

ABSTRACT

A survey was carried out to document the diversity and immune boosting claims of African indigenous leafy vegetables (AILVs) in Western Kenya. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. The results showed that there is diversity of AILVs in the study area with nine popular and frequently consumed, but cassava leaves, stinging nettle and russian comfry are not popular. Seven of these are cultivated but two, stinging nettle (*Urtica massaica*) and vine spinach (*Basella alba*) grow wildly. The AILVs are cultivated at subsistence level on home gardens with minimal inputs and only excess of this is sold. The religion one belonged to was significant ($p < 0.05$) in determining consumption or not of some of the vegetables. The vegetables are rain fed and the process of harvesting is by first uprooting during thinning followed by breaking the main stem and finally plucking off the leaves with maturity. Vegetable preparation in most households was mainly by women. The elderly women were keen in this process and spent more time in preparing the vegetables which were believed to be 'nutritious'. There was no processing and preservation of the AILVs for use during the dry season. The communities rely on wild weeds during such seasons. The AILVs though consumed for good nutrition are also associated with various medicinal and immune boosting claims. Out of the nine, five are known for various health benefits, African nightshade and spider plant for good nutrition by 31.8% and 25.1% of the respondents, respectively, slender leaf for healing power by 34%, cowpea leaves and slender leaf for anti-aging by 50% and 43.8%, respectively, and cowpea leaves (43.6%) and amaranthus (53%) for smooth skin and adding blood, respectively. Chi square analysis indicated that African night shade, spider plant and amaranthus are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in contributing to good nutrition, healthy functioning of the body and immune boosting. Further analysis showed that spider plant and amaranthus are significant ($p < 0.05$) for immune boosting.