

**Title** Cooking quality, utilization and consumption pattern of bananas and plantains grown by small-scale farmers in East Africa

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### **Abstract**

East Africa is endowed with abundant natural and human resources. The Great Lakes region produces the highest volume (20 million tons) of bananas and plantains in the world and also boasts of the highest per capita consumption. Studies and reports indicate that the majority of banana and plantains grown within the region are consumed locally in various forms, with cooking banana being the most popular. Despite this, the cooking quality, utilization and consumption pattern of banana cultivars in East African region has not been rigorously documented. This paper gives information on the types of banana cultivars grown in the region, their cooking quality, utilization and consumption patterns. Structured questionnaires were administered to 800 farm households, 540 in Uganda and 260 in Tanzania. Results indicated that 95 and 120 banana cultivars are grown by households in Uganda and Tanzania respectively. In Uganda, the most popular cultivar among farmers was 'Sukali ndizi' (AAB group) (exotic consumed as dessert), followed closely by 'Nakitembe' (AAA-EA group and endemic variety). In Tanzania, the cultivar grown by majority was 'Enshakara' (AAA-EA group). In Uganda, 68% of the cultivars grown were cooking types, among which 'Nakitembe', (Nakabululu', 'Mbwazirume', 'Musakala' and 'Nakyewogola' had high cooking quality. Cultivar 'Nfuuka' was recorded with the poorest cooking quality. In Tanzania, 56% of the cultivars grown were cooking varieties, with 'Enchoncho', 'Enshakara', 'Entobe' and 'Enyoya' having the best cooking quality. The findings also showed that although farmers sell some of the banana produce, consumption at household level is the highest form of utilization and cooked banana is the most popular way of consuming bananas. Consumption of bananas and plantains was highest between June-August and November-December. Through linear regression analysis, a strong relationship was observed between cooking quality and popularity of cultivar in both Uganda and Tanzania. This information confirms that households in this region depend on banana production mainly for food and prefer cooking bananas with high cooking quality. Therefore enhancing the production and nutrient quality of bananas and plantains will go a long way in reducing food insecurity and enhancing the nutrition and health status of small holder communities in East Africa.