

Compensating Strategies

1. Farmers attempt to save their own sorghum seeds from one year to the next so that they always have some for intercropping purposes. They will also save short-maturing varieties of millet and sesame from one year to the next.
2. Farmers purchase seeds from other farmers if they are available. Also, they may trade their seeds for another farmer's seeds if such trades are of mutual benefit. There is a common belief among farmers that other farmers are the best sources of obtaining seeds because they tend not to mix seed varieties. Seeds obtained from other sources are more questionable.
3. Farmers purchase seeds from local merchants.
4. Farmers bring back sorghum seeds from the mechanized agricultural schemes that they migrate to (e.g. Habila).
5. Farmers purchase seeds from the el-Obeid market.

Recommendations

1. As stated earlier, agricultural scientists should concentrate on the development of short-maturing drought resistant crop varieties and make these available to farmers in the area.
2. Distribution programs should be initiated which enable farmers to gain access to sorghum seeds as well as quick-maturing varieties of millet and sesame. One possible way of doing this would be to use village merchants as intermediaries through which to introduce these seeds. Village merchants already perform this role in many villages in the area. In fact, they are responsible for the introduction of several new varieties of sesame and sorghum through seed sales to farmers. For this reason, they are the logical choice for promoting the distribution of short-maturing varieties of millet, sorghum, and sesame.⁹⁹ In addition to selling these seeds, merchants could possibly operate a seed exchange program where farmers could exchange long-maturing varieties of seeds for short-maturing varieties. An incentive might have to be provided to the merchant to gain his participation, such as a small compensation for every sack he exchanges. Possibly a more practical incentive plan might be to have farmers exchange 1.25 mids of long-maturing seed for one mid of a short-maturing variety. Whatever incentive system is used, we are convinced that merchants should be involved with such seed

⁹⁹In initiating such programs, care must be taken to impress on merchants the importance of not mixing millet varieties. If these seeds are mixed, the program is of little value to the farmer.