baladi in part is due to the shortage of HireeHri seeds in El Geifil, and the long tradition of growing baladi.

In Umm Ramad, baladi was also the dominant type. Sixty-four percent of the land cultivated in millet was in baladi, and 79 percent of the farmers surveyed planted it. A higher rainfall could definitely explain this pattern, since Umm Ramad is south of El Obeid. Higher rainfall also could explain the appearance of another millet variety called 9ish barnu. Twenty-seven percent of all the cultivated millet was planted in this type.

The extent of millet cultivation demonstrates its importance in the farming system. In addition to serving as one of the main sources of food for farm households, millet stalks are used for various purposes. They are, for example, the main construction material for houses and other structures in these villages. In fact, the importance of millet stalks as a building material might ensure that millet will never be totally displaced by other cash crops, unless another building material were introduced (possibly another type of grass). Presently, such an alternative building material is not widely available, especially for villages north of El Obeid. In addition, millet leaves are sometimes used as fodder. Thus, the many uses of millet in this area must be evaluated in assessing the implications of proposed changes in millet cultivation practices.

Sorghum

Another important subsistence crop grown in the area is sorghum. Although it was not as extensively grown as millet, the majority of the farmers we surveyed were planting some sorghum in their fields. Seventy-five percent of the farmers interviewed were growing sorghum (30 out of 40).[13] Sixty-three percent (19 out of 30) of the farmers who grew sorghum planted it in the same field with another crop (usually sesame). Only 43 percent (13 out of 30) of the farmers surveyed planted sorghum in separate stands. Unfortunately, it is too difficult to estimate what proportion of the total land cultivated was in sorghum since so much was intercropped with sesame or other crops. However, the importance of this crop is well demonstrated by the extent to which farmers were planting it, either intercropped or separately.

Farmers in the area grow several different types of sorghum. The local names for these types are quite numerous; however, they can be grouped under three basic categories (See Appendix B for the local names). These are mareeg/zunaari baladi, mareeg/zunaari HireeHri, and najaaḍ/feterita. As for distinguishing characteristics, mareeg/zunaari varieties tend to have curved necks and large seeds which may be either red, black or white in color. There is essentially no difference in shape or color between the baladi versions and HireeHri versions of mareeg/zunaari. The major difference is maturation length, with HireeHri maturing much earlier (70-80 days) than baladi (90-120 days). Also, baladi tends to produce more heads

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[13] Some farmers grew sorghum in separate stands as well as intercropped with other food crops. This especially is true of farmers to the south of El Obeid.