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**Title: Sticking with old maize seed: Role of agro-dealers in driving variety turnover in Kenya**



The Kenyan maize seed sector stands out in Africa, exhibiting high hybrid adoption rates, growing number of seed companies, and an extensive agro-dealer network. Nonetheless, maize yields remain low and varietal turnover has been disappointing. While significant attention has focused on understanding the overall growth of the seed sector, distribution networks and their role in varietal turnover have been neglected. This paper investigates the incentives, strategies, and capacities of agro-dealers to sell new improved maize seeds. Data was collected during the 2019 seed-purchasing season from agro-dealer owners (n=80) and farmers immediately following their seed purchase (n=466). Results show that varieties released 15 years ago or more comprised 85% in volume of the Kenyan maize seed market. While 60 different varieties were available in the market, the top three varieties in the different agro-ecological zones were responsible for over 50% of the market share and on average were 20 years old. Roughly 20% of farmers switched seed varieties in 2019, but they tended to replace their previously used varieties with other relatively old varieties that were the most prevalent at agro-dealers. Agro-dealers stocked their varieties mainly on what farmers requested and had limited engagement with seed-producing companies, local governments, or others for seed promotion. However, where farmers changed variety, agro-dealers influenced the decision in almost 30% of the cases. Results cast doubt about the influence of traditionally used methods to promote hybrid adoption, such as demonstration plots and radio advertising. Future research needs to test options to increase sales of new hybrids at agro-dealerships, including incentives for agro-dealers to promote new varieties, information provision at agro-dealerships, and improved mechanisms for risk-benefit sharing between agro-dealers and seed businesses.