

An Early and Proactive Approach at Breaking the Poverty Cycle: Using Rural Elementary Agricultural Education

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Introduction

Benefits of rural agricultural education as a means to improve livelihoods of adults has been extensively documented. However, this project seeks to explore the benefits agricultural education can provide at an early educational level. Its objective is to measure the effectiveness of the FAO's School Gardening Framework on rural schools within the Kamuli District of Uganda. Following this framework, the project focused on measuring three of the expected outcomes: taste and learn about healthy food, learn how to grow fruits and vegetables, and have an improved access to a better nutrition. The proposed agricultural science curriculum is comprised of both a theoretical component delivered in the classroom, which covers topics related to native agriculture and introduction to agricultural sciences, and a practical approach by implementing what was learned in the classroom within the school gardens. Four focus schools [pupils=350] were chosen for implementation and quantitative information such as: nutritional food intake and access to food were measured and compared to Uganda's national statistics. Overall, students who were enrolled in the agricultural curriculum and worked in the school feeding garden had an improved access to nutritional food intake and access to nutritious food. In addition, they could also successfully recall native agricultural practices and had developed leadership skills through cooperation and entrepreneurship. This project is vital in better understanding proactive poverty prevention within rural communities.

In-country methodology

1. ISU-UP utilized the FAO's school garden framework to implement.
2. Through the service learning program, Iowa State students are able to prepare lesson plans in agricultural topics.
3. Pupils are then exposed to the practice application of these topics on the school gardens.
4. Data on food intake is collected and compared to the national statistics for Nutrition on Uganda.



Figure 1. Students first learn agriculture theory



Figure 2. Pupils practice the theory of agriculture in the classroom

Results

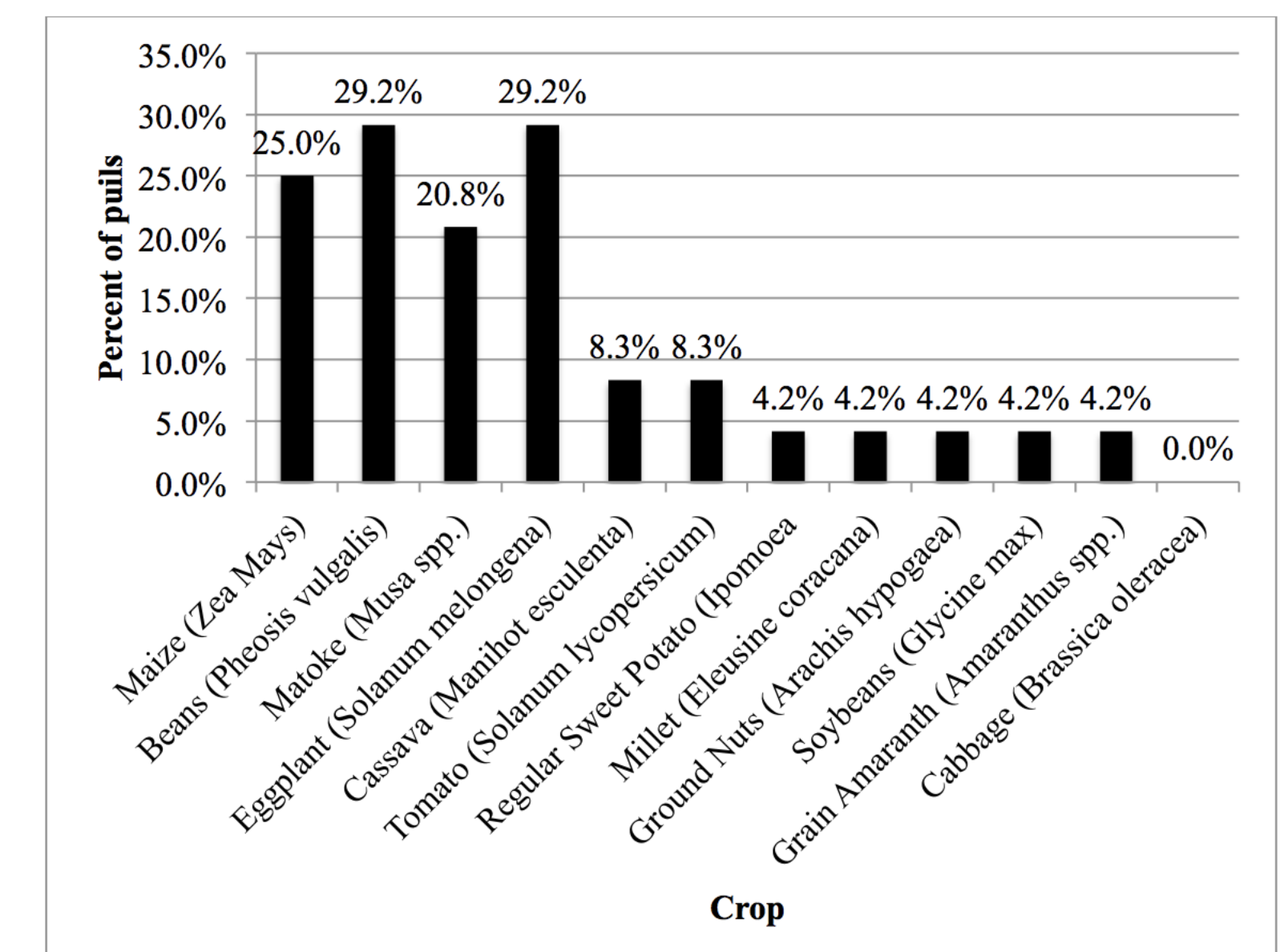


Figure 3. Percentage of pupils who are able to grow crops in their personal crop gardens listed by crop type (ISU-UP, 2017).

Conclusions and Recommendations

As Figure 1 and 2 portrays, the success of the school gardening program could not be possible without the efforts the Iowa State University – Uganda Program have developed in the 4 pilots schools. By providing pupils with the technical skills needed for crop raising, pupil accessibility to nutritious foods was increased. Not only is access to nutritious food impacted by their school feeding program, Figure 3 showcases how students are able to replicate the theory in the personal home gardens. Further research needs to be done to better determine the effectiveness of the school gardening program within the other FAO's expected outcomes.

Literature Cited

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