

Communicating information on maize hybrids through leaflets: What works from farmers perspective?

Figure 1:
Seed Company Leaflets



To market new seed products successfully, seed companies must communicate product attributes and performance details effectively to farmers. The distribution of seed leaflets is a very popular method used by maize seed companies in Kenya. However, there is no existing knowledge on how farmers perceive seed leaflets or insights into best practices that could enable seed companies to inform farmers effectively about new seed products. Using the hybrid maize seed product market in Kenya as a case study, this brief looks at the effectiveness of seed-product leaflets in transmitting information to farmers.

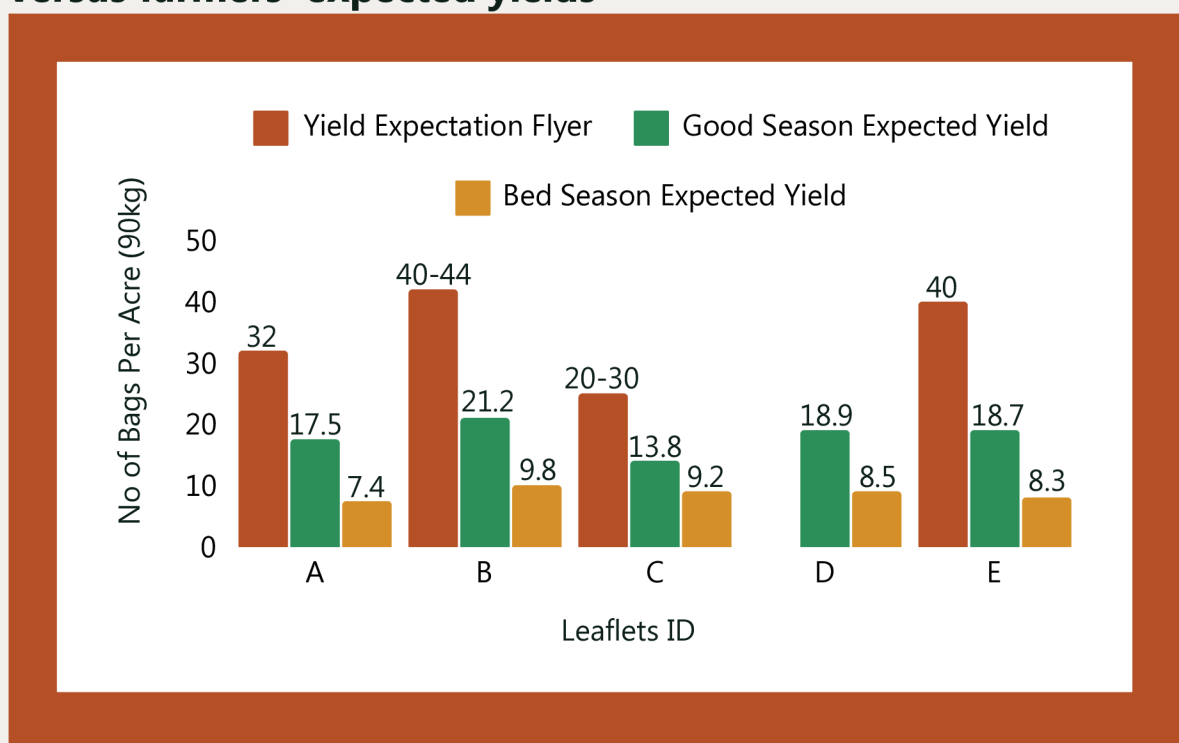
In 2023, we conducted a farmer survey (n=646) and focus-group discussions (n=10) in Machakos County to understand what farmers expected from leaflets and how they evaluated the leaflets currently used by seed companies. While farmers have a great interest in leaflets, the availability of these was limited at points of sale. Our interactions with farmers brought to light multiple opportunities for improvements in leaflet design, both in layout and language as well as in the content that should be included in the leaflets.

Table 1:
Farmers Suggestions on How to Improve Maize Seed Leaflets

Layout	Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local language or Swahili • Clear and readable fonts • No overload of colors • No abbreviations • Visual: A plant and a cob 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traits: maturity period, yield and drought tolerance • Practical info: How to plant the seed and manage seed • Quantity not a problem so long as the information is well structured

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Figure 2:
Yield potential listed on the flyer versus farmers' expected yields



The results also showed that the yield expectations of farmers per acre of land were far below those communicated by seed companies on their leaflets. Large-scale, on-farm testing of currently available varieties by an independent body/entity would allow direct comparison of the performance of available products. These data would not just come from seed companies, where varieties are often tested under optimal conditions, but also from the farmer's peers, which would probably make the data more relatable for the farmers.