

UNIVERSITÄT HOHENHEIM



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**Informal seed systems and their importance for food
and nutrition security in East Africa - A case study from
Kenya and Uganda**

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify seed system actors and to document the seed transaction networks in Teso South (Kenya) and Kapchorwa (Uganda). Moreover, the potential impact of the informal seed system on the diet of small-scale farmers in the two research areas was to be assessed. The results of this study supplement research conducted in the two areas within the HealthyLAND project. The methods used for data collection were focus group discussions (FGDS) and interviews. In total 15 FGDs, eight with female and seven with male groups, were conducted. In addition, 41 women and 16 men were interviewed. For data analyses social network analysis and excel calculations were used.

The seed networks generally had a low density and were rather homogeneous, implying that there was no actor who had much more influence and power than others. Social relations and in Teso South also markets were the most important seed sources for the surveyed persons. In villages that were further away from the trading centres (Busia or Kapchorwa) less informally sourced seed was transferred among the actors. For the formally sourced seed no difference could be detected in the villages in Teso South. This was different in Kapchorwa where the villages that were located at lower altitudes had accessed less formal seed compared to the two villages in Kapchorwa town or above.

The number of crop species in the food groups (FGs) was rather low in both research areas. Though there was a tendency that female interviewees had more crops compared to the FGD-participants. When categorising the accessed seed into FGs a similar pattern to what is known from the common diets in Kenya and Uganda has been observed. Most persons in both research areas had access to three or more plant-based FGs. In the majority of cases the number of FGs a person can potentially produce from the accessed seed did not increase when adding the FG(s) from formally sourced seed. The bulk of seeds were sourced from the informal seed system underlining its importance for and the contributions to the food and nutrition security of the surveyed persons. However, there is a lot of space for improvements to more nutritious diets and equitable access to seed for all.