



# West African Food Composition Table



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**Introduction:** Adequate data on food composition including on local foods are indispensable and fundamental for all nutrition and food security strategies. These data are the backbone of nutrition research and policies. Low quality compositional data may lead to inappropriate policies and funds spent unnecessarily. Existing food composition tables (FCT) for most of the West African countries date back to 1960 and 1970 and contain in general few foods and components without documentation.

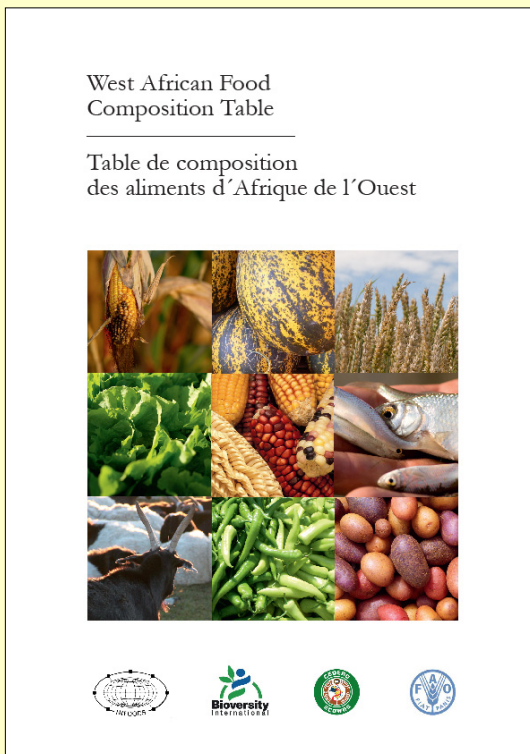
**Objective:** As a result of the recommendations by the ECOWAS Nutrition forum and other high level meetings, FAO/INFOODS, WAHO/ECOWAS and Bioversity International developed the West African Food Composition Table. It enables users to address present health problems, strengthen local development, enhance trade and to promote biodiversity.

## Development

- 1.step:** In April 2010, national consultants collected food composition data from scientific papers, theses, university reports and FCTs of traditional foods in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.
- 2.step:** These data were compiled into the INFOODS Compilation Tool and transferred to FAO Rome.
- 3.step:** In FAO Rome, the data were checked for consistency and were completed with some analytical data from the literature and from other FCTs; the composition of cooked foods was calculated.
- 4.step:** The FCT 'Composition of Selected Foods from West Africa' was published in 2010 in English by FAO/INFOODS, WAHO/ECOWAS and Bioversity International with 173 foods and 30 components.
- 5.step:** In 2011, FAO Rome added new compositional data and the West African Food Composition Table was published

## West African Food Composition Table

- Compiled using the **INFOODS Compilation Tool** and **INFOODS tagnames** in according to INFOODS standards and guidelines
- In English and French
- Contains **509 foods** in 13 food groups, many of them are at variety level for demonstrate compositional differences in food biodiversity
- Contains **28 components** (edible portion, energy, water, protein, fat, available carbohydrates by difference, dietary fibre, ash, Ca, Fe, Mg, P, K, Na, Zn, Cu, vitamin A, retinol,  $\beta$ -carotene equi., vitamin D, E, B1, B2, B6, B12, C and folate and niacin.
- **Well documented** (nutrient definitions, calculations, sources of data)
- contains data from:
  - 'Composition of Selected Foods from West Africa' (selenium and iodine were dropped as too little analytical data from West Africa)
  - the Mali FCT (2004): foods and recipes. The ingredients per recipe are provided, as well as the retention and yield factors and the recipe calculation method
  - FCTs of USDA, DK, UK, FAO
  - scientific literature
  - Food Composition Database for Biodiversity ([http://www.fao.org/infoods/biodiversity/index\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/infoods/biodiversity/index_en.stm))
  - nutrient values of cooked foods were calculated using EuroFIR retention factors, and yield factors from Bergström (2002), McCance & Widdowson's (2002) and Bognar (2002)



**CONCLUSION:** It is expected that the West African Food Composition Table will assist countries in West Africa and beyond to better estimate their nutrient intakes, to appreciate the significant compositional differences within varieties of the same species and thus enable them to promote the nutritional better foods in nutrition education programmes and to produce these foods on a bigger scale through additional agricultural programmes. These data could also contribute to enhance trade and serve nutritional labelling. However, new analytical data, especially on vitamins, are urgently needed and funds need to be allocated for chemical analysis by governments and other donors to increase the quality of future FCTs and consequently of programmes, research, food labels and policies concerning nutrition and food security.