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“Solidarity in a competing world —
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Comparative Investigation of Farmer’s Criteria for Cowpea Varieties via Farmers’ Participatory Varietal Selection in Niger and Burkina Faso

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Abstract

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) is an important crop for promoting the food security, livelihood, and cash income of farmers. Various improved cowpea varieties have been developed and released by the breeding programs in many national agricultural research systems in sub-Saharan African countries. However, the reports on farmers’ selection criteria and acceptability of improved cowpea varieties are still limited. Further, these acceptability are sometimes complicated by the fact that the selection criteria employed by farmers vary by region. Thus, in order to better understand the preferences and selection criteria employed by farmers, farmer participatory varietal selection activities were undertaken in different regions in Niger and Burkina Faso. A total of 1,134 farmers (224 farmers in Niger, 910 farmers in Burkina Faso) were invited to the demonstration fields with 37 genotypes in 12 villages (7 villages in Niger and 5 villages in Burkina Faso). The survey revealed that the most important criterion for farmers was grain yield. Interestingly, the difference of farmer’s preferences in both countries was in the second and third criteria. The second most important trait was “fodder yield” in Niger, and “early maturity” in Burkina Faso. In addition, farmers in Niger were concerned with “*Striga* resistance” of the variety. On the other hand, farmers in Burkina Faso were interested in “seed colour”. Furthermore, this study also clarified regional and gender differences among farmers’ preferences. Details of their preferences will be discussed in the presentation. These regional differences of preferences for cowpea varieties should be taken into account when developing improved varieties with better acceptability.

Keywords: Cowpea, farmers preference, FPVS, improved variety