



AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center

# Fact Sheet

## Saving Seeds of Okra

### Production

Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) can be grown on a wide range of soils with good drainage, but sandy loam soils are preferred. Temperatures between 27–30 °C promote rapid and healthy seedling development. Seeds will not germinate below soil temperatures of 17 °C. Seeds should be soaked in water for 24 hours before sowing. Plants grow well in raised beds (20–30 cm high).

### Isolation

Okra flowers (Fig. 1) are often cross-pollinated by insects. An isolation distance of 500 m or more is recommended. An alternative method of keeping seed pure is to bag the flower buds and hand-pollinate once flowers have opened.



Fig. 1. Okra pod and flower

### Selection

Plants for seed multiplication can be selected before flowering, taking into consideration the vigor and habit of the plants. Once flowering begins, plants with off-type flowers should be removed. After the first pods are developed, remove plants with off-type pods. Plants with viral symptoms should be removed as soon as symptoms appear.

### Harvesting

The okra pods mature in a sequence from the base of the plant toward the top (Fig. 2). The pods have tendency to split along the suture when they are dried out. Exposed seeds may be damaged by rain or may drop to the ground; therefore, the pods must be harvested as soon as they have become fully mature (brown color) and before shattering.



Fig. 2. Pods maturing from the base of the plant

### Processing

Pods are easily hand threshed.

### Storage

Dried seeds can be safely stored for at least three years. Place seeds in jars, manila envelopes, cloth or mesh bags, plastic containers, or foil envelopes. The best containers are air-tight, such as a sealed glass jar, metal can, or foil envelope. Protect seed from sunlight.

Store seeds in a cool (below 15 °C is ideal), dry location. Place the seeds in a refrigerator for long-term storage. For short-term storage, keep the seeds in a cool, shady and dry place.

### References

- Kelly, A.F. and R.A.T. George. 1998. Encyclopaedia of seed production of world crops. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rashid, M.A. and D.P. Singh. 2000. A manual of seed production in Bangladesh. AVRDC-USAID-Bangladesh Project. Joydebpur, Gazipur, Bangladesh.