

Seed supply system for vegetable production at smallholder farms in SouthWestern Nigeria

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Abstract

To characterise the local seed system and assess the potentials of the vegetable seed sector, a seed survey was conducted in five villages within three states of South Western Nigeria. Using structured questionnaires, 94 farmers from five farm settlement locations covering Ogun, Osun and Oyo states of Nigeria were randomly queried on types of varieties that they propagate, their seed sources, and factors that determined their seed choices. The data collected were subjected to descriptive analysis of simple proportions and percentages. At all the locations, the use of seeds of improved varieties for production of vegetable crops in terms of hectares cultivated was predominant over that of local varieties – 100% use of seeds of improved varieties in many cases. About 60% of vegetable farmers sourced seeds from their previously saved harvests, while about 30% purchased seeds from dealers over the 3 years covered by the survey. About 33% of vegetable farmers would select seeds of varieties to cultivate based on high potential crop yield and 32% based on consumer preferences, while 25% of farmers would select seeds of a variety if only it is readily available. The results showed that farmers demand for the seeds of improved varieties could be elicited with availability of varieties that meet production challenges (high yields) and market needs (consumer preferences). The implications of the results with respect to prospects for commercial vegetable breeding and seed production were discussed. But indications are that the seed system can be improved when crop breeders and seed producers regularly evaluate the dynamics of consumer quality preferences and continuously generate varieties that satisfy them.

Key words African vegetables - improved varieties - local varieties - seed industry development - seed sources