

Improved Dual Purpose Cowpea Varieties for the Dry Savannas of West Africa. (A06-singh042009-Oral)

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Abstract:

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata* (L.)Walp.) is the most important food legume in the dry savannas of West Africa. Cowpea grains are consumed as food and the haulms are fed to livestock as a nutritious fodder. However, on farmers' fields both grain and fodder yields are low. Therefore, IITA in collaboration with ILRI is developing dual-purpose cowpea varieties with higher grain and fodder yields and with enhanced fodder quality. By crossing the late traditional fodder type cowpea varieties with early semi-erect varieties, improved dual purpose varieties have been developed which yield over 2 t/ha grain and 2.5 t/ha haulms. The haulms of these varieties have about 17.5% crude protein and about 68% dry matter digestibility. Controlled feeding experiments have shown that young rams can gain as much as 80 g/day when fed on 200g to 400g/day/ram of cowpea haulms as a supplement to a basal diet of sorghum stover. The results indicate that improved dual purpose type cowpea varieties can play an important role in enhancing crop-livestock integration in West Africa.

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