Osun State’s Home Grown School Feeding programme has launched a new pilot to combat vitamin A deficiency in Nigerian schoolchildren at the same time as promoting the livelihoods of local farmers.

Over 4,000 pupils are currently being fed Orange Flesh Sweet Potatoes (OFSP) – a crop highly rich in vitamin A, as well as being popular among the children.

“I really enjoy the meals and I want to be eating it every day,” commented six year old, Abdul Kadri, beneficiary of the programme.

Both Imperial College London’s Partnership for Child Development (PCD) and the International Potato Centre (CIP) are supporting the OFSP inclusion in the programme, which is being implemented by Osun State. The pilot began at the start of 2015 and will continue until April, it is being carried out in eight local government areas of the state, and will eventually be expanded to 31.

Before the pilot’s delivery, PCD and the CIP carried out a series of sensitization workshops informing parents, teachers, smallholder farmers and food vendors on the importance, benefits, and knowledge on how to grow and prepare the crop.

After these workshops, Risikat Ibrahim, a caterer who prepares the school meals said, “The preparation is easy, saves time and money”.

The meals which include the potatoes are served to the child once a week, and are accompanied by other nutritious items, pottage, garnished sauce and cat fish.

- The Osun HGSF programme.