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Field documentation - What is essential and relevant information

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Published in:
Development Briefs. Technical

Publication date:
2021

Citation for published version (APA):
Schmidt, L. H. (2021). Field documentation - What is essential and relevant information. *Development Briefs. Technical*, (20).

Download date: 17. Nov. 2026

DEVELOPMENT
BRIEFS
TECHNICAL
No. 20 - August 2021

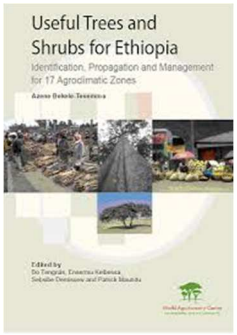
Field documentation – What is essential and relevant information

The purpose of seed labelling

The purpose of seed information is to provide the seed user with knowledge he/she cannot see on the seed lot. That is primarily information on species name, the place seeds were collected, and how many mother trees were collected from. Such information will help the user to decide where seeds can be used and if there is a reasonable genetic variation, as prescribed for the collection.

Species identification

The collector should know the species s/he collects. In case of doubt, a sample of branch and fruit should be maintained for later identification or verification. It is very difficult to identify species on the seed alone. Illustrated seed leaflets and botany books can be used for identification. If in doubt, and herbarium material is not available, seedlings produced from germinated seeds can sometimes help identification.



Location and seed source type

Put the name of the nearest village or name of the collection site. Inform whether collection was done in a plantation, on farmland or in a natural forest. Write both categories if there is a mix of two sources. With the appearance of geocoding, and GPS devices on many mobile phones, exact location of collection can easily be drawn.

Date of collection

The Gregorian calendar has been adopted in most international transfer and communication. However, where other calendar systems are used, make sure to indicate, which system is referred to.

Number of mother trees

Put a mark for each mother tree you collect from while you collect and write the total number down on the label. Try to collect approximately the same quantity of fruits from each tree.

Name of collector

Collectors name is relevant in case additional information is required for documentation

Quantity of seed

If you have a scale, it is practical to weigh the seed and put the quantity on the seed label.

When to fill in the label

It is best to start filling in while in the field to make sure no information is lost. Remember to put a label in each bag, if collection is split into several fruit bags. When seeds are extracted, the seeds are typically put in one bag or container. Tear the other labels to make sure they don't get mixed with other labels.

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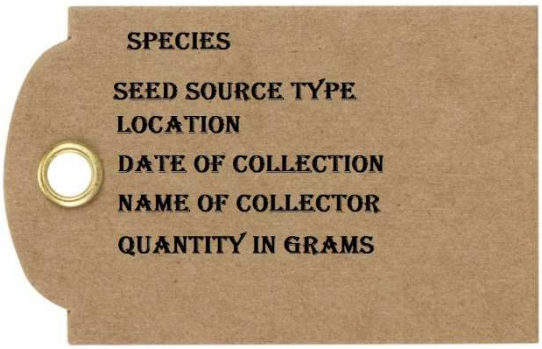

Where to put the label

Put one label inside the seed lot and attach an identical one to the outside. Tie or glue the label to the bag. The double labelling is to make safe the information is not lost. Writing may get unreadable on labels inside the bag if it is not completely dry. Labels outside may be lost during handling. Remember to tear labels attached to fruit bags or strings if they are to be re-used for another collection.

Site information

Seed users may be interested in site specific details such as soil type, pH, topography, climate etc. such information is usually collected and stored in seed source registers. It is thus important to link information on seed lots to information on seed sources. It is usually done by assigning each seed lot with a seed lot ID, which is a code number, that is entered into the seed documentation system at the processing station.

Summary

Essential information on seed label: Species name, location of collection, number of mother trees, quantity of seed in the seed lot.

Do's:

- Fill in label information immediately after collection and fill in with information on quantity after extraction and drying.
- Use two labels for safety, - one inside the seed lot and one attached to the container.
- Throw away redundant labels to avoid confusion of identity of seed lots.
- Fill in forms as exact as possible at the collection site before leaving

Don'ts:

- Do not lose labels during handling
- Do not think you can remember everything

Selected reading

Schmidt, L. 2000. Guide to handling of tropical and subtropical tree seed. Chapter 14, - seed documentation. Danida Forest Seed Centre, Denmark.

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Note: This DB was prepared as an extension note for PATSPO, Ethiopia in 2019