

Local seed systems (and more)

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Touching on...

- Wageningen studies
- Local seed systems and emergency response
- Local seed systems in the emerging political economy of “private – public” partnerships

Arguments

- Ethnographic studies show how farmers select seed (Richards) → farmers have intellectual resources that should be taken into account
- Breeding is not about full-fledged 'design' of new plant types but all about evolution (Simmonds)
- Ultimately, informal and formal seed systems may be complementary (Almekinders)

Wageningen studies

- Interdisciplinary: all studies have elements of ethnography and agroecology / genetics
- Biology matters
- Descriptive, hypothesis-driven, and action research
- The Gambia, Ethiopia (2x), Guatemala, Ghana, Benin

Shawn McGuire

- Sorghum in Ethiopia
- Modular approach (breeding, seed supply)
- Lack of institutional analysis
- Systemic approach to the seed system is needed – looking at both informal and formal seed supply, breeding
- Seed selection is not important in the case of Ethiopian sorghum – assessing, accessing and storing seeds is more important

Edwin Nuijten

- Comparison of millet and rice in The Gambia
- Seed selection (off types) occurs in rice, not in millet
- Breeding system not gender seems to be the determinant
- “Farmer breeding is very much a random process” – not very amenable to improvement
- Best way forward is to improve formal breeding and do Participatory Variety Selection

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- Maize in highland Guatemala
- If seed flow is the main thing farmers do, how does it work?
- Natural selection tends to push varieties to lengthen their growing period, while seed introduction serves to introduce precocious varieties especially in mid-altitude environments
- Modern variety introduction fills this niche
- Evidence of PPB, PVS, and local seed production, but not adding up to a seed system

Comfort Kudjadie

- Sorghum in Northern Ghana
- Action oriented research
- Conscious experimentation to gather evidence instead of reading 'signs'
- Science forms a new platform of interaction between neighbours

Afio Zannou

- Yam in Benin
- Farmers recruit wild yam from the forest
- Contribution of genetic diversity
- Social status

Seed security (Sperling et al.)

- Seed aid is an important (\$) but elusive business
- Exercise in logistics, little discussion about impact on seed systems
- It can have a negative impact
- Often it is not needed
- Seed system security assessment
- Seeds and rights (Archibald & Richards)

Public-private partnerships (PPP)

- CGIAR: PPP only 6% of partnerships (2006) and mainly IRRI, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, and CIP
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- CGIAR Change Management Initiative
- Seed Alliances: EASA, WASA

Benefits

- Getting a hold on private sector research resources (in particular biotechnology)
- Expanding 'product delivery'
- Opening new markets for small holders
- New sources of funding
- Cost reduction

Drawbacks

- Reputation
- Mission drift, real and perceived
- Science-led or demand driven?
- Transaction cost (Golden Rice)
- Unintended consequences
 - Preferential access to CGIAR varieties can lead to unfair competition (IFPRI 2005)

Questions

- Will PPP swamp local innovation (the political economy of knowledge)?
 - Soybean in India (Stone)
 - Maize in the US (Kloppenburg vs. Marglin)
- Will PPP create a viable seed sector (the political economy of seed markets)?
 - Current successful seed sectors (Guatemala) emerged fairly spontaneously and supply commercial farmers