



HOW TO INTRODUCE NEW SEED VARIETIES TO SMALLHOLDER FARMERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM SSTP

The Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership (SSTP) was a USAID-funded project implemented by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, and Tanzania from 2013-2018. Partnering with ag value chain actors, SSTP worked to increase farmer access to improved agricultural technologies.

The Performance Evaluation and Effectiveness in Learning (PEEL) project conducted an independent evaluation assessing SSTP and its impacts. As part of that evaluation, in 2017 and 2018, data on the same 3,300 direct and indirect beneficiary farmers in Ghana, Mozambique, and Tanzania was collected to generate the following learning.

1 For seed uptake, word-of-mouth referrals were most effective.

In Tanzania, AGRA evaluated the “motivating factor” that convinced respondents to try a new seed variety.



53% of respondents cited discussions with a neighbor or relative.



17% referenced a farmer-managed demonstration.



11% cited information provided through an agro-dealer.

Takeaway: Encourage farmers to learn from each other through dramas, radio interviews, and village-based agents who are farmers.

Quick Definitions

Application: Farmer tests a new seed variety or technology to determine whether to adopt it.

Adoption: Farmer decides to incorporate new seed variety or technology into their long-term planting repertoire or management practice.

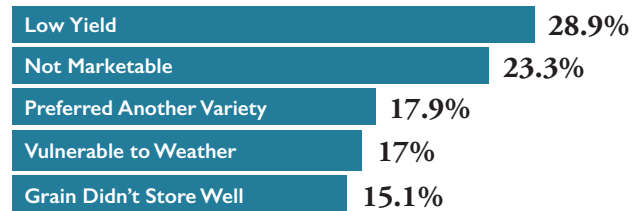
2 Seed cost was not among top reasons for abandoning improved seed varieties.



95%

of farmers paid full price for the seed the first time they applied it.

Top 5 reasons farmers cited for abandoning a new variety:



Takeaway: Programs don't need to focus on seed cost to encourage new application. Instead, programs should support farmer-to-farmer education, farmer access to seeds in markets and agro-dealers. Support creation of and linkages to output markets and ensure seed availability through agro-input dealers who are located within a reasonable distance to the target farmers.

3 Women farmers used new seed varieties at the same rate as men but were less likely to be engaged in SSTP interventions.

Women made up nearly

50%

of farmers planting new varieties, but most were categorized as ‘indirect beneficiaries’.

Quick Definitions

Direct Beneficiary: Smallholder farmers who have heard of SSTP-promoted improved varieties and recalled taking part in activities promoting them.

Indirect Beneficiary: Smallholder farmers who have heard of SSTP-promoted improved varieties and did not take part in activities promoting them.

Takeaway: The application and adoption of improved varieties are evident even among indirect beneficiaries, suggesting the importance of designing programs that leverage direct beneficiaries’ influence on indirect beneficiaries. Seed companies should be supported to enhance their marketing and distribution channels and make free varietal “tester packs” available to all farmers. Donor communities should understand target populations through disaggregated data and support more inclusive outreach and extension. Both government and private extension agents must be trained on the importance of inclusivity. Alternatively, the public and private sectors should promote a population-based or “whole-village” approach to extension.

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