

Tomorrow's varieties get on the catwalk

Ugandan stakeholders evaluate 36 new soybeans

Field Days are like a beauty contest for new varieties. Breeders learn from customer evaluation. The events are also a perfect time for questions.

A good example are the events run by Uganda's Makerere University* and AATF** at Mubuku and Ngetta Zardi. These field days let soybean stakeholders evaluate 36 new varieties. Participants came from farms, local government, local seed companies and processors, the Uganda Seed Trade Association, agro-dealers, buyers and NGOs. Each event attracted around 100 people.



Participants saw the varieties on field tours, and voiced their preferences. At Mubuku, top marks went to Tikolore, followed by Maksoy 3N and 1N. Ngetta participants liked Maksoy 4N, 5N and 1N, as well as S1179-5-58 and SC Sentinel. The overall winners were Tikolore, Maksoy 3N, 1N and 5N, plus SC Sentinel.

What interested visiting farmers the most? High yields, early maturity and drought tolerance, the organizers found.

As well as giving their preferences, participants also asked lots of questions. Most focused on soybean research, production or marketing. Researchers, seed company and processor staff responded. The table below presents a few of the many topics handled.

Question	Response
What do soybeans fetch on the Ugandan market?	Prices vary between areas. In Kasese, in the west, a kilo cost about Sh. 1700-2200 at the time of the Field Days. Up north, the price was about Sh. 1000/kg.
Does the price vary according to eye color?	No. Buyers and processors pay for quality, in the form of other traits (e.g. protein or oil content).
How do different varieties' maturity periods compare?	Maksoy 1N, for example, matures in about 90 days, 3N takes 100 and 2N 105.
How do the varieties perform in cool temperatures?	Temperatures are usually less of a worry than damp. Soybean needs well-drained soils.
Will farmers get free seeds?	The Makerere Soybean Centre produces seed for sale only, at Sh.5000/kg to individuals and Sh.6000/kg to organizations.
How much seed is required to plant an acre (2.5 ha)?	20 kg, at spacings of 6cm within rows and 60cm between rows.

*The Makerere University website provides a 'musical' view of the Ngetta Field Day, and adds further details: <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2019/01/mak-soybean-breeders-turn-music-outreach-tool-acholi-lango-sub-regions>

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