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CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF ORANGE FLESHED SWEET POTATO: DETERMINANTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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Master Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of Masters of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics

Financially supported by the Eiselen Foundation Ulm and International Potato Centre - Uganda

ABSTRACT

Nutritional concerns have gained increasing attention in food security issues of late. Consequently pharmacological, industrial and agricultural measures are currently applied to address nutritional deficiency among target groups. This study is primarily concerned with one of the agricultural measures that involve breeding staple crops for higher nutrient contents – otherwise known as biofortification. The efficacy of the approach, however, depends on wider acceptability of the nutritionally enhanced foodstuffs. This calls for knowledge of consumer acceptance of such food varieties in an attempt to improve the impact of such efforts. One such food crop is the Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) which has been biofortified with beta-carotene to address vitamin-A deficiency. In this study an analysis of consumer acceptance of OFSP is undertaken based on a survey of consumers in two urban centres in the districts of Soroti and Kampala in Uganda. Descriptive and econometric approaches are applied to estimate consumer acceptance and to understand factors affecting acceptability of OFSP. The results reveal a significantly low level of acceptance - 14% which is mainly attributed to lack of awareness of OFSP among consumers. Indeed providing information on nutritional benefits of OFSP improves acceptance to 55%. Knowledge of the nutrient value of OFSP and its taste value are identified as key determinants of acceptance. But incompatibility of OFSP with locally preferred form of sweet potato consumption is shown to be impacting negatively on its acceptance by consumers. There is therefore greater need for publicity on the nutritional advantage of OFSP if it has to play a greater role in addressing vitamin-A deficiency in Uganda. Innovative processing approaches that can make OFSP more compatible with the popular consumption form of sweet potato should also be sought, more so in the Teso region where sweet potato is a staple food.