

## ACTU DES ZONES DE PRODUCTION

«Eru»

# High Income Generating Vegetable

*Cultivation has shifted from humid areas to fallow crop fields for income generation.*

**E**ru is a leafy creeping plant growing in the humid tropical forests of Cameroon and West and Central Africa. Originally consumed by Cameroon's forest-dwelling Bayangi people, eru is now one of Cameroon's most widely consumed vegetables. Hundreds of tonnes of eru are exported every week to Nigeria where it is known as "okazi" and overseas for consumption by Central and West Africans living abroad. The eru leaves are eaten raw, or shredded and added to soup, stews, porridges, and fish and meat dishes. Eru is highly nutritious and an important source of protein, amino acids, and minerals. Today, inhabitants of the South West Region are known for their huge appetite for the vegetable. Also known as "okok", it is eaten in the Centre, East and part of South Regions. The aforementioned



Regions grow the vegetable in large quantity. A heap of eru in Yaounde costs FCFA 25 and a package of FCFA 1,500 can feed a family of eight.

Eru is medicinal as well. In Nigeria, the species "Gnetum africanum" is used in the treatment of sore throats. In DRC, it is used for nausea while in Congo-Brazzaville, the stem is eaten to reduce pain in child-

birth. In Cameroon, the leaves are sometimes chewed to lessen the effects of drunkenness. Eru has now become an important source of income and nutrition for many impoverished Central African communities. Unfortunately, the wild leaf has been harvested from the forest at an unsustainable rate and has been pushed to extinction in some areas. Sustainable cul-

tivation of eru has the potential to reduce poverty and increase food security.

The Center for International Forestry Research, CIFOR has been training women in Lekie Division, to cultivate eru to improve incomes and restore degraded forests. Eru can be planted in fallow crop fields, secondary forests, and on community trees. The leaves can be harvested regularly rather than pulling the entire stem.

According to research conducted by FAO, eru is easily domesticated and has considerable potential in agroforestry and smallholder agriculture systems. The Centre for Nursery Development and Eru Propagation, CENDEP in Cameroon is training local people in the domestication, sustainable production, and marketing of the vegetable.

**Yaboa Ndula MUNTEH**