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The XXI International Grassland Congress / VIII International Rangeland Congress took place in Hohhot, China from June 29 through July 5, 2008.

Proceedings edited by Organizing Committee of 2008 IGC/IRC Conference

Published by Guangdong People's Publishing House

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Marketing of seeds of *Stylosanthes*—a tropical legume in India

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Keywords : *Stylosanthes* , seeds , area and production , market channels

Introduction *Stylosanthes* is a hardy legume known for its adaptability to different soil , rainfall and climatic regimes . Its natural adaptation to varied climatic factors along with its other positive characters like preventing soil erosion , improving soil quality by fixing atmospheric nitrogen and increase fodder availability created a huge demand for stylo seeds in watershed programs . Over the last three-four decades , India has supported rehabilitation of micro watersheds through a range of schemes and programs in which it invests over 300 billion rupees annually . Like wise , bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are funding many watershed development programs in India . This mushrooming of watershed programs through out India created a huge demand for Stylo seeds . The formal grass and legume seed production sector in India , is small in size and confined to production and supply of selected species only . In some pockets of the country , farmers are involved in production of forage seeds . In Deccan plateau , it is observed in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh where farmers of more than 30 villages produce seeds of *Stylosanthes* , since 1977 . A study was conducted to analyze the marketing of stylo seeds by the farmers of the said district .

Materials and methods The research was carried out in April 2001 and qualitative and quantitative methods were used . Data were drawn both by primary and secondary sources . A survey of 13 stylo seed production villages was conducted in Hindupur-Gorantla areas of Anantapur . Farmers were selected randomly and in each village focused group discussion was held . In-depth interviews were held with a sample of dealers to investigate the nature of contracts , social relations of the enterprise and supply-demand analysis of Stylo seed industry .

Results and discussion The maximum area under stylo crop was 302 ha and the minimum was 6 ha . Accordingly the mean yield varied from 12 .5 q/ha to 37 .5q/ha (Figure) and the variation in yield could be attributed to different management practices being followed for the same crop in different villages indicating scope to introduce scientific management of stylo seed crop to obtain the optimum yield levels .

The stylo seed production area increased gradually in these villages . This lead to evolution of different market channels . Three market channels emerged from the study are-

- 1 . Farmers-village agents-old dealers of stylo seeds (Hindupur)-Large private seed dealers in different states-Consumers (state government and non-government agencies) : Dealers identified in this channel are involved in the business from many years and have well established contacts in different parts of the country , through which they market the seeds .
- 2 . Farmers-nascent dealers-consumers : The nascent dealers travel different places for orders , buy accordingly from farmers and sell . Seed dealers of these two channel range in size , managing business between 500 tons and 10 tons . Price is fixed on market demand and is inversely related to the production . Growers have the option of selling seeds immediately or otherwise based on price factor , as they can be stored without much special care . However , most of the growers reported that they sell certain portion immediately to cover the investment cost .
- 3 . Farmer members-sheep society-sheep union-state veterinary department-end users : This channel operated upto 1994 , and later became defunct due to mismanagement .(the foregoing points need some clarification and improved stylistic change)

Conclusion The informal market channels thus dominate the stylo seed market and suggest the need to have alternate formal channels to ensure better competition and fair price for the growers .

