SIM-SIM PLANTING AND MANAGEMENT

Meetings held in Masii 17/3/91

Wamunyu 19/3/91

SEEDBED PREPARATION

A fine seedbed should be prepared for sim-sim due to the small size of the seed.

PLANTING - SEED HANDLING

The small size of the seed presents two major problems. One is that of delivery and two is the planting depth.

For effective delivery in the absence of a drill, it is suggested to mix the seed with sand or soil in the proportions seed : sand of 1:2. The mixture would allow for a delivery of a small number of seeds.

After delivery into a farrow or hole, the seed should be covered lightly by a branch for example.

Planting should be as soon as there is enough moisture in the soil or before the rains start.

PLANTING DISTANCES

Broadcast seed would give an uneven plant distribution and result in difficulties in weeding.

Easiest crop management is achieved through row planting. The ox-plough can then be used for weeding.

Currently the recommended distances are 60 cm between rows and 60 cm between planting holes.

THINNING AND WEEDING

Sim-sim seed will germinate in 3.5 days and should be thinned when it is 3.6 inches tall leaving 3 plants per hole.

The crop does not tolerate weeds well and the seedbed should be weeded clean for young plants.

As the crop grows it forms a canopy smothering weeds.

HARVESTING

The crop matures in 110 days. It is harvested when the bottom pods brown and shatter the leaves fall off flowering stop and the stems turn yellow. Harvesting is by cutting the plant and tying in bundles which are stacked upright to dry. The dried crop is then threshed to release the seed.

Threshing is done on tarpaulin, plastic sheeting or cement floor for maximum seed collection.

PREFERRED SOILS

Sim-sim prefers deep well drained soils. Although it survives in poor soils, the yields are higher in the richer soils. Manuring will increase the yield. The crop does well in light sandy soils and loams but poorly in heavy clays which have a tendency to water-logging.

INTER - CROPPING

Sim-sim has been intercropped with maize and millet. In this case the crop is planted between rows of maize or millet.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF PESTS AND DISEASES

The application of natural pest solutions. Plant teas could be applied to combat pests on the crop. The most common pest of the crop in Kenya is the webworm which is however of minor importance in yield loss.

Tobacco Tea

1 Kg (50 leaves) fresh tobacco leaves and boil in 10 litres (1/2 debe) of water for 20 minutes add a small piece of soap. Spray the plant tea on the crop.

Marigold or stinging nettle

Cut fresh plant and dissolve in water for 1 - 2 days and spray.