

many cases, however, crops also matured earlier and gave higher yields. They also flowered earlier – very important in drought-prone areas. In some cases – in chickpea and upland rice for example – less disease was reported. Priming has become very popular with collaborating farmers and their friends and neighbours, because it is simple and cheap yet extremely effective.

Table 1 summarises the crops in which yield benefits from seed priming have been demonstrated, either in researcher-validated, farmer-participatory trials or in replicated on-station experiments. The crops listed

in Table 1A have been extensively tested, while those in Table 1B have shown promise in initial trials and are undergoing further testing. Within each series of the trials shown in the table, it appears that priming occasionally has no benefit. However, no cases were reported where priming was worse than not priming. This is significant because, since priming has essentially zero cost, the practice can be considered as reliable "insurance" for farmers. For practical purposes, overnight soaking has been shown to be effective in all the crops listed in the table, although a superior response is often obtained from soaking rice and maize for 18 hours.



*Proof positive: the primed chickpea on the right is mature and ready to harvest. The non-primed crop, still green in this photo, eventually ran out of water and produced no grain.*