



Does it Pay to Buy Hybrid Seed?

Hybrid seed is more expensive than saved or recycled seed. Under good farming management hybrid seed can yield more. The question is, “do you get enough yield increase to justify the higher cost of hybrid seed?”

To determine if you should buy hybrid or local seed, you should think of it as a business decision. To make a business decision, you need to estimate three things.

1. What is value of a 50 kg sack of maize if you are going to sell it? Example - Kw 340/sack
2. What is the cost of hybrid vs recycled seed (OPV) per lima? Example – Kw 900/10 kg = Kw 540/lima
3. What will be the yield increase using hybrid seed vs OPV seed? Example – 2 sacks/lima

If the higher cost of hybrid seed for 1 lima is 540 Kw, it would take an increase of 1.6 sacks of maize/lima (540/340) to pay for the hybrid seed. For low management growers, spending the money on hybrid seed would not be a good business decision. If the growers are going to manage their fields well, hybrid seed can be a good investment.

Below is a table made from data collected in Zambia estimating the yield increases using hybrid seed vs OPV for different management systems

Scenario	OPV (local) yield	Hybrid Yield	Yield increase
Low inputs Poor weeding	1.5-2.0 t/ha (7.5-10 sacks/Lima)	1.6-2.2 t/ha (8-11 sacks/Lima)	0.75 sacks/Lima
Moderate inputs Timely weeding	2.0-2.5 t/ha (10-12.5 sacks/Lima)	2.3-3.0t/ha (11.5-15 sacks/Lima)	2 sacks/Lima
Good Management Good fertility	2.5-3.0t/ha (12.5-15 sacks/Lima)	3.0-3.8 t/ha (15-19 sacks/Lima)	3.25 sacks/Lima
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