

## 20 Cropping pattern

### **Background**

In areas with fairly reliable irrigation, the dry season is usually considered the most appropriate season to cultivate sweetpotato. The yield is potentially higher since clear weather with lots of sunshine supports the growth of the crop. However, farmers also grow sweetpotato during less favorable seasons for various reasons. One reason may be that they grow the crop for seed supply during the main season, or that they anticipate a high market price, despite a lower yield. When the sweetpotato market price suddenly drops drastically, farmers often lose interest to establish this crop and opt for other crops. On the contrary, when the price is high, sweetpotato may be planted for several consecutive seasons, despite the build-up of pest populations that often occurs under such conditions.

Farmers consciously or unconsciously consider many factors in making a decision on whether or not to cultivate sweetpotato during a particular season.



Each season definitely has its advantages and disadvantages. In order to make the best decision, farmers should be able to consciously counterbalance those advantages and disadvantages.

### **Objectives**

After completing this activity the participants will have gained enhanced understanding on what factors to consider when determining the cropping pattern.

### **Materials**

- Newsprint paper.
- Felt-tip markers.

### **Activity steps**

#### **A Cropping pattern habits**

A.1 Ask several participants to list the three major crops they cultivated over the past few seasons. List their reasons for choosing these crops. Write the answers on a sheet of newsprint paper in the format of a table such as the example below:

Name of farmer	Major crop two seasons ago	Major crop during previous season	Current major crop
1.			
2.			
3.			
Reasons	1. 2. etc.	1. 2. etc.	1. 2. etc.

#### **A.2 Discussion:**

- What factors do farmers normally consider when choosing a crop to cultivate during a particular season?
- To what extent can farmers influence the various factors mentioned in order to optimize their decision?

### **For more information see:**

- Cropping pattern (Part III, Section 6.5).