



2SCALE

Fura with a difference:
a modernized way

Gender Cases

2SCALE Consortium



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Netherlands

1. The sorghum sector

The sorghum sector

Sorghum is an important cereal crop that is fast growing in the Nigerian market, as brewers in the country are now using a larger percentage of the crop for brewing beer and malt drinks. Sorghum is also grinded into powder and prepared as a meal for consumption. Fulani women also process it into a local meal named Fura. The high demand for sorghum is creating an opportunity for entrepreneurs that can tap into its production. Sorghum is produced in virtually every state in Nigeria. The crop is grown on about 5.6 million ha and the current annual production is estimated to be only about 2.8 million tons.

The supply side

Nalmaco Nigeria Limited (Nalmaco) and Adefunke-Desh Varieties Limited (Adefunke-Desh) are regional grain aggregators based in Northwestern Nigeria, off-taking white sorghum from Small Holder Farmers (SHFs) and local aggregators/middlemen. They add value by grading and cleaning the grain before supplying it to large scale processors such as Nestlé, Honey Well Cadbury and the Asabe Fulani women processors, among others. These aggregators combine

an off-take of about 10,000 tons of white sorghum annually. They are key actors in the sorghum value chain because they provide SHFs and other grain traders with access to structured and profitable markets that they would ordinarily not access due to the high investment involved and the capacity required to organize large volumes of grains and related transactions. The Asabe Fulani women processors buy from these aggregators the sorghum they use in processing into Fura both for sale and local consumption. The partnership aims to Integrate 200 (70% women-led and 30% youth) in the value chain and support micro-entrepreneurs, such as these small-scale women-led processors of Fura.

The use of sorghum for Fura

Fura is an indigenous fermented cereal-based food majorly consumed in the Northern part of Nigeria. It is a thick ball snack that is produced mainly from sorghum and spices such as ginger, pepper, black pepper and cloves. It is a semi-solid dumpling meal made from millet or sorghum and is used traditionally as staple food in most West African countries including Nigeria. The Nigerian market is dominated



Nigeria - Sorghum being processed into fura



Katsina state, Nigeria - Funtua women preparing fura

by small scale processors, mostly women and Fulani women marketers who sell Fura mixed with yogurt locally called Fura da Nono. The volume of white sorghum which goes into Fura is lower compared to that which goes into Nestlé's supply chain. This market channel fits however well with the access to nutritious food ambition of the 2SCALE partnership by improving processors' access to fortified sorghum varieties.

2SCALE, which is an incubator program that manages a portfolio of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for inclusive business in agri-food sectors and industries, and ultimately to improve rural livelihoods and food and nutrition security. 2SCALE offers a range of support services to its partners, also called business champions (SMEs and farmer groups) and partners in eight countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, enabling them to produce, transform and supply quality food products. These products go to local and regional markets, including to Base of the Pyramid (BoP) consumers.

The processing of sorghum into fura

The processing of sorghum into fura is done by the Fulani women of Funtua local government area of Katsina state and serves as a major source of income for these women. The production process is time consuming and tedious, involving the use of simple equipment. During the preparation of Fura, the cereal grains; millet or sorghum are soaked in water and allowed to ferment overnight and then drained. The grains are dried, grinded into fine powder and then mixed in hot water with continuous stirring to form a smooth paste which is then moulded into balls and cooked. The moulded balls are allowed to ferment for 1-4 days at room temperature. The balls are pounded and re-moulded and then sun-dried which can also be dry-milled into powder which is reconstituted in water to get Fura meal. Also, the cooked dough balls can be broken and mixed with fermented milk (nono) to form Fura de nono which can serve as a fast-food providing energy and protein.



Katsina state, Nigeria - Marketing fura - Fulani women sellers

2. Gender based constraints

Insufficient funds to purchase primary raw materials

It is challenging for Asabe Fulani women processors to get enough funds to purchase inputs for processing such as sorghum (popularly known as Dawa in Nigeria) and the spices required (clove, pepper, black pepper and ginger). This coupled with the seasonal fluctuation cost of these items, has led to a low rate of productivity and growth in processing into Fura.

Unhygienic processing/moulding

Poor handling of Fura during processing, storage and marketing can predispose it to microbial contamination as these women mould the sorghum into balls by hands during preparation. After production, they store it in an unhygienic container and environment. Also, improper handling and post-fermentation processing such as pounding in mortar, moulding and the point of sale can expose the Fura product to microbial contamination. When the contaminated Fura is consumed, it can lead to serious types of diseases like abdominal tuberculosis, cholera and typhoid for both adults and children

Seasonal sales and demand

Fura is readily enjoyed with processed cow milk (nono) during the dry season or when the weather is relatively hot. This trend causes a fluctuation on the demand for these products during the rainy season or the cold weather, consequently triggering an uncertainty of demand during this period. However, supply is also limited by weather conditions like the rainy season which prevents the Fulani women from walking all the way from their settlements to their selling point or even making supplies to small grocery sellers.

Lack of processing equipment

In order for sorghum to be made into Fura the ingredients (sorghum, clove, pepper, ginger) need to be grinded. Having access to grinding machines for this purpose has proven to be a challenge due to insufficient funds to purchase them, in addition to difficulties in accessing to the few machines in their settlements. They instead use simple locally available equipment which makes the process more tedious, time consuming and prone to contamination.

Limited access to the market

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with retail outlets or corner shops also demand daily delivery of Fura, thus expanding the market opportunities for Asabe Fulani women processors. Although the daily demand for Fura is high in the local communities because this is a local food, customers in the cities are reluctant to patronize small scale processors because of low hygienic practices which causes frequent food poisoning. The hawking process of marketing fura by Fulani sellers is not efficient and it exposes the product to more hygiene problems and low revenues.

Cultural and social barriers

Cultural and social norms are one of the most significant barriers preventing women and girls from earning a living for themselves and getting involved in the value chain. In the Northern part of Nigeria, men who are not their husbands are not allowed to come close to the women, which makes it difficult to hold training sessions, when the facilitators are men.

3. Strategies and recommendations

Good hygiene trainings

To eliminate the high level of microbial contamination involved in the production process of Fura and limit the risk of diseases, 2SCALE organized an intensive training session conducted by the 2SCALE team where the six Asabe women processors were trained on good hygienic practices. Equipment's such as blenders, transparent bowls as well as trainings on their usage were provided to limit contamination, enhance and hasten the production process in order to increase productivity, thereby increasing their income.

Financial literacy training

2SCALE also organized financial literacy trainings where the women were taught to keep records, maximize profits and properly manage income. However, evaluation of the training indicates that some women being illiterate do not apply regularly knowledge acquired, therefore a post training exercises would be required in order to ensure implementation.

Seasonal forecasting training

In order to bridge the gap in seasonal demand and supply, 2SCALE plans to provide trainings on improved demand forecasting, knowledge on product, lead times and streamlining order fulfilment. This will assist the processors to maximize profit during unfavourable seasons.

Women friendly trainings

In an effort to bridge the cultural and social barrier gap, women to women trainings were initiated by 2SCALE to effectively reach the processors and to ensure proper implementation.



Katsina state, Nigeria - Marketing fura - Fulani women sellers



Katsina state, Nigeria - Marketing fura - Fulani women sellers

Recommendations

Since one of the objectives of 2SCALE is to provide beneficial products for low income consumers, Fura de Nono is eaten in the North as a meal. Marketing strategies could be developed to assist the processors in expanding their market, so as to earn them more income. Branding and packaging the Fura alone or the already blended Fura de Nono could also be done to assist the processors in breaking into the market not just in the Northern part of the country, but also in other parts of Nigeria to provide food for BoP consumers. Since the partnership aims to integrate 200 (70% women-led and 30% youth) small scale women led processors into the value chain in the coming

years, steps like recruiting female technical staff with a background in gender inclusion to support small scale women processors in order to encourage more Fulani women processors to come out could be taken. Processors most times have to walk miles to get to their selling points, they could be assisted to get transportation to enable them get to their place of business on time. It is also a norm that Fulani women who sell Fura de Nono in the North have to hawk these products and walk miles from town to town to sell them. Having a permanent space would assist them in reaching their customers better.

Results from 2SCALE interventions



Benefits for the processors

Improved income

Due to the improved and more hygienic way of processing introduced, Fura is now being processed in a more hygienic way and is displayed on a table, in transparent bowls where customers can see how neat they are. Blenders are now used in the mixing of these dumplings with the milk, unlike the initial unhygienic way of mixing with their hands. This adoption has led to a large increase in profit from making just 40% to 70% worth of profit and a better access to market for the Asabe sorghum women processors.

Access to processing equipment

With the provision of improved processing equipment, increased efficiency in processing and productivity is being experienced by the processors. They no longer have to spend a long time mixing the Fura de Nono to serve customers. Instead, they blend to mix in few seconds, which is less stressful for them and more customer effective.

Improved knowledge

Trainings provided on financial literacy and good hygiene has had a positive impact on the processors, by improving their capacities. It is said that “when you train a woman you train a nation”, so this knowledge will also be passed on to their future generation and other women processors who would be likely to join the cooperative in the coming years.

Benefits for small grocery sellers

Better quality of Fura

The quality standard of Fura supplied by Fulani producers of Fura to the small grocery sellers has greatly improved (Devoid of sands, debris, moulds and other microbial contamination) due to the trainings and equipments provided to them by 2SCALE. This has led to an increase in sales for these small grocery sellers.

Increased market outreach

The upgraded processing and packaging of Fura has greatly helped the small grocery sellers in reaching their target customers and in satisfying their needs.

A more organized shop space

Having the Fura displayed in a more appealing way has assisted in gaining more visibility for the small grocery sellers, which has led to more sales. Previously these dumplings were displayed in calabash, which made it difficult for people to notice or identify without asking, now they are displaced in neat transparent bowls and where people can identify it while passing.



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inclusive agribusiness in Africa*



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