

Practical guide: pearl millet variety evaluation with farmers

1. Invitations

Invite 2-5 farmers at a time, who have similar interests or type of farming to conduct the evaluation. Please explain to them, that their input is important, so that the best, most preferred varieties of millet can become available to many farmers. Fix a date and time of day that is convenient to the farmers. Invite at least 2-3 groups of women and 2-3 groups of men to every trial you are conducting.

2. Labelling the plots

The plots should be labelled with the names of the varieties as follows:

Entry number	Variety Number/Pedigree	Variety Name used by farmers
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Please label the plots with the variety name that will be used in the Gambia (3rd column above) in large letters so everyone can see it – and remember the varieties by their name.

3. Presenting the trial field to the farmers

If the farmer who grew the trial is available, it is best that he presents to the visitors how he cultivated this field of millet, and which variety he used to sow the rest of the field, around the trial.

4. Presenting the varieties to the visiting farmers

Show every variety to the farmers and answer any questions they may have about problems encountered, management practices, etc.

5. Open-ended evaluation of advantages and disadvantages of the varieties (more details in separate *Practical Guide on open ended evaluation generally*)

Ask the farmers who are visiting to freely express their opinions, concerns and thoughts. Ask questions like: 'What do you think about this variety?' 'What do you see in this plot?' 'What do you think could be advantages/disadvantages of this variety for you?' 'Why do you say ...?'. Please encourage every member of the group to speak. If one or two people are really dominating the discussion, you may have to interview them separately from the 'more quiet ones'.

Please note in the first column the name of the variety you are discussing with the farmers. Please note in the next two columns, using the words of the farmers - also in local language - they are using to describe the varieties and their thoughts about it, in terms of advantages and disadvantages.

6. Ranking and Thanking

Ask the group of farmers to rank the varieties from best to worst, by consensus. If they cannot agree, please add a separate column, and describe why the farmers have a different opinion.