Vegetables

- provide essential vitamins and minerals needed for good health
- balance calorie-dense, staple-based diets with nutrients and fiber
- add diversity to diets, agroecosystems, and rural and urban economies

Why vegetables must be on the table

Growing vegetables in home gardens is the most direct way for many rural and urban poor families to obtain a variety of nutrient-rich food.

Food security is not only about the quantity of food consumed, but also about the nutritional quality and diversity of food sources.

Missing even three of the 40 nutrients the body requires has dire consequences for health: Diets low in iron weaken the immune system, a lack of zinc impairs brain and motor functions, and without vitamin A, half a million children go blind every year. Malnourishment weakens the mind and body; education levels drop and earning power declines.

Household gardening is an important food production and nutritional improvement strategy. Garden initiatives can lead to better health and more robust livelihoods in developing countries.

Home gardens

- provide a ready, low- or no-cost supply of fresh, nutritious vegetables for the whole family
- create home-based employment, especially for women, through preserving, processing, or drying perishable vegetables
- generate income for the household through the sale of surplus vegetables
- teach children and adults about nutrition, climate, environment, plants, insects, water use, waste management

AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center’s

Healthy Home Garden Kits

With an AVRDC Healthy Home Garden Kit, a 6 x 6 m garden area can produce more than 250 kg of vegetables year-round, supplying vitamins A & C, protein, and iron for a family of four.

Healthy Diet Gardening Kits put better nutrition and improved health within reach of anyone with a few extra meters of soil to spare.

The kits include:

- seed of 14 to 18 crops, including nutritious indigenous vegetables
- crops selected to suit local tastes and agroecological conditions
- planting and seed saving instructions
- plot plans and cropping patterns for different seasons to produce year-round yields
- recipes

Seed for Disaster Relief

Since 2005, humanitarian agencies and local governments have distributed more than 75,000 AVRDC Disaster Relief Seed Kits as well as seed in single packets to the victims of major disasters in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Caribbean.

Natural disasters or human conflict can disrupt or destroy entire food production and distribution systems. Fast growing vegetables can help restore local food supplies and provide nutrition to survivors. Different seed kits and packets selected for East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa provide protein and micronutrients in the initial months after a disaster.

Survivors receive seed of locally adapted, nutrient-rich vegetable varieties and instructions in local languages to produce, prepare, and preserve vegetables. The full kits provide enough seed for one household to grow vegetables on 100 m² of land.

The Center’s seed has helped survivors rebuild their lives, from war-ravaged Mali (2013) to floods in Fiji (2013), India (2011 and 2012) and Thailand (2011), the 2010 Haiti earthquake, Typhoon Morakot in Taiwan in 2009, and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.
AVRDC home gardens: Expertise in action

AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center has long recognized the value of home vegetable production for improving nutrition and providing income. For more than 30 years, the Center’s adaptive, integrated research into home garden design and application has brought better health and brighter futures to families in developing countries.

With the help of partners, the Center’s home garden kits have been promoted throughout Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia:

- Participants in home gardening projects in Bangladesh spent less on buying vegetables at the market, increased their incomes about 10% from selling surplus vegetables, and increased their daily calorie intake.
- From 2006-2013, more than 10,000 householders, farmers and community representatives learned how to establish and maintain home gardens through demonstrations and workshops hosted, sponsored or inspired by AVRDC in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lao PDR, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. The training sessions covered production methods, recipes and cooking tips, and ways to preserve the vegetable harvest.

School and community gardens

For children, there’s no better way to learn and grow than through a school vegetable garden. The harvest enriches school meals, providing nutrition often lacking in the home diet. Students, teachers, parents, and administrators learn daily lessons in biology, economics, and resource management. Vegetables Go to School, a project launched in 2013, will establish and evaluate school gardens in Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Nepal, Bhutan, the Philippines and Indonesia to measure their impact on malnutrition and food security. Community gardens in and around cities increase the supply of fresh produce for the urban poor, offer income-generating opportunities, and improve the quality of the urban environment.

HOME GARDENS

Fresh vegetables within reach of all

In the backyard, in pots, alongside fields and roads: wherever available soil and space can be found, gardens can grow. Home gardens contribute to nutrition and food security for the world’s poorest families by ensuring vitamin-rich, health-promoting vegetables are close at hand throughout the year.