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The potential of cassava mahewu enriched fruits and vegetables to address food insecurity and undernutrition in Mozambique

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In Mozambique, 90% of cassava produced is for human consumption and more than 60% of Mozambicans have cassava as basic staple food. It has been reported that children having cassava as basic staple food are at risk of micronutrient deficiencies such as zinc, iron, and vitamin A. Undernutrition and food insecurity are both public health concerns in Mozambique. It is estimated that 43% of children under five years of age are undernourished, the anaemia affects about 40 to 50% of woman at the reproductive age and food insecurity is determined by cyclical natural disasters characterized by drought and heavy rains ending up with floods. Cassava mahewu is a non-alcoholic fermented beverage made from cassava flour, which after fermentation could be enriched with fruits such as banana, orange, mango, baobab and vegetables namely carrots and beetroots. In this context, the objective of the research is to propose cassava mahewu enriched with fruits and vegetables to be a food alternative in undernourished children under five years of age as well as in the situations of food insecurity. The statement is based on previous researches showed the effectiveness of fortification of cassava mahewu with ferrous sulphate and ferrous phumarate and the bioavailability of iron from fortified cassava mahewu. More researches have been done in to improve the nutrition value of cassava mahewu, such as enrichment carrots and beetroots where the findings demonstrated the increase of nutritional content such as of minerals and proteins and increased fat content, it was also observed improvement on appearance (attractive color given by the added fruits and vegetables), texture and taste. It has been reported the increase of mineral content of cassava mahewu when fruits are added to mahewu made from cassava. Other utility of cassava mahewu is its use as weaning children; cassava mahewu being a fermented beverage is supposed to offer health benefits such as prevention of diarrheal infections, promotion of growth and development of children. Taking into account researches made in cassava mahewu and the fact of higher index of under nutrition and vulnerability of the country of cyclical calamities and disasters cassava mahewu could be use for nutritional rehabilitation of undernourished children, emergency situations and food insecurity mitigation, considering that Mozambique ranking on the top 10 cassava producers and the fact that cassava is resistant to drought and pest.

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