



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Seed Selection

Seed is an embryonic plant that can be sown for the purpose of producing food.

Seed selection refers to the choice of seed for the next farming season.

Seeds may be selected several times of the year. In fact, some farmers decide to use certain seeds from particular crops they have planted – deciding the quality is good enough for the next planting season.

Seed is one of the crucial elements in determining the success of the agriculture season. The potential benefit of good seed selection to crop productivity and food security can be enormous.

Seed producers have managed to identify seed types based on different requirements. Some seed can be drought resistant and other seed types can be suitable in high rainfall areas. Knowing about different types of seed can be very useful to farmers.

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

Problem: Poor Seed Selection

Small scale farmers often use seed from one year's harvest for planting the following season, but this can sometimes cause poor productivity.

Traditionally, farmers kept varieties that were suitable for use from one season to the other. However, most of that seed has been lost by the introduction of hybrids.

Seed recycling also transmits several diseases.

If seeds from infected fields are used to grow the next crop, the disease will immediately cause serious problems by reducing the expected yields.

Even when seeds are carefully selected they may still carry disease.

While seed selection is mainly aimed at obtaining healthier seeds, it can be used also to maintain and improve the quality of the crop variety.

In a crop field, there are always differences between plants. Some plants may have characteristics that are more suitable than those of other plants.

During the growing season, the farmer can try to observe these differences and mark preferred plants with a ribbon or with a stick. During the harvest, the seeds of these plants can be reserved for growing the next crop. In this way, the farmer can slowly improve the quality of his variety.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Good seeds are essential to grow a strong and healthy crop.

Find out from your listeners their sources of seed.

Why do they choose such seed? That is, what is the criteria they use?

Find out what the benefits are for farmers.

The selection of seeds can be based on a number of things -- such as the type of soils, rainfall patterns, and the size of the crops you intend to produce as well as the yield you want to achieve.

Find out from the farmers what characteristics they follow whenever they are selecting seeds for planting.

A farmer can select seeds for planting based on the seeds' resistant to insects/or diseases.

Planting any available crop does not help a farmer, farming requires investment in order for one to get desirable yields. Investment in seeds suitable for the geographical features and rainfall pattern is a sure way that a farmer may benefit.

Find out from listeners what geographical features they follow whenever they are selecting seeds for farming.

Geographical features such as soil types, availability of water, soil fertility, rainfall period and many other factors help determine suitable seed crops for their areas.

Farmers should select whole seeds when

planting. Farmers should avoid crushed or broken seeds.

The sowing of quality seeds improves germination capacity and crop yields.

Seed should be free from infection.

Seeds should not be mixed with other seeds.

The best seeds should be disease-resistant

Farmers can get assistance on seed selection from agricultural officers.

The introduction of hybrid seeds has reduced the availability of open pollinated seeds used by traditional farmers. Find out if farmers can tell the difference between open pollinated seeds and hybrids?

Ask farmers to consult their agriculture extension officer for this difference and also find out what seed type is suitable in their area.

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment:
Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia:
+260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email:
makwetiskanu@yahoo.com

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO
Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com. Phone: 0966-246-924

Good source of information; Mwape Sichilongo, WWF
Conservation Manager. Email:
msichilongo@wwfzam.org. Phone: +260 966442540