EFFECT OF HARVEST AND POSTHARVEST PRACTICES ON SEED QUALITY OF JUTE MALLOW VEGETABLES

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African leafy vegetables (ALVs) are an important source of nutrients, income and traditional medicines in Kenya. However, their production has been constrained by lack of high quality seed due to varied farmers’ harvest and post harvest practices. Limited research has been undertaken on the production of quality ALVs seed on farmers’ fields. This study was carried out to investigate to identify optimal harvest and post harvest practices as far as seed quality of jute mallow (an ALV) is concerned. Field experiments were established in Kakamega and Siaya districts using Random Complete Block Design (RCBD) with 3 replicates. Agronomic, harvest and post harvest practices identified during a farmers’ survey were used in these field experiments. Seed viability (measured by % germination) and vigour (measured by speed of germination index) was determined for the seeds obtained from the field experiments. Data obtained from field experiments was subjected to ANOVA and T-tests using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS). In Kakamega, seeds harvested at black pod stage from non defoliated plants, which were hand shelled and dried in the sun had higher percent germination and speed of germination indices for both seasons. In Siaya, jute mallow seeds harvested from non defoliated plants at black pod stage had significantly higher percent germination and speed of germination indices than other combinations. Season and site significantly affected percent germination and speed of germination index of the seeds harvested during field experiments. It was concluded that seasons, harvest and post harvest practices need to be considered by farmers in their quest to obtain good quality jute mallow seeds.

Key words: Jute mallow; Seed quality