

NEWSLETTER



Pictured above: Dr. Ogechukwu Anulika Umeh.

ABOUT THE LECTURE

The Power of Our Indigenous Crops: A Nutritional Goldmine!

A significant portion of the lecture was dedicated to showcasing the diverse range of indigenous crops native to Southeast Nigeria. These crops are not just culturally significant; they are nutritional powerhouses, often surpassing the nutritional content of commonly consumed staples!

Here are just a few examples of these amazing crops and their benefits:

- **Scent Leaf (*Ocimum gratissimum*):** Aides in antioxidant protection, promotes a healthy heart, aids digestion, and helps regulate blood sugar. Traditionally used for coughs, colds, and fever.

- **Utazi Leaf (*Gongronema latifolium*):** Used in the treatment of cough, dysentery, and malaria. When mixed with bitter leaf and scent leaf, it can decrease blood glucose levels and high blood pressure.

- **Ukazi Leaf (*Gnetum Africanum*) :** Helps manage diabetes, protects against various forms of cancer, and is a remedy for anemia and sore throat.

INTRODUCTION

AGmart Foods and Farms Limited was honored with an invitation by Dr Ogechukwu Anulika to attend the insightful faculty lecture organized by the faculty of Agriculture, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Anambra State, Nigeria under the distinguished Host Prof. Cordelia I. Ebenebe.

The lecture titled **"Improving Underutilized Indigenous Crops In South Eastern Nigeria: A Panacea To Food Security"** was delivered by Dr. Ogechukwu Anulika Umeh.

Food insecurity is a pressing issue in Nigeria, particularly in the Southeast. But imagine a future where our plates are filled with nutritious, locally grown treasures, a future where food security is a reality. This vision was at the heart of Dr. Ogechukwu Anulika's compelling lecture at UNIZIK, where she championed the incredible potential of underutilized indigenous crops!

Dr. Anulika highlighted the current challenges to food security in the region, including over-reliance on a few staple crops, climate change, dwindling arable land, post-harvest losses, and limited access to modern farming technologies. She also emphasized the vulnerability of our food system to external shocks.

- **Ukwa / African Breadfruit (*Treculia Africana*):** Prevents heart disease and inflammation. Also used for rheumatoid arthritis and asthma treatments, possessing antioxidant properties that prevent early aging.

- **African Oil Bean Seed / Ukpaka / Ugba (*Pentaclethra Macrophylla*):** Offers numerous health advantages including lowering cholesterol, preventing cataracts, fighting bacterial infections, potentially lowering cancer risk, and raising hemoglobin levels. It also contains minerals essential for bone and muscle health, promotes heart health, and may help cure epilepsy and insomnia.

- **Kolanut (*Cola Acuminata*):** A stimulant containing caffeine and theobromine, traditionally used for treating conditions like whooping cough, asthma, malaria, and fever.

- **Castor Oil (*Ricinus Communis*):** A stimulative laxative that increases bowel movements. It possesses analgesic, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory effects, making it useful for various skin conditions, speeding wound healing, and reducing joint pain. Traditionally used to aid labor induction.

- **Cocoyam:** Boosts the immune system due to its high Vitamin C content, potentially aiding in managing diabetes mellitus and diabetic nephropathy, and supporting dental

- **Coconut:** Improves immunity, enhances blood sugar regulation, and promotes cognitive function. Coconut water is a strong source of several nutrients and may help with kidney function and athletic performance. Coconut oil's Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) may promote a healthy weight and have antibacterial qualities.

- **Pumpkin:** Offers numerous health advantages including increased immunity, better vision, heart health, and possibly a lower risk of cancer. A wonderful source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

- **Bitter Leaf (Onugbu):** Known for its high antioxidant content and anti-inflammatory properties. It can help reduce blood pressure and has traditional uses for enhancing fertility.

- **Okpa (Bambara Nut Meal):** Highly nutritious, helps prevent anemia and malnutrition, improves bone health, and boosts the immune system.

- **Abacha (African Salad):** Rich in potassium and iron, promoting bone health, aiding digestion, and boosting blood circulation.

- **Palm Wine (Raphia hookeri):** Used as an aphrodisiac, to improve milk production in nursing mothers, and to treat diseases like measles in traditional medicine. Also used to macerate medicinal herbs and has been researched for its possible antidiabetic benefits and capacity to control pancreatic oxidative damage. The fruit's mesocarp is utilized as a pain reliever and for its stomachic and laxative effects.

- **African Walnut (Tetracarpidium conophorium):** Rich in healthy fats, protein, and essential minerals.

- **African Star Apple (Udara – Chrysophyllum albidum):** A fruit rich in vitamins, especially Vitamin C.

- **Bush Mango (Ogbono – Irvingia gabonensis):** Seeds are used as a soup thickener and are rich in fat and protein.

- **Garden Egg (Anara/Akwukwo Anyara):** Contains vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber.

- **Mushroom:** Various indigenous mushroom species are consumed and are good sources of protein and other nutrients.

ORGANIC VS. GMO: KNOW YOUR CODES!

Dr. Anulika also shared important information about identifying organic and genetically modified (GMO) foods through their PLU codes:

- **4-digit code (e.g., 4011):** Indicates chemically grown crops/inorganic crops.

- **5-digit code starting with 9 (e.g., 94011):** Indicates organically grown crops.

- **5-digit code starting with 8 (e.g., 84011):** Indicates GMOs (genetically modified foods).

A CALL TO ACTION!

Dr. Anulika passionately encouraged everyone to embrace our indigenous crops once again. She urged us to promote traditional recipes by incorporating these nutritious crops into our daily meals and by showcasing traditional and innovative recipes that are both appealing and easy to prepare.

By working together to revive and promote indigenous crops, Southeast Nigeria can build a more resilient, nutritious, and culturally rich food system for the benefit of all its people!

