

Edible insects for food security and health- from practice to evidence and policy implications (INSFOH)

Edible insects have been consumed in most parts of Africa as part of traditional diets for many years dating back to the pre-historic times. More than 500 edible insect species are consumed by inhabitants in Sub Sahara Africa with potential benefits of high nutritional components such as proteins, macro and micronutrients. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe have well known history of consuming insects with more than 50 edible species recorded in each country. Contrary to the large expectation that the focal point of edible insect utilization as food and animal feed would emerge from this African region and spread to other parts of the world, development of this sector has been slow. Many edible insect species are still collected from the wild, making it less sustainable if not well managed as well as posing challenges with guaranteed food safety standards. Additionally, the governments in these two countries have not fully embraced the use of insects as a trade commodity, leading to poor and lack of legislative framework to genuinely support this emerging edible insect industry. Poor infrastructure, lack of investment and awareness about edible insects can only mean that the populace in these countries remains spectators as the rest of the world makes advancement to utilize insects as a source of human food and animal protein of the future.

The overall aim of the AgriFoSe project is to promote the integrated use of edible insects as food in urban and peri-urban areas of DRC and Zimbabwe. Specifically, this project seeks to build capacity in local urban authorities so that they can create an enabling environment for the sustainable trade of edible insects in urban areas. Additionally, the project will facilitate local stakeholders' engagement in DRC and Zimbabwe in order to create an enabling inclusive platform that promote sustainable entrepreneurship in edible insects by women, youths and disadvantaged members of the society. In order to promote good hygiene and improve food safety standards, the project will construct suitable insect market handling facilities that can be adopted in other urban markets in these two countries. Using several dissemination channels such as the innovation hub, print and press, the project will also disseminate good practices that promote good hygiene and food safety standards of edible insects. At the end of the project, an African conference on use of insects as food and feed will be hosted by Chinhoyi University, Zimbabwe in 2019. This conference will gather scientists, academics, investors, policy makers, communities and development in order to consolidate research and development of edible insects in Africa and pave way for genuine decisions on investments in this sector to be made.

The project is expected to lead to the following outcomes: improved urban handling and trading of edible insects in DRC and Zimbabwe will contribute to enhancing livelihoods for women and youth engaged in collecting and trading edible insects, thus contributing to eradication of poverty, improvement in food and nutrition security and good health of societies in this part of the region (helping to attain SDGs 1-3); increased availability of safe to consume nutrient rich edible insects on the markets will contribute to improved food security and income generation.

Lead Implementer: Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe

Partners:

- Association des Femmes D'Affaires du Congo (AFC), Democratic Republic of Congo
- Directorate of Housing and Community Services, Chinhoyi Municipality, Zimbabwe
- School of Hospitality and Tourism, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
- BKind, Sweden