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## *Full Length Research Paper*

# Evaluation and release of new sweet potato varieties through farmer participatory selection

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## Abstract

Low yields and yield instability due to the use of old land races were limiting sweet potato production by resource-poor farmers in South Africa. Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS) is considered an appropriate method to develop varieties for low input agricultural systems. The aim of this study was to evaluate advanced sweet potato genotypes, using PVS, to determine their adaptability and acceptability in targeted production areas. Advanced sweet potato lines and varieties were tested in multi-location trials, maintained collaboratively by resource-poor farmers, agricultural extension officers and research technicians at six sites across the period 2000/2001 to 2002/2003. This study resulted in varietal recommendations for six areas, the release of seven cream-fleshed varieties and one new orange-fleshed variety for alleviation of vitamin A deficiency. Farmer participation proved useful, though a number of shortcomings were identified and recommendations have been made to improve the procedure.

**Key words:** Multi-location trials, participatory varietal selection, sweet potato.

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