EFFECTS OF INTERCROPPING ON FRESH LEAF YIELD OF AMARANTH (A. DUBIUS) IN WESTERN KENYA

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Keywords: diversity, indigenous vegetable, land equivalent ratio (LER), micronutrients, soybean

Abstract: Amaranth (Amaranthus spp.) is an important indigenous vegetable in Kenya, yet factors affecting leaf yield have not been fully investigated. Besides being rich in micronutrients, it has several medicinal properties compared with most traditional vegetables. For the potential of this crop to be exploited, there is a need to look at factors that would contribute to optimal leaf yields. Field experiments were carried out in Teso district of Western Kenya to investigate the effects of intercropping amaranth (A. dubius) with soybean (G. max) on leaf yield of A. dubius at six harvest dates. A split-plot design was used where single rows, double rows, and sole stands formed the main treatments which were replicated three times in two sites (A and B) for two cropping seasons. Data were collected on A. dubius leaf yield at six harvest dates and analysed using split-plot ANOVA. Results indicated that intercropping significantly affected leaf yield in both seasons and sites (P<0.05). Leaf yield of A. dubius was higher in site A than site B and in season two compared with season one. Similarly, higher A. dubius leaf yield was obtained from double row intercrops compared with single row intercrops or sole stands for the two seasons in both sites. There was a significant increase (P<0.05) in leaf yield of A. dubius in weeks 1, 2, and 3, reaching a peak in week 4 before declining in weeks 5 and 6. Average land equivalent ratios (LERs) were 2.1 for single rows in both sites, and 2.6 and 3.0 for double rows in site A and B respectively. Intercropping A. dubius with G. max using double rows provided full potential for sustainable use of biological diversity towards meeting food, health, and economic needs of the Kenyan population.