

Recommendations

1. Agricultural scientists should focus on the development of early maturing, drought resistant crops to be made available for farmers in this area. Work could begin with the varieties farmers are already using.
2. Rainfall patterns for this area should be more closely studied to determine if there are optimal times when farmers should be planting. The present practice which is followed of planting early before the rains increases the danger of wind erosion. However, any suggested changes in planting should take into consideration the labor constraints farmers must deal with if everyone plants during the same period.
3. As discussed earlier, mulching practices and shelter belts should be introduced into the area. These practices help retain soil moisture, thereby increasing the efficient use of limited rainfall.
4. Research should focus on the beneficial effects of water catchment areas around plants. If such catchment areas do have some positive effect, farmers should be encouraged to reinstate the old practice of creating these depressions around the plants in their fields. The depressions could be created at the same time that thinning is done, which usually takes place during the first weeding. In addition, other types of water catchment strategies might be explored to determine their utility for this area as well.

Input Constraints

Input constraints to crop production include those inputs farmers have unequal or no access to which impact crop output.

A. Access to Labor

The most limiting factor for crop production in this area other than natural conditions is labor. Access to labor usually determines the size of the cultivation unit which a farmer can maintain. Labor shortages during the critical periods of planting, weeding, and harvesting can adversely effect the success of farmers. Labor is often the only thing of value poor farmers have to sell to overcome periodic food shortages. This takes away labor input from their own fields which is detrimental to their crop output.

Compensating Strategies

1. Farmers plant their millet and other crops early before the rains to take advantage of the low cost and availability of labor. Likewise, they clear their land early for the same reason. Such strategies are employed to avoid peak labor shortages that arise with the coming of the rains. Unfortunately, many farmers still have to replant during this time