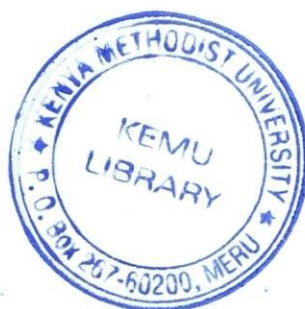


**STATUS OF YAM (*Dioscorea spp*) PRODUCTION,  
DISTRIBUTION AND UTILIZATION IN MERU  
CENTRAL, KENYA**

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# STATUS OF YAM (*Dioscorea spp*) PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION AND UTILIZATION IN MERU CENTRAL, KENYA

## ABSTRACT:

In Kenya yam is treated as a minor crop despite its high potential for income generation and provision of food security. A field study was undertaken to establish the status of yam in Meru Central, a major yam production area in Kenya. The study focused on identification, characterization and distribution of existing cultivars in three agro ecological zones. Methods of utilization were also determined. A total of 120 farmers, 40 traders and 10 extension and research officers were interviewed.

The crop has a rich biodiversity. Twenty four different cultivars were identified by local names. They were distinguishable through tuber, stem, leaf and maturity characteristics. Farmer's preference for cultivars was based on yields, maturity period and ease to harvest. It was concluded that further work should be carried out to characterize cultivars at molecular level. .

Yams were always grown as intercrops with other crops. No farm inputs were used other than farm yard manure. The crop matured within 4 to 36 months and yielded between 25-260kg per plant per year. The roots were primarily used in boiled form. Approximately 80% of farmers relied on oral literature for yam production and utilization. The crop appeared to have potential for provision of food security and income generation. It was concluded that knowledge on yam production and utilization with elderly members of the society should be harnessed and documented .