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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Report on the Production of Additional Value-added Food Products on the Ahotor Oven



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Cover photo: Nuggets made with fish and potato baked on the Ahotor oven

Photo credit: Doris Owusu

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ACRONYMS

CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
DAA	Development Action Association
GHS	Ghana Cedis
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
SFMP	USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	US Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
PROBLEM.....	1
ACTION	1
NEXT STEPS	2
CONCLUSION.....	2

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Alternative products on the Ahotor oven	2
Figure 2 Products on display.....	2

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the USAID/SFMP is to rebuild marine fisheries stocks and catches through adoption of responsible fishing practices. Ghana's marine fish stocks is near collapse, yet encouraging fisherfolk to engage in alternative livelihoods to reduce dependence on the fishery has been a longstanding challenge particularly because they have limited education and skills to transition into other forms of work

PROBLEM

In 2017, the SFMP developed and deployed the clean fish smoker –Ahotor oven for use by fish processors along the four coastal regions of Ghana. The objective of this was to;

- Reduce the drudgery of fish smoking
- Reduce the large amounts of smoke emitted by the chorkor oven and inhaled by the processor
- Reduce the Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) deposits on the smoked fish.

The Ahotor oven comes in two sizes- the double unit which currently costs GHS 3,000 and the single unit which costs GHS 1,800. However, Fish processors typically have limited access to finance due to their inability to save consistently, and so struggle to invest their businesses, a situation has been exacerbated by the near collapse of Ghana's marine fish stocks. Thus to increase the uptake in the adoption, over 300 Ahotor ovens were constructed for fish processors under a cost- share arrangement. The Fisheries Commission under the West Africa Regional Fisheries Project also constructed 400 ovens.

To replenish the dwindling fish stocks, it has become necessary to implement management measures such as closed seasons to prevent the total collapse of the fishery. This leaves fisheries households with no savings nor alternative livelihoods/income, more vulnerable to economic shocks.

ACTION

There are currently, over 500 Ahotor ovens constructed and underutilized by fish processors due partly to the low fish catch or user preference. To afford the fisher processors who own an Ahotor oven the opportunity to earn extra income, SFMP through its implementing partners DAA and CEWEFIA explored the possibility of using the Ahotor oven to produce other edible and marketable products using local ingredients. The brief market survey revealed an interest in the consumption of snacks such as fish nuggets (made with local potatoes and fish), fish/beef pasties, coconut cookies, bread rolls and maize dumpling (locally known as 'abolo').

60 women were therefore trained in the production, packaging, labeling and pricing of these products.



Figure 1 Alternative products on the Ahotor oven



Figure 2 Products on display

NEXT STEPS

To enable begin the production of these products immediately after the training so they lose the knowledge acquired, the trainees were given a starter pack made up of:

- Basic ingredients (flour, butter and spices).
- Packaging materials.
- Labels.

CONCLUSION

The need for earning an alternative income for fisheries households has become more critical than ever. Using the Ahotor oven which is an existing business asset to produce other products besides fish to earn an extra income is a laudable initiative.

Yet, over a month after the training was held, none of the women has used their Ahotor oven to produce any of the products they were trained on. This is because traditionally no other product can be smoked on the ovens apart from fish, while the income from the production of these products is very marginal compared to smoking fish. Even though, fish catch remains low, fish processors will rather smoke imported frozen fish than make alternative products.