In Umm Ramad, only 29 percent of the land cultivated was in sesame, however 87 percent of the farmers planted some in their fields (13 of 15). As in El Kharta, baladi/danameet was the dominant type grown, followed by jabarook and HireeHri. Only two farmers grew more than one type, and no farmers mixed seeds of different types before planting.

The extensive cultivation of sesame among farmers in this region has an important bearing on the farming system of this area. Sesame has significantly displaced subsistence crops such as millet and sorghum to the point that farmers are depending on the revenue gained from sesame to purchase food supplies which supplement the grain supplies grown on their own fields. For this reason, the extent of sesame cultivation is a good measure of the integration of these farm communities into the cash economy. Aside from foodstuffs, cash generated from sesame sales is also used to purchase other commodities offered by urban markets which cannot be locally purchased. This shift away from locally produced goods to market purchased goods represents a shift in taste and values, to the point that farmers are relying heavily on sesame to satisfy their material wants. Therefore, a cash crop like sesame does, and will continue to play a critical role in the farm household economy.

Aside from being a source of cash, sesame is also used as a source of food. Farmers consume sesame raw, mix it with other vegetables and consume it as a main dish, or grind it up to make an oil used in food preparation. In addition, sesame is used as a source of fodder. The pods are saved during threshing and fed to camels, and the leafy stems remaining in the fields after cutting are consumed as fodder by livestock.

Thus, as with the other crops farmers grow, sesame serves a number of functions in addition to being a source of cash. Agricultural researchers should be aware of these when they consider ways of improving farm production in this region.

Groundnuts

Groundnuts are the second most important cash crop grown in the El Obeid area. This crop is more extensively cultivated to the southwest of El Obeid than to the north and east. Since two of the villages in this initial sample are in the areas where few groundnuts are grown, the crop's importance is perhaps under-represented in the findings below.

Forty-eight percent of the farmers interviewed grew groundnuts (19 of 40). The total amount of land cultivated in this crop was 70 mukhammas, which represents 10 percent of the total land cultivated.21

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20 Umm Ramad farmers grow two main cash crops. Aside from sesame, groundnuts are also extensively cultivated. Most farmers plant some of both.

21 The size of the cultivated holdings in groundnuts tend to be smaller than those of other crops because of the high cost of labor inputs required to grow this crop.