

Abstract

A case study, involving 60 representative farmers from three administrative divisions of Yatta district, was conducted to identify abandoned crops (AC) of ecological and nutritional significance for reintroduction. Participatory techniques were used to collect information on; agricultural production constraints, AC of ecological and nutritional significance, reasons for crop abandonment, pathways of nutrient losses from the farming system and locally available resources for supporting production of AC. The constraints to crop production in the administrative divisions were; poor soil fertility, soil erosion, unreliable rainfall, inadequate labour and lack of farm inputs. The crops; sorghum, cassava, finger millet, sweet potatoes and pumpkins that were popular in the 1960s and 1970s had been abandoned in favour of new crops such as maize and horticultural crops. The key reasons for crop abandonment in the divisions were; high input prices, a young generation disinterested in agriculture, attack by pests and diseases, and farmers' preference for high value crops. The principal pathways of nutrient losses in the three divisions were; crop harvests and sales and, soil erosion. The local resources available for supporting production of AC were manure, crop residues and compost, and trash and stones to control soil erosion. Based on the constraints to crop production, reasons for crop abandonment and farmers' knowledge and resources, integrated technological packages, tailored towards production and reintroduction of the AC crops are being tested.