

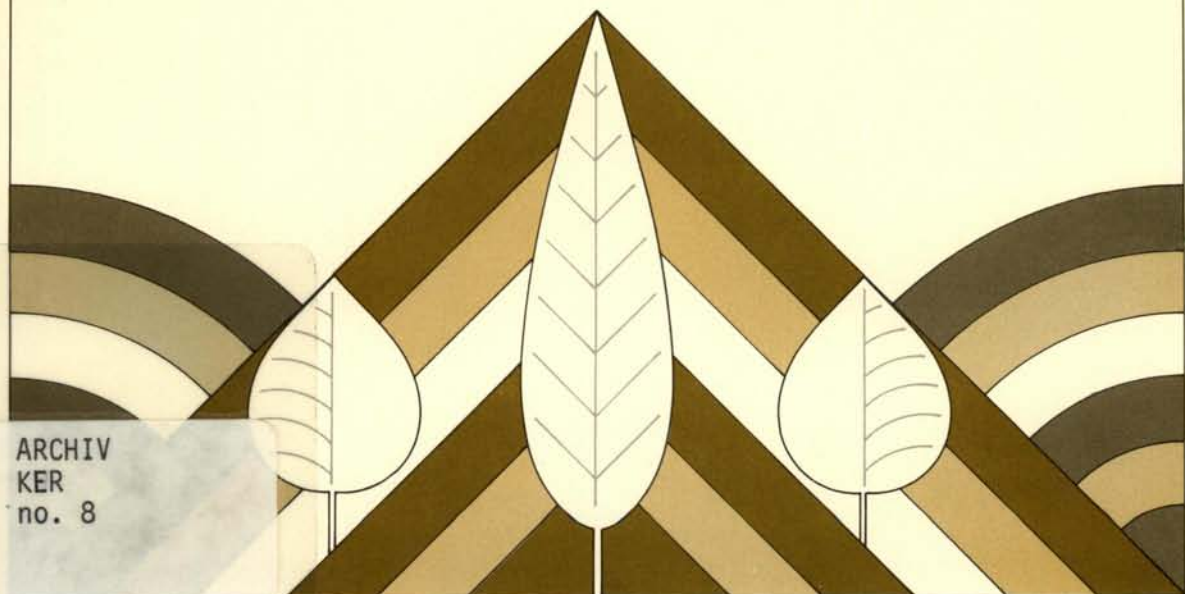
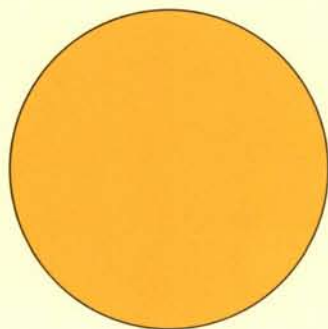
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INTERCROPPING in semi-arid areas

Report of a symposium held at the
Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry
and Veterinary Science,
University of Dar es Salaam,
Morogoro, Tanzania,
10-12 May 1976

Editors:
J.H. Monyo, A.D.R. Ker,
and Marilyn Campbell

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Farmer's field near Ibadan, Nigeria, showing intercrop of cowpea under maize

Contents

Foreword <i>A. D. R. Ker</i>	5
Addresses to the Participants	
Welcoming address <i>A. M. Hokororo</i>	8
Opening address <i>Hon Mr J. S. Malecela</i>	9
Summaries of Papers Presented	
An appraisal of some intercropping methods in terms of grain yield, response to applied phosphorus, and monetary return from maize and cowpeas <i>Y. A. Sudi, H. O. Mongi, A. P. Uriyo, and B. R. Singh</i>	12
Rhizosphere populations in intercropped maize and soybean <i>T. H. M. Kibani, C. L. Keswani, and M. S. Chowdhury</i>	13
Intercropping for increased and more stable agricultural production in the semi-arid tropics <i>B. A. Krantz, S. M. Virmani, Sardar Singh, and M. R. Rao</i>	15
Cropping systems research: the scope and strategy for research in crop combinations based on experience of previous and current studies <i>B. N. Okigbo</i>	16
Mixed cropping research at the Institute for Agricultural Research, Samaru, Nigeria <i>E. F. I. Baker and Y. Yusuf</i>	17
Crop production practices in intercropping systems <i>R. C. Finlay</i>	18
Effects of crop combinations and planting configurations on the growth and yield of soybeans, millet, and sorghum in intercropping <i>R. K. Jana and V. M. Sekao</i>	19
Intercropping with sorghum at Alemaya, Ethiopia <i>Brhane Gebrekidan</i>	21
Studies on mixtures of maize and beans with particular emphasis on the time of planting beans <i>D. S. O. Osiru and R. W. Willey</i>	23
Intercropping of cassava with vegetables <i>G. F. Wilson and M. O. Adeniran</i>	24
Some aspects of the productivity and resource use of mixtures of sunflower and fodder radish <i>R. W. Willey and D. A. Lakhani</i>	25
Preliminary results of intercropping trials in Zaire with maize and certain legumes <i>Thomas G. Hart and Mangha Kewe</i>	27

(con't.)

Contents (concluded)

Effects of maize height difference on the growth and yield of intercropped soybeans <i>D. R. Thompson, J. H. Monyo, and R. C. Finlay</i>	29
Intercropping as a means of producing off-season tomatoes during the hot summer months in the Sudan <i>A. T. Abdel Hafeez</i>	30
Development of cowpea ideotypes for farming systems in Western Nigeria <i>Olatunde A. Ojomo</i>	30
Cereal-legume breeding for intercropping <i>R. C. Finlay</i>	31
Cowpea as an intercrop under cereals <i>H. C. Wien and D. Nangju</i>	32
Selection criteria in intercrop breeding <i>R. C. Finlay</i>	33
Experiments with maize-bean and maize-potato mixed crops in an area with two short rainy seasons in the highlands of Kenya <i>N. M. Fisher</i>	37
Pest control in mixed cropping systems <i>H. Y. Kayumbo</i>	39
Measuring plant density effects on insect pests in intercropped maize-cowpeas <i>B. M. Gerard</i>	41
Effects of spraying on yield of cowpeas grown in monoculture and under maize, sorghum, or millet <i>H. Y. Kayumbo, R. C. Finlay, and S. A. Doto</i>	44
Possible relationship between intercropping and plant disease problems in Uganda <i>J. Mukiibi</i>	45
Attempted control of virus incidence in cowpeas by the use of barrier crops <i>S. A. Shoyinka</i>	46
Induced resistance to bean rust and its possible epidemiological significance in mixed cropping <i>D. J. Allen</i>	46
A limited objective approach to the design of agronomic experiments with mixed crops <i>N. M. Fisher</i>	47
Systematic spacing designs as an aid to the study of intercropping <i>P. A. Huxley and Z. Maingu</i>	50
Future directions of intercropping and farming systems research in Africa <i>A. D. R. Ker</i>	51
Developing mixed cropping systems relevant to the farmers' environment <i>D. W. Norman</i>	52
Assessment of innovations in intercropping systems <i>C. D. S. Bartlett, E. A. Mandy, and G. I. Mlay</i>	58
Summary and Conclusions	
<i>D. W. Norman</i>	59
<i>H. Doggett</i>	62
References	63
List of Participants	67

Systematic Spacing Designs as an Aid to the Study of Intercropping

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Although intercropping and relay cropping are widely practiced in the tropics, particular systems are usually highly location-specific (64). As compared with sole cropping, socioeconomic benefits are often better established than are ecological or technical ones (44) and this is sometimes due to comparisons being made at different total plant populations (21). Indeed, the exploitation of environmental resources will be highly dependent not only on crop combination but also on plant population. Furthermore, the interaction between these two factors may well vary depending on the time and magnitude of the particular environmental components involved and the stages of plant development achieved, so that ecological benefits are apparent in some instances from intercropping (21) but not in others (43, 44). A more fundamental approach is likely to sharpen our understanding of the value of intercropping more rapidly than just a proliferation of empirical trials, particularly as the number of variables involved is so large and their interactions so complex. Experiments involving systematic spacing de-

signs could well assist here (58).

Both the extent of between-component competition and within-component interference can be tested by using a replacement crop series within a systematic spacing design (e.g., a "fan"). The theoretical results of such a trial were discussed by comparing the *actual* yields of the individual crop components used in such a design with their *predicted* yields, the latter based on the sole crops grown over a wide range of plant populations using the same design.

Thus, for a mixture, both the best crop ratio and spacing to optimize yield per unit area of harvested parts, calories, protein, or cash, can be predicted from the results of a few preliminary experiments that provide the yield/plant population response curves of the components, and the extent to which these are altered in mixtures. It is then possible to compare this with the maximum sole crop returns for each component grown at its optimum plant population. The results of combining crops with different types of sole-crop yield/plant population response curves were then outlined.