

**CULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY: A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE  
ENDANGERMENT AND DECLINE IN THE PRODUCTION AND UTILIZATION OF  
AERIAL YAM (DIOSCOREA BULBIFERA) AND COCOYAM (XANTHOSOMA  
SAGITTIFOLIUM) IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This interdisciplinary study explored factors responsible for the underutilization of two local food crops aerial yam and cocoyam in selected communities in Imo State, Nigeria. This is necessary, because there have been no scientific explanations for their neglect. Data for the study were obtained from Researchers'-Made-Questionnaire (RMQ) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The Focus Group Discussants were mainly Cultivators of the crops. A total of 1500 copies of the questionnaire, distributed to 64 randomly selected rural communities were retrieved. The questions were based on demographic and socio-cultural factors, and on people's perception of the nutritional and medicinal values of the crops. SPSS Version 20 was used for imputing data and analysis. Findings from the study showed that production and utilization of the two crops have actually declined. Six factors (low rating, low yield, hard to cook, fewer buyers, perceived low food value and storage problem) out of fourteen accounted for 64.3 %. Tradition, which placed the two crops as 'women's crops' further accounted for the decline. The study recommends among other measures sensitization of the farmers and general public on the nutritional and medicinal values of the crops.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Culture, Food Security, Underproduction, Underutilization, Aerial Yam, Cocoyam, Food Crop*