



Farmers' Sorghum Seed Sources after a Drought Year in Southern Mali



Sonja Siart¹, Eva Weltzien², Moussa Kanouté², Volker Hoffmann¹

¹University of Hohenheim, Department of Agricultural Communication and Extension (430A), 70593 Stuttgart, Germany, Contact: sonja_siart@web.de

²International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), B.P. 320, Bamako, Mali

Background

Sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor* (L.) Moench) is the staple crop in southern Mali. In the project regions average rainfalls are about 700-1000 mm. The 2003 season was a rather good year, whereas in 2004 the rains ended one month before the normal end of the rainy season. Thus farmers faced serious production shortfalls.

Objective

Identification of problems that farmers in southern Mali may have with seed availability following a drought year

Methods

Individual interviews with 287 household heads in a total of 16 villages in the two project regions (Mandé and Dioila) based on a standardized questionnaire with open questions

Seed Panicles of three sorghum varieties



Interview with a household head

Results

Variety diversity on household level is higher after the drought year (Figure 1)

Following the drought year a higher percentage of farmers (65%) planted more than one sorghum variety (2005), in contrast to results obtained from a similar survey one season earlier (2004), following a good year for sorghum production.

Household seed sources are more diverse after the drought year (Figure 2)

Similarly farmers mentioned using other seed sources than their own production more frequently.

They obtained seeds from other persons e.g. in the own village (30%), as well as from other villages, projects and markets.

Relations between the seed donors and seed beneficiaries are mostly family ties and neighborhood. Projects, friends and markets are of smaller importance.

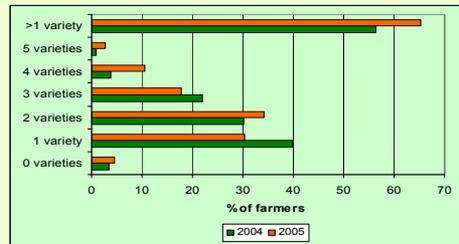


Figure 1: Number of varieties per household

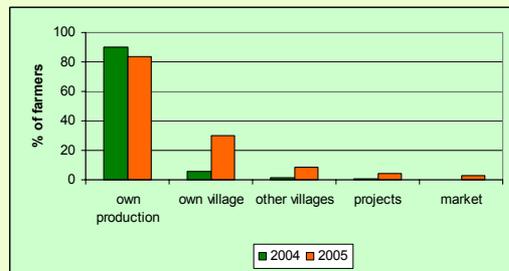


Figure 2: Seed sources in the years 2004 and 2005

Seed loss is not a main reason for searching seeds outside the household

Reasons for searching seeds from outside the household are:

- Interest in cultivating a new variety (20% of farmers)
- Total seed loss (10%)
- Interest in testing a new variety (7%)

Reaction to the drought year is the extension of the sorghum cultivation area, due to food shortage

- 76% of farmers extended the surface sown with sorghum
- 43% mentioned the "food shortages" as explanation

Conclusions

- Seeds are available for farmers within the local seed system after the drought year
- Food supply is a bigger concern for farmers after the drought year rather than seed supply