

# Policies and Strategies to improve the utilization of *Blighia sapida* (K Konig) in the Rainforest and Guinea savanna ecological zones of Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper takes a critical look at policies and strategies that can be used to improve the utilization of *Blighia sapida* fruits to reduce poverty in the rainforest and guinea savanna ecological zones of Nigeria. Semi structured questionnaires were used to collect information on the indigenous uses of *B. sapida* in the two ecological zones. Two communities in each ecological zone were purposively selected. 50 respondents in each sampled community were randomly selected to investigate the indigenous uses of *B. sapida* in the two ecological zones. The results of the study (chi-square test) showed that a significant difference exists ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the indigenous uses of *B. sapida* in the two ecological zones. There is however the need to harmonize the indigenous uses of *B. sapida* in order to improve on the utilization of the species. In the light of this, it is essential that policies that will help to promote the utilization of *B. sapida* and other neglected or underutilized species (NUS) be enshrined in the forest policy statement of the states covered by the study. Promoting the conservation of NUS plants should also be included in the forest policy statement of the states covered by the study. NUS unit in the State Forestry Departments in the country should be created that will help to promote the utilization of *B. sapida* and other NUS plants all over the country through proper and prompt dissemination of information. Other strategies that can help to promote the utilization of *B. sapida* include; commercialization of *B. sapida*, value addition to the fruits of *B. sapida*, selling the fruits in urban markets as well as exporting the fruits in order to improve income earnings from the fruits.

Key Words: Policies, Strategies, *Blighia sapida*, Rainforest and Guinea savanna

## Introduction

*Blighia sapida* (Ackee apple) is an evergreen, fruit bearing tree that is native to the tropical West Africa. It belongs to the family Sapindaceae. It has a short trunk and a dense crown. *B. sapida* has flowers that are greenish, small, staminate and hermaphrodite, in axillary racemes. See diagram. Its fruits are pear shaped. They are green when not ripe but turn to bright red or yellow – orange when ripe. When the fruit splits open at maturity it has 3 cream coloured arils, each tipped with a black seed. The fruit typically weighs between 100-200g.



*B. sapida* flower



Fruit of *B. sapida*

## Method of Data Collection

Two ecological zones were purposively selected. These are rainforest and guinea savanna

Then two communities were selected in each ecological zone. 50 households were randomly selected in each community to make a total of 200 respondents.

Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect information from respondents.

Table 2: Indigenous uses of *B. sapida* in the study area

Guinea savanna Uses	Igbaja		Rainforest Shaki		Ile-Ife		Ikere	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
For fish poison	7	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Use as soap	10	20	0	0	0	0	6	12
Arils eaten raw	48	96	40	80	42	84	45	90
Arils use to prepare soup	40	80	38	76	39	78	41	82
Seeds use to play local game	10	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Treat epilepsy	0	0	11	22	0	0	0	0
Treatment of backache	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	40
Treatment of chest pain	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	22
Treatment of stomach ulcer	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	16
Treatment of mouth sore	45	90	0	0	0	0	0	0
Used to treat weak children	0	0	15	30	3	6	0	0
Use to treat fever	0	0	11	22	0	0	3	6

Table 1: Nutrient Composition of *B. sapida*

Nutrient	Composition per 100g
Fat	18.8g
Protein	8.8g
Phosphorus	98mg
Iron	0.5mg
Niacin	3.7mg
Vitamin C	65mg

Source: Montoso Gardens, 2007

- Review of State Forest Policy
- Adoption of Open door Forest Policy
- Commercialization of *B. sapida* and other NUS
  - a. Existing markets of *B. sapida* and other NUS
  - b. should be upgraded and expanded by the state or local government
  - c. encouraging market research on *B. sapida* and other NUS
- c. Provision of improved storage facilities
- d. Value addition to *B. sapida* fruits or any other NUS products
- e. Remove marketing barrier
- f. Grading and packaging of *B. sapida* fruits
  - Improved Extension Services
  - Promoting Conservation of *B. sapida* and other NUS