

To Include or Not to Include: Resolving Ethical Concerns over the 20% High Quality Cassava Flour Inclusion in Wheat Flour Policy in Nigeria

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Abstract : Cassava, an indigenous crop grown locally by subsistence farmers in Nigeria has potential to bring economic benefits to the country. Consumption of bread and other confectionaries has been on the rise due to lifestyle changes of Nigerian consumers. However, wheat, being the major ingredient for bread and confectionery production does not thrive well under Nigerian climate hence the huge spending on wheat importation. To reduce spending on wheat importation, the Federal Government of Nigeria intends passing into law mandatory inclusion of 20% high-quality cassava flour (HQCF) in wheat flour. While the proposed policy may reduce post harvest loss of cassava, and also increase food security and domestic agricultural productivity, there are downsides to the policy which include reduction in nutritional quality and low sensory appeal of cassava-wheat bread, reluctance of flour millers to use HQCF, technology and processing challenges among others. The policy thus presents an ethical dilemma which must be resolved for its successful implementation. While inclusion of HQCF to wheat flour in bread and confectionery is a topic that may have been well addressed, resolving the ethical dilemma resulting from the act has not received much attention. This paper attempts to resolve this dilemma using various approaches in food ethics (cost benefits, utilitarianism, deontological and deliberative). The Cost-benefit approach did not provide adequate resolution of the dilemma as all the costs and benefits of the policy could not be stated in the quantitative term. The utilitarianism approach suggests that the policy delivers greatest good to the greatest number while the deontological approach suggests that the act (inclusion of HQCF to wheat flour) is right hence the policy is not utterly wrong. The deliberative approach suggests a win-win situation through deliberation with the parties involved.

Keywords : HQCF, ethical dilemma, food security, composite flour, cassava bread

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