTS OF VALUE

To identify improvements which would enhance the value of cabbages in the eyes of consumers, firstly, Vivian explored what product attributes most influenced consumer behaviour. “I needed to know what would make shoppers buy more cabbages, more often, and ideally even pay more for them. I started with consumer focus groups and individual interviews, as well as shopper observation and intercept interviews. Encouragingly, I found there were lots of factors affecting shoppers’ decisions.” The critical control points for cabbages that Vivian identified are shown in Table 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Varietal choice: “While I found that market stallholders get useful feedback from consumers about the characteristics they like, this isn’t passed back up the chain to inform farmers about more suitable – and valuable – varieties to grow, nor the types of seeds input suppliers should be sourcing. Cabbage farmers have the potential to increase their incomes if there was a better information flow concerning consumers’ preferences.”

Chemicals: Farmers reported that the unavailability and price of specially formulated pesticides and fertilisers meant they resorted to general pesticides, which can cause concern amongst consumers about the safety of cabbages sold on the markets. As a result, consumers rely on trust in their favourite market traders as an assurance around the chemicals used.

Scope for differentiation: “I found that supermarket retailing is superior because they select and prepare the product more carefully. They wash and clean to get rid of dirt and leaves damaged by pests, and then wrap cabbages in a cling film to preserve them, as well as displaying them on clean shelves and in cold stores, so deterioration is slower. They even add some value by slicing and packaging cabbages into ready to prepare portions.

Proper planning could help farmers avoid the glut situations which is a major factor that causes waste. “Farmers still use traditional low yielding farming methods because of inadequate extension services and the perceived additional costs, highlighting how persuading farmers to upgrade production will depend on them achieving better returns.”

Information flow – Reducing waste: If wholesalers who are responsible for harvesting and distribution to retailers could plan the harvesting such that it meets the volumes required by retailers on a daily basis, the problem of left over cabbages at the market centres can also be avoided. This can help reduce waste resulting from insect damage and theft.

Table 1: Critical Points of Value

Product Attribute	Critical Control Points for Value	Responsible Chain Members
Appearance	Pest control practices	Producer
	Packing practices and packing material	Wholesaler/Aggregator
	Speed of transporting to the market	Wholesaler/Aggregator
	Handling by downstream actors	Wholesalers/Retailers
Freshness	Harvesting practices	Producer/Wholesaler
	Transportation time to the market	Wholesaler/Aggregator
	How transported (cold storage)	Aggregator/Wholesaler
	Handling by downstream actors	Wholesaler/Retailer
	Mode of display	Retailer
	Cleaning	Retailer
Color	Seed varietal choice	Input dealer/Producer
	Proper storage at the market	Wholesalers/Retailers
	Grading and sorting practices	Retailers
	Display in the market	Retailer
Size	Seed varietal choice	Input dealer
	Irrigation practices	Producer
	Proper fertilizer application	Producer
	Disease and pest control practices	Producer
	Plants per acre	Producer
	Weed control techniques	Producer
Weight	Seed Varietal choice	Producer
	On-farm practices	Producer
	Sorting and grading	Wholesaler/Retailer
	Cleaning	Retailer
Health/Organic	Chemical application	Producer
	Quality and source of water used for irrigation	Producer
	Good sanitation of environment produce is displayed	Retailer
	Adhering to food safety practices during processing	Retailer/Processor
	Good market storage practices	Retailer
Price	Efficiency across the whole chain	All actors along the chain

HOW VIVIAN BENEFITED FROM THE COURSE

“Learning the importance of understanding consumers when identifying and capturing markets opened my eyes to new opportunities for Ghanaian women and the youth. Then the week we spent on the walking-the-chain exercise taught me that strong relationships based on trust and commitment are the foundation for success in value chains.

“I especially appreciated how the content and delivery style made the course very participatory and interactive. This approach has helped improve my presentation skills, pitch development and team playing abilities, which are key skills in my profession.”

“The group exercise in Value Chain Analysis in Ghana gave me first-hand experience in how to engage chain actors, which helped me greatly in carrying out my in-country project.”

“This whole experience has built my confidence, both inside and outside work.”