



Partnership and Land in quality seed potato multiplication in the central highlands of Kenya

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Introduction

Access to land is central to adequate and quality seed multiplication in Kenya. Seed production is important because potato seed comprises 42 % of the total production cost. However, much of the government land, particularly that of Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) meant for research and seed multiplication was grabbed resulting in inadequate quality seed in the market. To overcome the constraint KARI forged partnerships comprised of public, private and farmers' groups. Effective production of quality potato seed depends on the interaction between enough land, crop agronomic practices (e.g., rotation, seed replenishment) and the synergetic roles of the various partners.

Objective

The study seeks to unravel the link between partnerships focussing in seed seed multiplication and the history of land tenure in Kenya.

Method

The research was conducted at KARI Tigon, a research and development institution and four self-help groups (S.H.G) in the central Kenya highlands. The study integrated three different qualitative techniques: participant observation; key informant interviews and focus group interviews in addition to secondary sources



Figure 1. Partnerships in quality seed multiplication in the central Kenya highlands

Results



Figure 2. Quality seed multiplication at KARI Tigon

Partnership and quality seed multiplication

- Farmers groups' provided land and performed all the specialized activities of seed multiplication.
- The Ministry of agriculture (MoA) provided extension services.
- KARI Tigon provided quality basic seed and technical knowhow.
- Development partners (e.g., USAID), GTZ and CIP) funded the aeroponic tissue culture (TC) infrastructure that produced the mini-tubers.

Results

Farmers' groups performance in Quality seed multiplication

- Group one and two rented land and multiplied quality seed in the first season. In the second season land was repossessed by their owners. The groups did not get any other land for seed multiplication resulting in their collapse.
- Group three's first crop was affected by bacterial wilt and was disqualified as seed because the group did not follow the crop's agronomic practices to the letter. The group could not find any more clean land to continue the task of seed multiplication. The members abandoned seed multiplication and opted for other less risky crops such as indigenous vegetables.



Figure 3. Seed Potato Famers' field day



Figure 4. A farmer sorting and selecting seed potato

- Group four managed to multiply quality seed but the yields were lower than those produced at KARI Tigon. This was mainly because the group lacked enough land for the three years rotational program. Besides, the group did not practice the three season flush-out seed production system due to inadequate basic seed.



Figure 5. Quality basic seed at KARI Tigon

Conclusions

- Partnership originated as a strategy for producing quality seed multiplication under constraining land conditions. However, the partnerships did not perform as was envisioned due to constraining complexities of land tenure, access, distribution and ownership in the region.

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