

Community based-sorghum seed multiplication as a strategy for enhancing sorghum production for improved smallholder incomes and livelihoods in Siaya County

A significant proportion of the Kenyan population experiences food insecurity and malnutrition. The most affected are children and expectant mothers who depend on maize meal for food. Maize is a staple food in Kenya with over 90% of the population depending on the crop both for food and cash. However, with the unpredictable global climate change coupled with outbreaks of maize lethal necrosis disease in the high potential maize zones, sorghum is one of the best options for food security. The production of sorghum is hampered by the unavailability of seeds suitable for appropriate agro-ecological and socio-economic needs of small-scale farmers. The farmers are faced by a scenario whereby seed companies supply only hybrid varieties which cannot be recycled meaning farmers have to purchase fresh seeds every planting season. Over the last two years there has been a deliberate effort by farmer groups, courtesy of the KAPAP project, to bulk an Open Pollinated Variety (OPV) known as Mercia in Siaya County, a variety that is now available to farmers for replanting. The community seed bulking and farmer-farmer sharing of seed has not only increased the number of farmers involved in sorghum production but has enhanced the availability of sorghum seed to other farmers who could hitherto not afford good seed. The objectives of the study were to identify sorghum common interest groups to promote growing of high yielding variety of sorghum and to avail high yielding variety and evaluate its acceptability. It involved a baseline survey to identify the groups, training on sorghum production, growing of the high yielding seed by the farmer groups and evaluation of its acceptability by the farmers. The study revealed that smallscale farmers continue to experience lack of good seed variety to plant and that this project not only brought in a viable seed variety but also sensitized them on other uses of sorghum.

