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Complementary feeding and climate-resilient crops in Ethiopia

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The current study aims to characterize the complementary feeding practice and identify locally available climate-resilient crops that can be used for complementary feeding among agro-pastoralists in Ethiopia. A phenomenological study in Benna-Tsemay district, comprising focused group discussions, key informant interviews, and household observations, was conducted. A pretested guide was used to capture information regarding types of complementary food, lists of food items, and ingredients included in their complementary formulation. A thematic analysis for emerging points of discussion was carried out. Three major themes, including infant and young child feeding practices, food items included in complementary food and their consumption frequencies, as well as the incorporation of climate-resilient crops into complementary foods as coping mechanisms were emerged. Breastfeeding was common and regarded as essential. Gruel and porridge from grains, roots, and tubers were regular parts of complementary foods in the study area. Moringa and sorghum were dominantly identified as climate-resilient crops regularly grown and used in complementary foods. Growing these crops was regarded as a coping strategy for drought and seasonal constraints. The district is one of the most drought-prone areas in Ethiopia, compromising the quality of complementary food. Unlike the WHO recommendation, the grains, roots, and tubers-based diet formed the basis of complementary food lacking flesh foods, eggs, pulses, and other fruits and vegetables. Thus, it is recommended to improve complementary food quality through value-addition using locally accessible crops.

Biography

Mr. Derese Tamiru Desta is an Assistant Professor at the School of Nutrition, Food Science, and Technology at Hawassa University. With a Master's degree in Human Nutrition, he has a strong background in academic teaching, research, and community outreach. His research interests span across various fields, including Human Nutrition, Nutritional Epidemiology, Food Systems, and Public Health. Mr. Derese is an active member of the Food and Nutrition Society of Ethiopia (FONSE) and the Ethiopian Nutrition Leaders Network (ENLN).