



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



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## 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 Dioiia) 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.

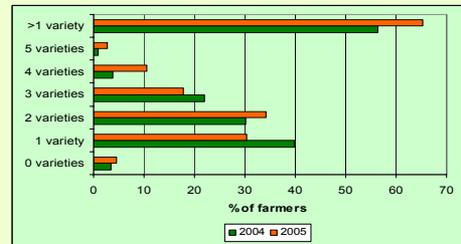


Figure 1: Number of varieties per household



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