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THEME: Strengthening Research and Innovations for Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Development

Performance and Acceptability of Mushroom in Tharaka Nithi County

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Abstract

Mushroom is a fleshy, spore bearing fruiting body of a macro-fungus. Mushrooms often grow in association with trees. They are found mostly late summer or early fall. Most mushroom are wild. Some are edible and others poisonous. Some of the edible mushrooms are a good source of protein, thiamine, vitamin b6, magnesium zinc, manganese, dietary fibre, riboflavin, potassium, copper, selenium, niacin, and pantothenic acid. It is useful in the treatment of diabetics, have immunotherapeutic properties, important in prevention of cancer and many other uses. The popularity of the mushroom has growing in many parts of Kenya. Although mushroom has high value, no market in Tharaka Nthi County provides the produce for sale. During a preliminary survey conducted in Chuka, Tharaka and Maara, wild mushroom types were noted as highly existent in this County but the community seemed not to understand the usefulness of the product in food and nutrition security. Only two large hotels in the County were observed as utilizing mushroom flour for making appetizer. Generally the mushroom was indicated as not popular in Tharaka Nthi County because of; lack of knowledge on food, nutritional and medicinal value, fear for poisonous nature, unpalatable taste, high perish ability, lack of knowledge on value addition and preparation. Some of the suggestions given for enhancing utilisation of this product in the communities were; education on how to distinguish between poisonous and non-poisonous mushrooms, sensitization by advertisement through media, use of entertainment in drama, songs, poems among others, fortification of mushroom with other foods especially children's food, commercialization of mushroom by experts, exchange program through cultural workshops and seminars to enhance training of various groups on how to prepare mushroom, training of women and youth groups, use of medical prescriptions, introduction of cultivated mushroom in the area.

Key words: Mushroom, utilization, nutrition, Tharaka Nithi County