Tomato Production in Ethiopia: Constraints and Opportunities

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Abstract

Tomato is a popular and widely grown vegetable crop in Ethiopia, ranking 8th in terms of annual national production. It is consumed in every household in different modes, but in certain areas, such as Walo, Hararge, Shawa, Jimma and Wallaga, it is also an important co-staple food. Primary data were collected from 400 randomly selected smallholder producers who were equally distributed among five different study zones where tomato was a co-staple. Surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with growers and staff of the Ministry of Agriculture during 2011. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered by employing a structured questionnaire. Before launching the survey, the questionnaire was pre-tested and was improved accordingly. Primary data collected were used to describe the actual tomato production management practices and to quantify the distribution of crop area and production in relation to agro-ecological conditions in the different administrative zones (North Walo, East Hararge, East Shawa, Jimma and East Wallaga) and growing seasons. Yield constraints were identified based on the survey including the 400 smallholder producers. The FGDs were used for triangulation. Constraints appeared to include lack of resources such as irrigation water, nutrients and high-quality seed, but also weather conditions including drought and cold. Crop production management varied significantly across study zones because of differences in agro-climatic conditions, access to resources and culture. Average fruit yields ranged from 6.5 to 24.0 Mg ha⁻¹ and were different for the five survey zones. According to the survey and FGDs results about 32–40% of the growers used irrigation. Supplementary irrigation was required in most of the production regions to sustain food security and commercially viable tomato production. There were also several major weeds, insect pests and diseases including late blight and Fusarium wilt reducing the yield. Possibilities for yield improvement are discussed and recommendations are made to further improve tomato yield in the different growing zones.

Keywords: Biocides, diseases, Ethiopia, improved seed, irrigation water, nutrients, pests, tomato

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