

surrounding el-Obeid to be self-sufficient in cereals. Because sorghum is imported to the region, farmers are released from the necessity of always looking first to their subsistence crop, and a variety of cash cropping strategies have developed. Owing to these historic changes, at least half of the grain consumed by villagers at this time is sorghum imported to the region from the mechanized schemes. The balance is made up of locally-produced and consumed millet, and some local sorghum, along with a small amount of wheat that is produced in the Gezira or imported from abroad.

El-Obeid Grain Market

The marketing of cereal grain in the el-Obeid area is closely keyed to the supply of grains and prices prevailing in el-Obeid grain market. The el-Obeid grain market consists of about forty grain merchants in all. Half of these are located in a special enclosure where only grain is sold. Of these, six merchants are big wholesalers. Big merchants sell grain by the sack and by the mid (thirty mids to a sack) to their customers who are either small retail merchants or consumers. The small retail merchants generally sell to consumers by the mid only. Besides the grain market enclosure which lies in the center of town, there are several outlying marketplaces which are near to the areas where trucks coming from the villages load and unload passengers. Although grain prices in these outlying markets are slightly higher than those found in the central market enclosure, there is the convenience for villagers of buying grain near to transport. The following cereal grains are regularly found at el-Obeid grain market:

- (1) feterita - this makes up 90% of the sorghum sold in the el-Obeid market; it is a major staple of the urban and rural poor because it is the least expensive of the cereals, although it is not a preferred food because the flour is dark. Most feterita marketed in el-Obeid area is transported by trucks from the mechanized farming schemes at Habila, South Kordofan.⁸²
- (2) habbashiya (or safra) and dabar (or gasabi) - two sorghums grown in the Gedaref region and transported to el-Obeid mainly by rail via Kosti.⁸³ Both sorghums generally show the same price at el-Obeid market and they invariably cost more than feterita. The flour of both habbashiya and dabar is prized for its whiteness and fine texture. Mainly it is eaten by the urban middle and upper classes.
- (3) millet - most of the millet is grown at Habila although some local millet finds its way into the urban market; millet from Dar Fur is never sent to el-Obeid.
- (4) wheat - this grain is from two sources (a) wheat that is produced in the Gezira and (b) wheat produced abroad (called istraali). Wheat is eaten on an occasional basis even by villagers.

⁸²Owing to the petrol crisis that currently afflicts the Sudan, the cost of transporting one sack of feterita from Habila rose from 2.000 in January to 4.000 in March.

⁸³Transportation by rail is often delayed but the alternative--hauling by truck from Kosti--is too expensive. Seventy sacks are hauled by rail for 56 L.S., while a lorry carrying seventy sacks costs 450 L.S.