

# Highlights of my fieldwork in Accra, Ghana



Under the auspices of the *GreenGrowth* project (“Preserving African Food Microorganisms for Green Growth”) and with partial sponsorship from the Otto Bruuns Fond (Denmark), I undertook a two-month field visit in Ghana during October and November 2014. The fieldwork formed part of my research towards my Master degree in Human Security at Aarhus University. I was fortunate to collaborate with researchers on the GreenGrowth project and to have one of the partners, the CSIR - Food Research Institute, as my home during this time. The staff helped to set up interviews with local fermented food producers and provided me with the tools, knowledge and expertise required for the fieldwork.

It was a great opportunity to pursue and deepen my academic interests, to understand the context of Ghana, particularly, Accra. A number of technologies, including improved presses, graters and smokeless stoves, have been developed by both the local R&D institutions and the private sector to improve food processing in Ghana. My aim was to understand how these technologies have helped to improve the livelihoods of the processors and to contribute to food security. It was interesting for me to interact with some of the key actors in the fermented foods value chain and to understand their operational conditions.



My research concentrated on a number of fermented foods found in the Greater Accra area including *fura*, a millet-based product and *gari*, which is a very popular fermented cassava product. I was interested to know how the traditional food processors perceived of the value-chains in which they operated and the socio-economic impact of technology transfer on the status of traditional food processing.



The processing units that I had the chance to visit were normally family-based businesses, where women are prevalent. The operations have a high manual labor input, which the operators do not often perceive as cost. The process is time consuming and uncontrolled, thereby often leading to contamination and poor safety of the final product. As a result of the poor status of cassava, the product has a stigma as the “poor man’s food”.

During my stay, I collected valuable data for my thesis and understood, among others, the main internal and external challenges faced by these micro and small businesses.

Overall, it was also an extremely rich experience, both professionally and personally, as I had the opportunity to get to know some beautiful places in Ghana and to experience the daily life “as a Ghanaian”.