

Consumption in the farming system involves both food intake by the household as well as material goods consumption. Given available resources, consumption patterns result from the strategies farmers follow with regards to types of foods consumed, seasonal variations in the types of foods eaten, social practices as to which members eat together and preferences for various material goods. Consumption strategies also involve the procurement of food and other commodities which has a direct bearing on the types of crops grown, the rearing of livestock and the need for pursuing off-farm economic activities. Consumption is also closely integrated with marketing. For instance, seasonal preferences in millet and sorghum consumption correspond to seasonal variations in purchasing patterns of these commodities.

The interrelationships between all five of these components must be stressed. Each has an influential and somewhat limiting effect on the others. For this reason, to fully understand farming in this area, all or most of these components must be considered. Thus, a survey instrument which intends to collect comprehensive information on farming should address all of these components. It has been our intention to design this type of instrument for our survey. Well grounded in ethnographic data, this instrument contains questions dealing with the intricacies of farming in this area (a copy of this interview schedule is found in Appendix J). The information collected from 40 farmers in three villages is summarized below.

Results of the Preliminary Farming System Survey

The Sample

The 40 farmers surveyed were selected from the three intensively studied villages in our study area. Using the nearly 100 percent samples⁴ of cultivated landholdings in the three villages as the sampling frame, a stratified random sample was drawn. Farmers were stratified according to property and size of household. After selection, these farmers were carefully scrutinized with regard to crop mix to insure that variable cropping patterns could be investigated. Fifteen farmers were selected from El Kharta, 15 from Umm Ramad and 10 from El Geifil. A smaller number were selected from El Geifil because it is a much smaller village than the other two. Unless noted otherwise the data refer to the 1981-82 agricultural year.

Demographic Data - Household Composition

All 40 farmers surveyed were the heads of households; 34 of which were male and 6 were female.⁵ The average household size was 7.7 members and

⁴The types of data collected on each farmer included: 1) total size of household; 2) total size of landholding and 3) area cultivated in millet, sorghum, sesame and groundnuts. Report No. 1 presents the analysis of this data for El Kharta.

⁵More females were not included in this sample because of the difficulty we had as male researchers in interviewing females in these villages and because of the low frequency of occurrence of female household heads. Fortunately, much data were collected on married female farmers and their farming practices through interviews with married male household heads, because these females usually operated their own separate small farms.