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## Contributing to livelihoods, saving lives and improving resilience in crisis affected communities in the South West and North West regions of Cameroon through oyster mushroom cultivation

Reducing vulnerability and strengthening livelihoods for crisis-hit communities in Cameroon through mushroom cultivation

### Context

The fast-deteriorating situation in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon and subsequent displacement has led to growing levels of food insecurity and a higher prevalence of negative coping mechanisms adopted by affected populations. To reduce risks and vulnerability of households and communities, FAO is implementing the emergency livelihood and nutrition support to the vulnerable population in the crisis affected communities in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. This project aims at improving the food security of beneficiaries through the production of eggs/nutrition-sensitive poultry farming, organic oyster mushrooms and vegetable gardens for domestic consumption as well as the sale on the market.

### Challenges

- Increase in price of inputs due to the war in Ukraine war for example, the price of 1 sheet of corrugated aluminum zinc of 1mx3m increased from 6 000 XAF to 10 000XAF.
- Delay in implementation of certain activities due to security reason (access restriction).
- The activities are much appreciated in the field by the supported households. FAO is looking for more funds to scale up and phase out.

### Concept

Provide agricultural inputs and training on mushroom cultivation itineraries to kick start production.



BETTER NUTRITION



BETTER LIFE

### Geographic coverage:

- Cameroon, Southwest and Northwest regions

### Partners:

- United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UNCERF)
- Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (MINEPIA)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER)
- Center for rural action (CEFORA)
- Caritas Bamenda
- J2D Afrique

### Target group :

- 8,184 beneficiaries, including 2,880 women, 1,592 men, 3, 712 children, and 623 persons with disabilities

### Gender and nutrition:

- Approximately 60% of beneficiaries are women and young girls and 10% people with disabilities. These measures will allow access, availability of highly nutritious products such as mushrooms, an excellent source of high quality protein, which to provide a fair substitute for meat, with at least a comparable nutritional value to many vegetables. Mushrooms are a good source of vitamin B, C and D, including niacin, riboflavin, thiamine, and folate, and various minerals.

## Methodological approach

Training in mushrooms cultivation, 2500 seeds and tools were provided to vulnerable populations (internally displaced persons, host communities, persons with disabilities, and returnees) in order to enable them to provide a source of food and income in a very short timeframe as well as refresher sessions to maximize their use and value. Training participants was provided with complete mushroom production itineraries, 50 mushrooms units were constructed. Four training of trainers and sixty staff were organized. FAO signed a letter of agreement with three local implementing partners (Caritas Bamenda, CEFORA and J2D Afrique).

## Impacts and return on investissement

- Boost livelihoods to reduce vulnerability to shocks, provide income and improve nutritional status.
- With an average investment of 340 USD per household, the family can have an average net income of approximately 630 USD/year.

## Sustainability and Replicability

Small-scale mushrooms growing does not require any significant capital investment as the mushroom substrate can be prepared from any clean agricultural waste material that can decompose, and can be produced in temporary clean shelters. They can be cultivated on a part-time basis, and require little maintenance. The material on which the mushrooms grow is called substrate, which can be made from different agricultural waste (wood chips/sawdust, sugarcane bagasse, etc.) depending on which mushroom we want to grow. The taste and nutritional value of fresh mushrooms is better than conserved mushrooms. Nevertheless, conservation methods such as canning, brining and drying are necessary when the whole harvest cannot be sold fresh. Community technicians and the technical staff of the government, together with local NGO partners, were involved in the programmes to strengthen sustainability.

For a successful activity, FAO consider certain important factors when selecting a site to grow mushroom such as distance to the market, availability of good quality substrate material, transportation of both product and substrate material and availability of clean water.

Since it does not require access to land, mushroom cultivation is a viable and attractive activity for IDPs, returnees, rural farmers and peri-urban dwellers.

Oyster mushrooms can be harvested in bundles or in single fruiting bodies; they are usually ready for harvesting within one from the time of plantings (temperature between 15 and 20 °C) or two to three days after fruiting (at higher temperatures). It will take another five to nine days for the second flush. Harvesting can continue as long as the mycelium remains white and firm.

“ I live with my wife and our five children. We are actually hosting four internally displaced persons in my home. My wife is the direct beneficiary of this project but I was so interested and excited that I joined her in the race to cultivate mushrooms and we are doing pretty well together. This project has brought much to our family.

Thanks to the support granted by FAO, we are now living a better life. The excess of mushrooms, not consumed are send to the market. In Buea market, a kilogram is sold at XAF 4500. I harvest every three days and I sell about 10 kg a month. The profits from the sales allow me, among other things, to pay rent, pay for the schooling of my kids and provide daily basic need for the house. In addition, the income generated from this activity help me to open a small door business for my wife.”

Emmanuel Kemayou, Host community member living in Wonia Mongo, Buea town.



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