

Whose standards matter? Piloting the implementation of Quality Declared Planting Material inspection guidelines for sweetpotato in Lake Zone, Tanzania

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Abstract

Ensuring that smallholder farmers access quality planting material can contribute to improved food security and poverty reduction. Standards and norms for Quality Declared Planting Material (QDPM) for vegetatively propagated crops were published by FAO in 2010. These were based on the recommendations of an expert consultation in 2007. To date there has been limited experience in translating these standards and norms into practical guidelines for visual inspection procedures for sweetpotato planting material produced by decentralised (tertiary level) multipliers. The paper describes how, through a participatory process, the FAO recommended standards have been translated into operational guidelines for the QDPM inspection of sweetpotato planting material in the Lake Zone Region of Tanzania. In the context of a research-for-development project, a case study approach has been used to pilot three different models with decentralised vine multipliers. The models are based on the concepts of self-inspection; team inspection; and external inspection. These models are being piloted in different agro-ecological zones which reflect: varying disease pressure, access to water and markets. The preliminary findings for disease and pest incidence in different varieties under each inspection model are compared against the FAO recommended standards. The technical, social and institutional implications for the on-going study and future inspection models are discussed.

Key words: Quality Declared Planting Material, sweetpotato, seed systems, inspection