

Private Contracting versus Community Seed Production Systems: Experiences from Farmer-Led Seed Enterprise Development of Indigenous Vegetables in Tanzania

The growing scourge of malnutrition due to unhealthy and imbalanced diets has led to increased public health awareness and advocacy for diversifying diets with highly nutritious indigenous vegetables and fruits. Several studies have shown that indigenous vegetables rich in micronutrients, vitamins, antioxidants, and other health-related phytochemicals with antibiotic, probiotic and prebiotic properties can play a key role in addressing human nutrition and development. However, a major reason for the low adoption of indigenous vegetables from Africa is the inability of formal, centralized seed production systems to meet their complex and diverse seed requirements. Drawing on experiences in Tanzania with amaranth, African nightshade and African eggplant, this paper provides a preliminary assessment of the viability of seed production under two farmer-led seed enterprise models, namely, contract seed production with seed companies, and the community-led Quality Declared Seed production systems. Both are examined as strategies for economically viable and sustainable distribution and promotion of indigenous vegetable crops.

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