fact, many farmers in villages to the north of El Obeid said that this is one of the main reasons why they plant sorghum in their sesame fields. Likewise, animals such as cattle, donkeys, goats and sheep find sorghum stems a palatable fodder, and farmers will often cut and save the stems to feed animals throughout the long dry season. This practice emphasizes the importance of sorghum to animal husbandry in this area. Third, sorghum is used to manufacture a local beer called mariisa. This beer is often used as the main source of food for many farmers for at least one meal during the day, especially during the harvest season. The extent to which mariisa is consumed varies from one village to the next. Fourth, sorghum is intercropped with sesame to serve as a wind break for sesame plants. Wind erosion is a serious constraint to sesame production in this area, and farmers have found that planting sorghum in their sesame fields helps guard against wind damage. The sorghums grown in this area are usually firmly rooted and have strong stems which aid in resisting wind erosion. Thus, farmers gain three advantages by planting sorghum in their sesame fields: 1) it serves as a food source for humans; 2) it serves as animal fodder; and 3) it serves as a wind break for sesame plants. Therefore, sorghum production in this farming system is very critical, and it is necessary for agricultural researchers to understand the many functions it serves to fully assess its importance.

Sesame

Sesame is one of the most important cash crops farmers grow in this region of North Kordofan. Ninety-three percent of the sample farmers (37 of 40) grew some sesame in their fields. Fifty-one percent of all land cultivated was in this cash crop (365.5 mukhammas). In addition, for each farmer, the average proportion of his total cultivated land that was planted in sesame was .48.

Several locally recognized types of sesame are grown in the El Obeid region. The local names for these are simsim baladi/danameet, simsim jabarook, and simsim HireeHri. Simsim baladi/danameet is a long maturing variety (100-120 days) with multiple branches and the highest pod production of the sesames grown. Simsim jararook is an intermediate maturing variety (80-100 days) with fewer branches and lower pod production than baladi/danameet. Simsim HireeHri is an early maturing variety (70-80 days) with few branches and the lowest pod production of the three types. Baladi/danameet tends to be dark green in color while jabarook and HireeHri are successively lighter shades of green. Simsim HireeHri is usually planted by close spacing on previously fallow land (buur) in order to realize a higher yield while the other two types are usually planted on previously cultivated land.

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18 In two of the villages under study, mariisa is consumed by most of the farmers, while in the other village, very few people drink mariisa. The strictness with which Islamic values are upheld appears to account for this difference between villages.

19 There were exceptions to this pattern. Sometimes farmers plant jabarook or even baladi/danameet on previously fallow land if simsim HireeHri seeds were not available.