

Granaries



Agrodok 25

Granaries

Martien Hoogland
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First edition: 2000
Second edition: 2005

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Printed by: Digigrafi, Wageningen, The Netherlands

ISBN Agromisa: 90-8573-018-X

Foreword

This booklet appears in a series of Agrodoks published by CTA and the Agromisa Institute in Wageningen. Agrodoks provide practical information on small-scale sustainable agriculture in the tropics. Until now, the Agrodok series has generally focused on subjects that are directly related to the cultivation, production, processing, storage and soil use of a variety of agricultural products (food crops, cattle, small farm animals, dairy products). However, Agromisa has recently become aware of a growing need for information directed more at the level of organisation and management of these products. This booklet on granaries is an attempt to meet part of this need.

The information provided in this Agrodok has been compiled from NGO reports and conversations with field workers who have been involved for a number of years in the establishment and operation of granaries. The text is based as much as possible on practical experience. The authors want to thank everyone who has contributed their practical knowledge to this booklet, especially Erik van Altena of SNV Nederland and the *Compagnie Malienne pour le Developpement de Textiles* (CMDT) who were willing to share their valuable experiences with us.

Because little has been published on this subject, information had to be gathered from many diverse sources. This booklet could not have been written without the successful efforts of Martien Hoogland, who was able to gather this information and put it down on paper. The authors would also like to thank all of the other workers at Agromisa for their enthusiasm and contributions to this project. More in particular we have to thank here Barbara Oranje for her drawings and Maritn le Fèvre, for all the efforts in giving this publication its final lay-out.

Martien Hoogland and Peter Holen

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1 Introduction

“Any commodity is politically significant if huge economic and social interests are at stake. Grains are particularly significant because, according to place and to purse, maize, wheat, barley, sorghum, millet or rice form the basis of the diets for both the poor and the rich.”

M. van de Velde, In: *The Courier*, No. 114, March 1989, p. 62

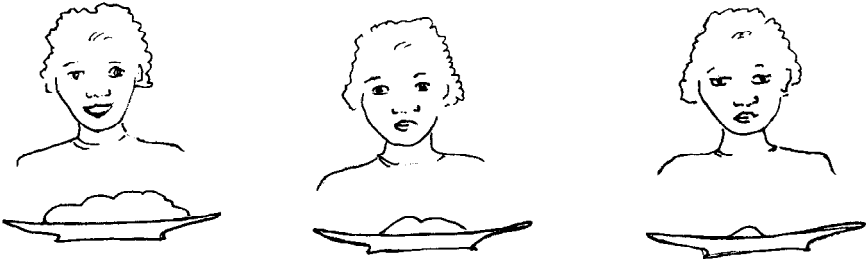
Most people in the world depend on grains, such as rice, corn, wheat, sorghum and barley, for their main source of food. Due to this dependency and the varying availability of grains, many grain-producing families experience periodic shortages or they are regularly confronted with unequal social and economic relations within their village or region. To decrease the negative effects of this dependency, a large number of organised granaries have been established in the past decades by governments, the mission institute or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in diverse regions of Africa. The experiences and results of these initiatives vary greatly. By presenting a summary of these experiences we aim to give individuals and groups involved in the establishment and management of a granary a source of information and direction, which will support the proper functioning of their granary.

1.1 The granary

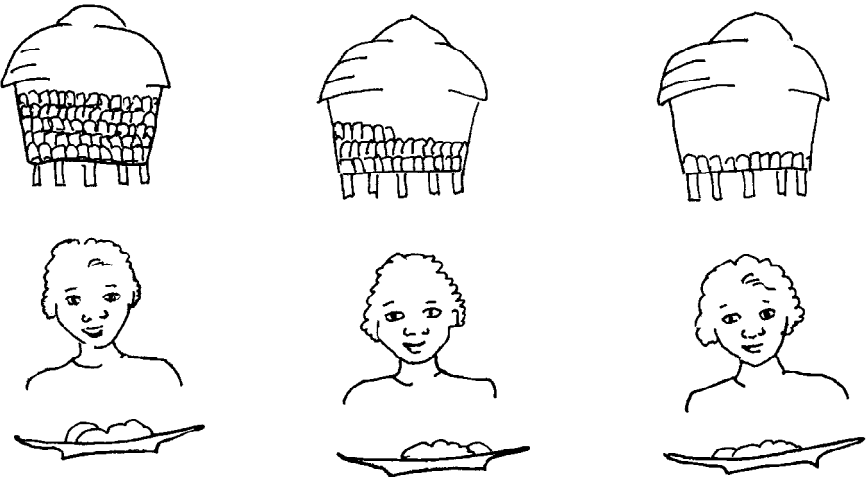
Granary is a general term for a form of cooperative in which grain is stored so that it can be distributed at a later date. There can be different reasons for setting up such cooperative, depending on the characteristics of the area. This is explained in detail in Chapter 2. In general it can be said that a granary increases the availability of grain for the households and allows them to be less dependent on the price fluctuations of the crop (due to a surplus or scarcity of the grain).

A well-functioning granary improves the self-sufficiency of a village or community. Grain stays in the village. The food security of the

households is increased and it is sometimes even possible to save some grain, or earn money if the compiled reserve is sold. Needy households can take out a low-interest loan and they can purchase grain at a low price. Large-scale farmers, who can grow more than enough grain to support their own needs, profit by selling their extra grain at a high price.



a: Due to a varying availability of grains, many people experience regular shortages or even a famine.



b: A granary decreases the negative effects of the dependency on grains.

Figure 1: Food availability

Granaries are managed by village councils or by individual groups of farmers who are responsible for the proper functioning of the cooperation. The households that join a granary can *borrow* grain from the granary, which has to be paid back later. The lending of grain is usually done at a relatively low interest rate that is enough to cover the costs of the granary.

1.2 The contents of this Agrodok

This booklet attempts to concisely present the general principles and assumptions that granaries are based on. Wherever possible, these principles and assumptions are demonstrated through examples from different regions of Africa. Based on examples of both good and bad practices, the reader is provided with an answer to the following questions:

- In what situations is it worthwhile to set up a granary?
- How is a granary established?
- What aspects are important in establishing and operating a granary?
- What requirements must be fulfilled for a granary to function well in the long term?

In an attempt to make this book compact and manageable, we have concentrated only on the basic ideas behind granaries and the most important factors influencing their operation. The information presented here cannot be complete. For this reason a list of other sources has been included to help readers find answers to their specific questions. We have also deliberately chosen to leave out aspects having to do with the physical circumstances and processing of grain products, because these are described in detail in other titles in the Agrodok series (numbers 18 and 31).