



THE GREEN AGES AGRIBUSINESS REPORT

Seed Crisis in Liberia:

A Case Study of Vegetable Seeds
Accessibility and Affordability

by **JR Farms Africa**

...securing humanity's food future!



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The Green Ages Report is a quarterly publication of JR Farms Limited designed to publish scientific study of critical sub-sectors across the agribusiness value chain in Africa to open possible areas of interventions to Government and Development Partners, and business opportunities for the private sector that will lead to strengthening of the five cardinal goals of JR Farms- food security in Africa, ending hunger in Africa, adding value to agro-commodities in Africa, creating decent jobs for youth and women and raising the next generation of agrarian leaders.



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Overview

JR Farms with support of the Food and Agriculture Organization Country Office in Liberia conducted research into the vegetable seed sector in Liberia- the purpose of this survey is to probe into the scarcity of vegetable seeds and high cost of vegetables production in Liberia and unveil opportunities for investors and development partners in the Liberia seed sector that will lead to availability of affordable vegetables to Liberians.

Introduction

Availability of seeds is very important to ending hunger and ensuring food security; what's more critical is that vegetable seeds are scarce in Liberia, which is a threat to the SDGs 2&3 (zero hunger and ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages). Hence it will be impossible to attain zero hunger and good health without availability and affordability of seeds to produce vegetables and other crops. By extension, since vegetable seeds are scarce and unaffordable, the vegetable itself would be unaffordable for low income households to purchase and consume, hence creating nutritional deficiencies.



In February 2022, the leadership of JR Farms and FAO Liberia agreed to conduct a survey on Liberia's seed sector focusing on vegetables seed, while the survey was financed by JR Farms, FAO Liberia through its country wide network and data management tools administered the survey accompanied by other technical support. The survey was conducted in July 2022 in three (3) counties namely in Lofa, Bong, and Nimba Counties with the goal of understanding current farmers' access to improved vegetable seeds within their locations, their experiences and motivations in cultivating varying types of vegetables. The study discovered several challenges. The assessment provided insights into the specific challenges related to access to seed, particularly for vegetables. At present, there is no standardization body/process for seed certification in the country and the other results that were found are outlined below:



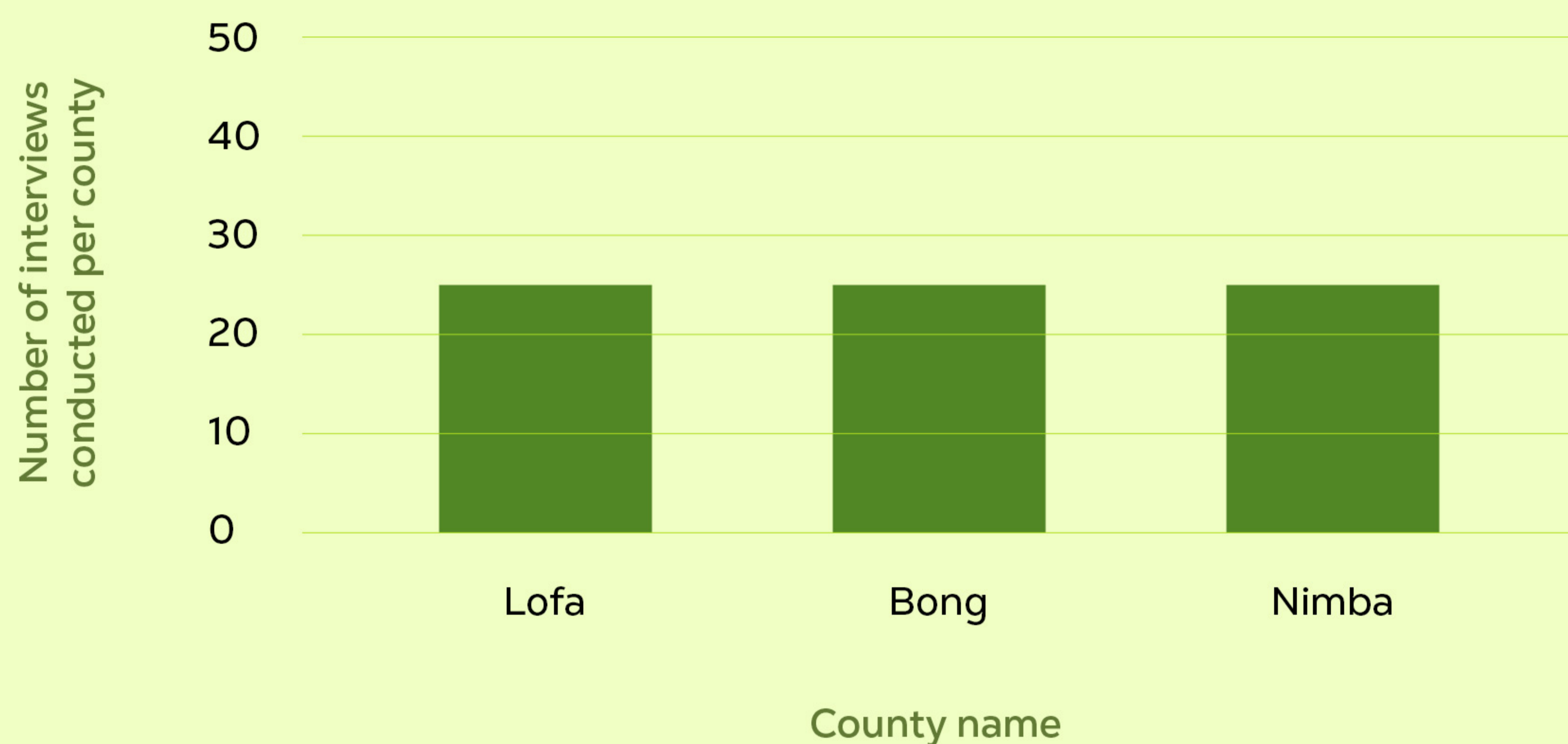
Data Analysis

Data was collected using the online data collection platform *Kobo Toolbox*, using mobile phones and tablets. This allowed for real-time feedback as data was collected at the field level. Where applicable, data was exported into MS Excel for further analysis including a comparison of results.

Outcomes of the Assessment

Figure 1

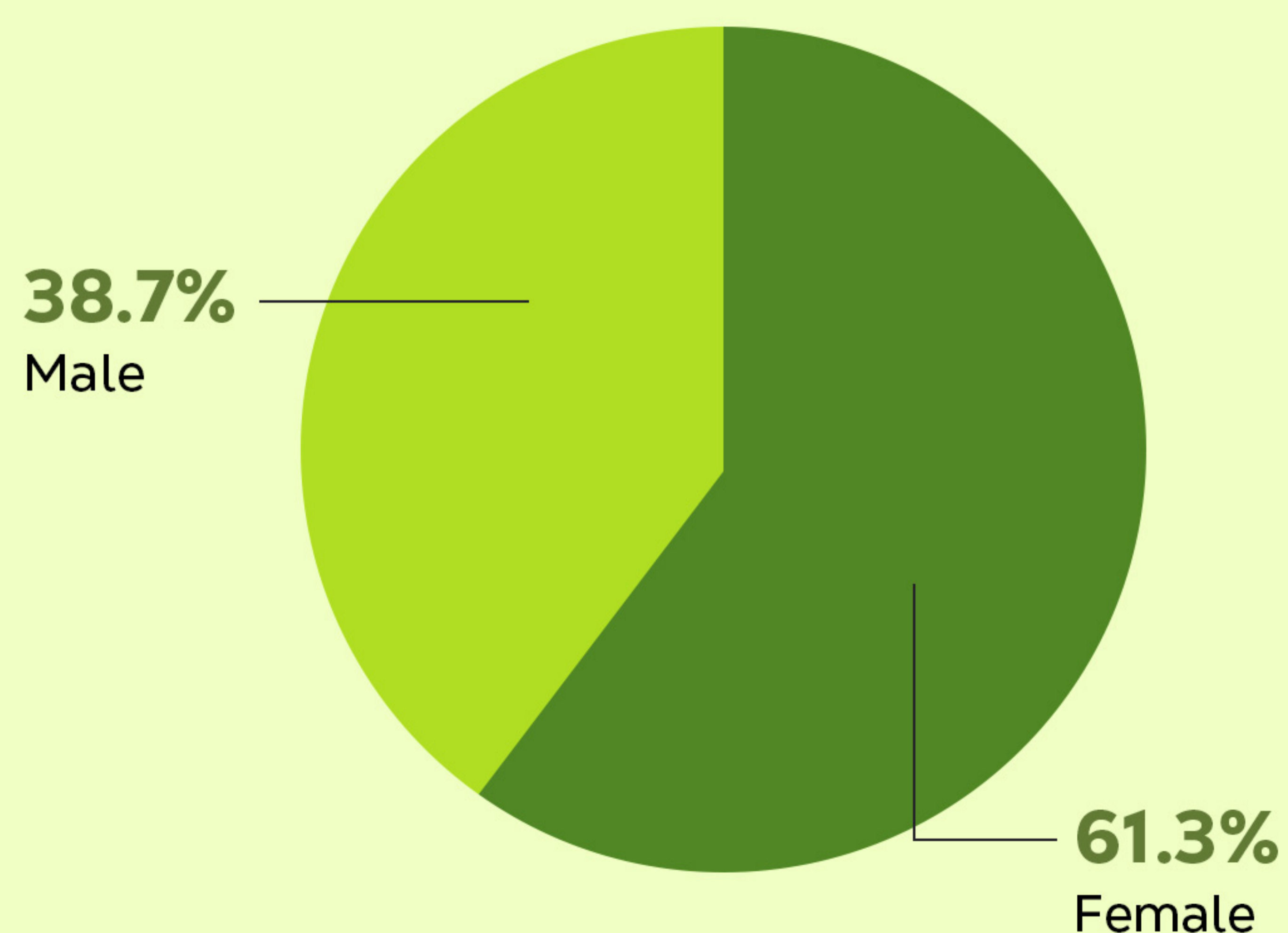
Number of Interviews conducted / county vs County name



A total of 75 smallholder vegetable farmers from three counties (Lofa, Bong, and Nimba) participated in the assessment. 25 interviews were conducted in each county; covering 5 communities per county, summing up to 15 communities.

Figure 2

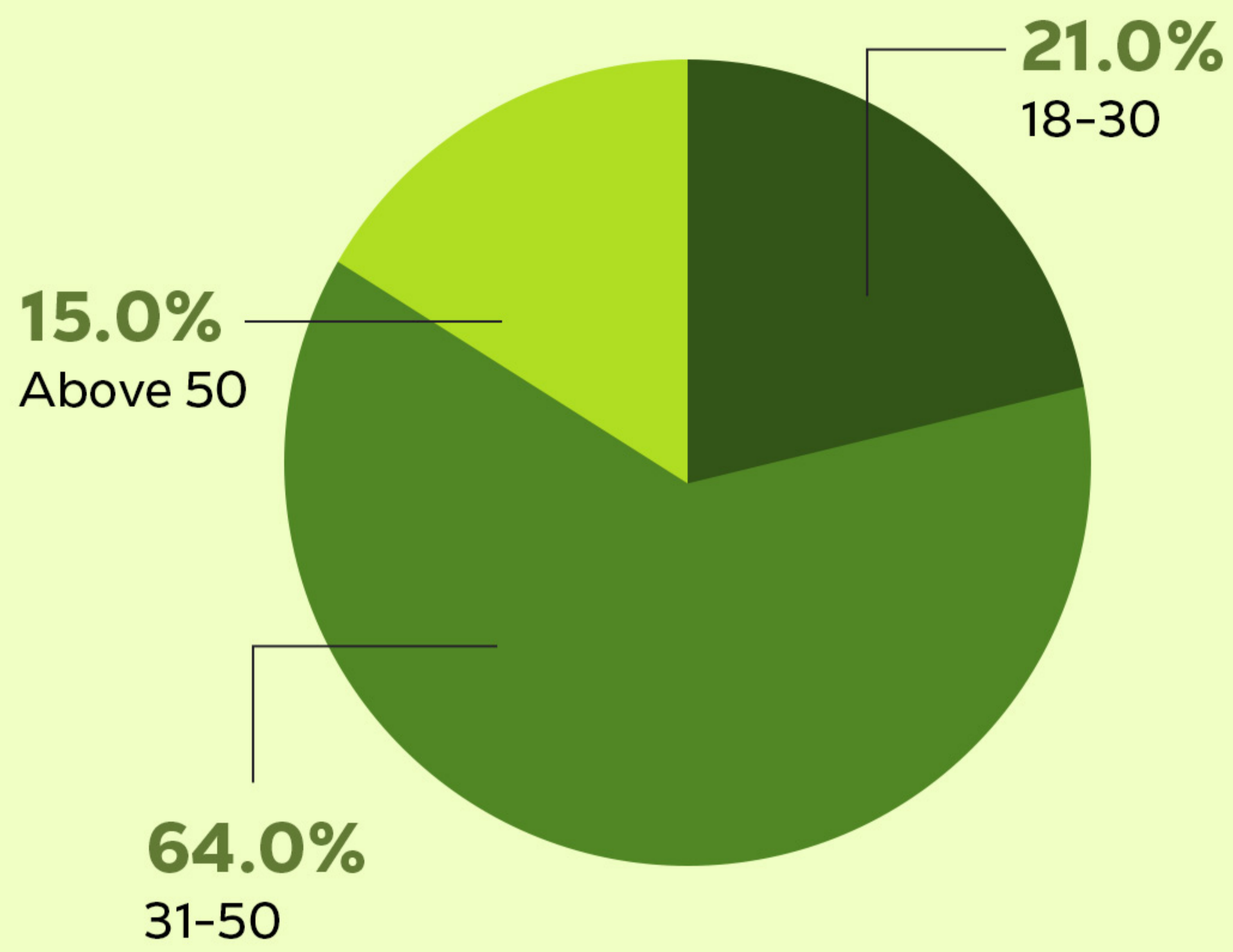
Percentage of Respondents by Gender



Vast majority, 61% of the respondents were female, and 39% were male. However, more male smallholder farmers were interviewed from Nimba county only.

Figure 3

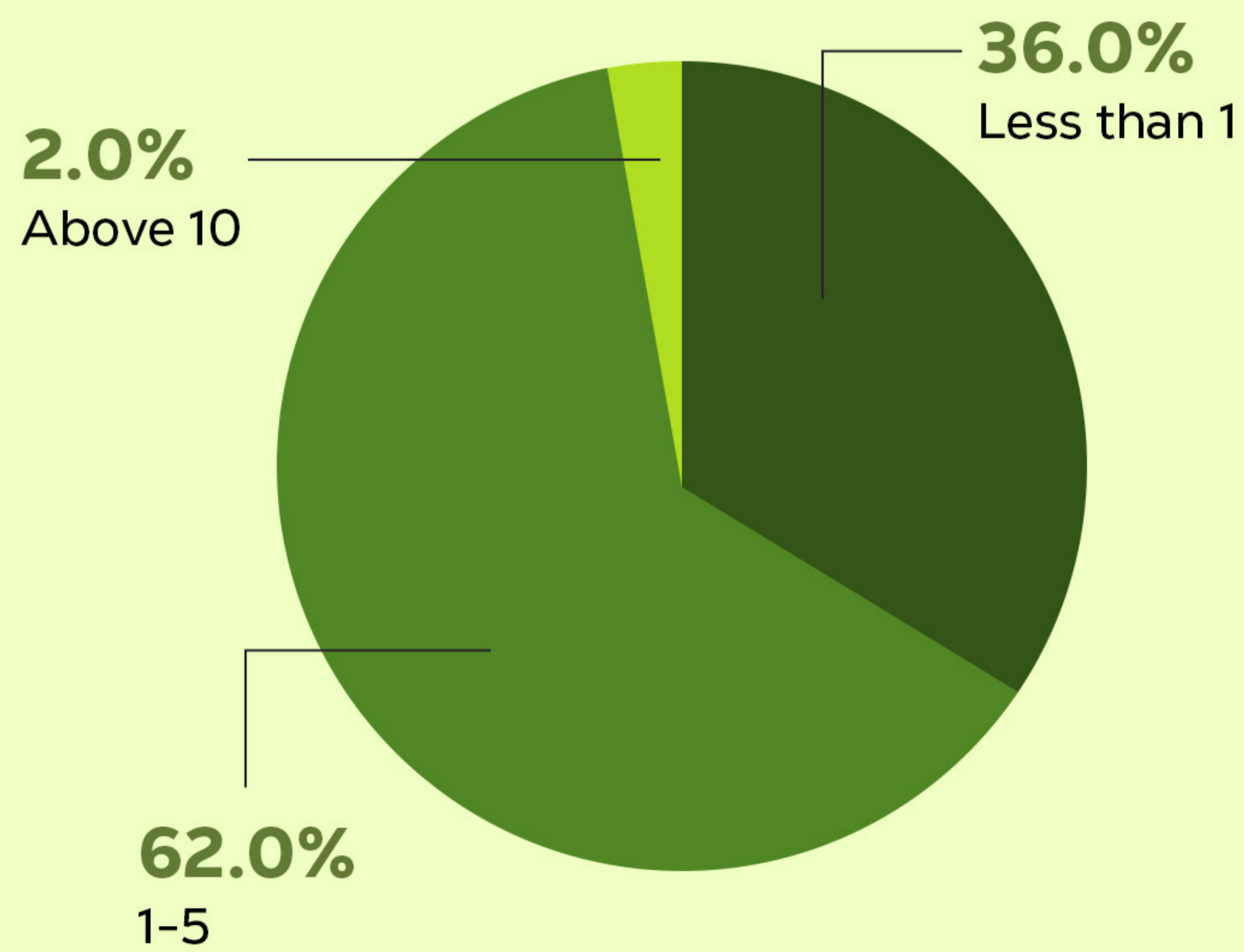
Percentage of Respondents by Age



More than 64% of the respondent were between 31-50 years while less than 15% were above 50.

Figure 4

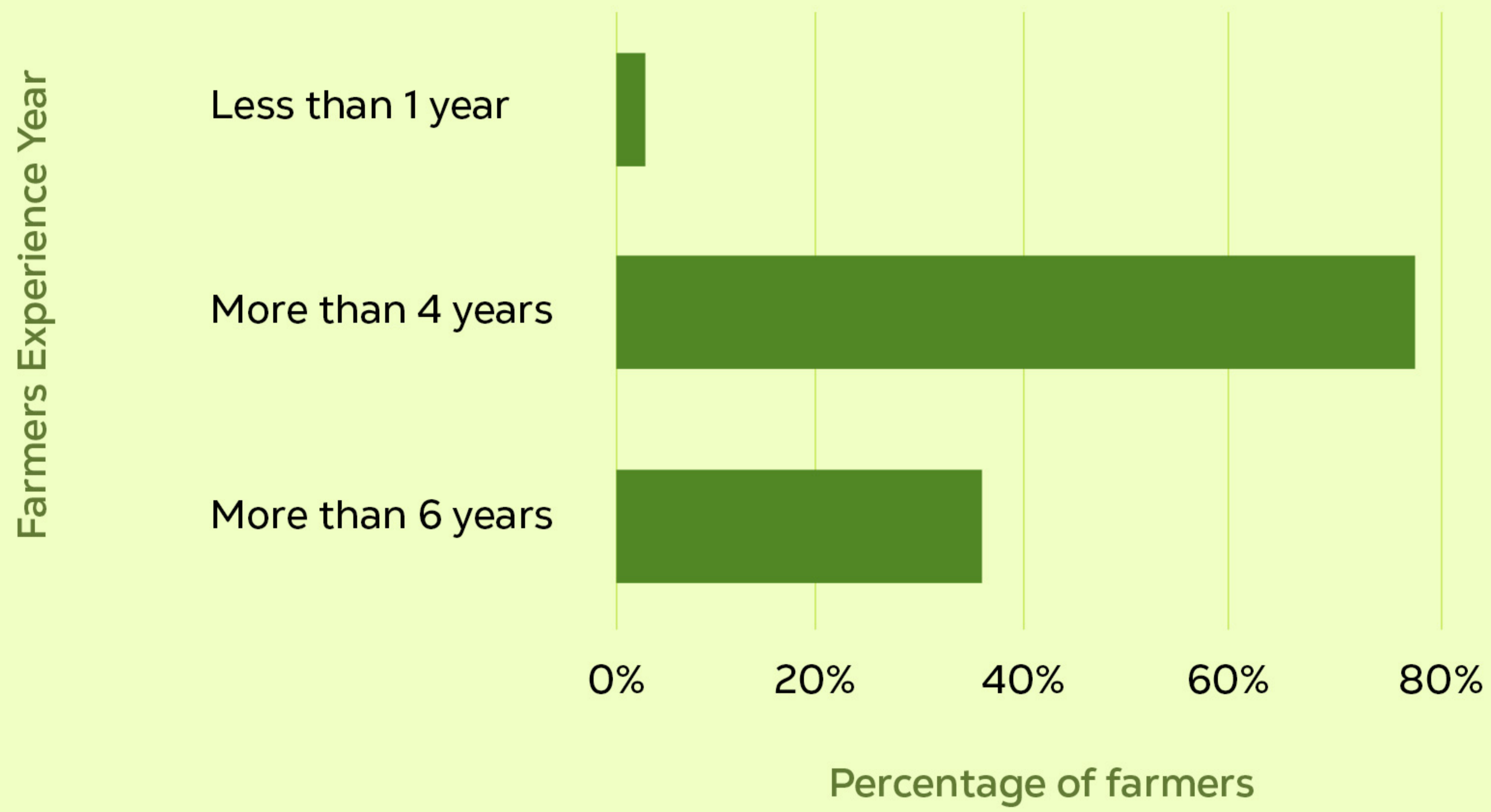
Percentage of Land smallholder farmers have



More than 62% of the smallholders have their farm size between 1-5 acres, and less than 2% have above 10 acres.

Figure 5

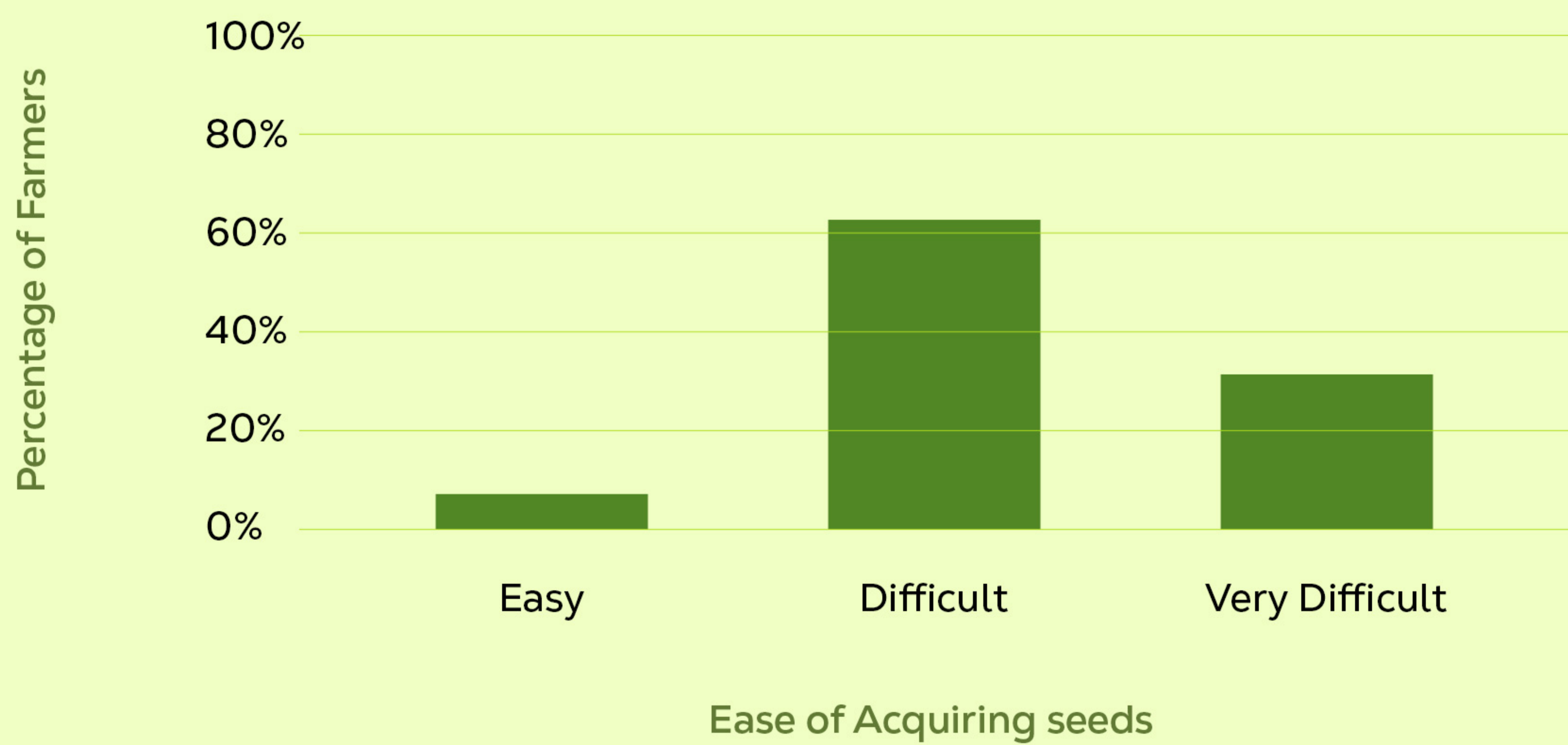
Percentage of Farmers vs Farmers Experience Year



Years of Experience in Vegetable Farming: 78 % of the respondents have 4 years and above.

Figure 6

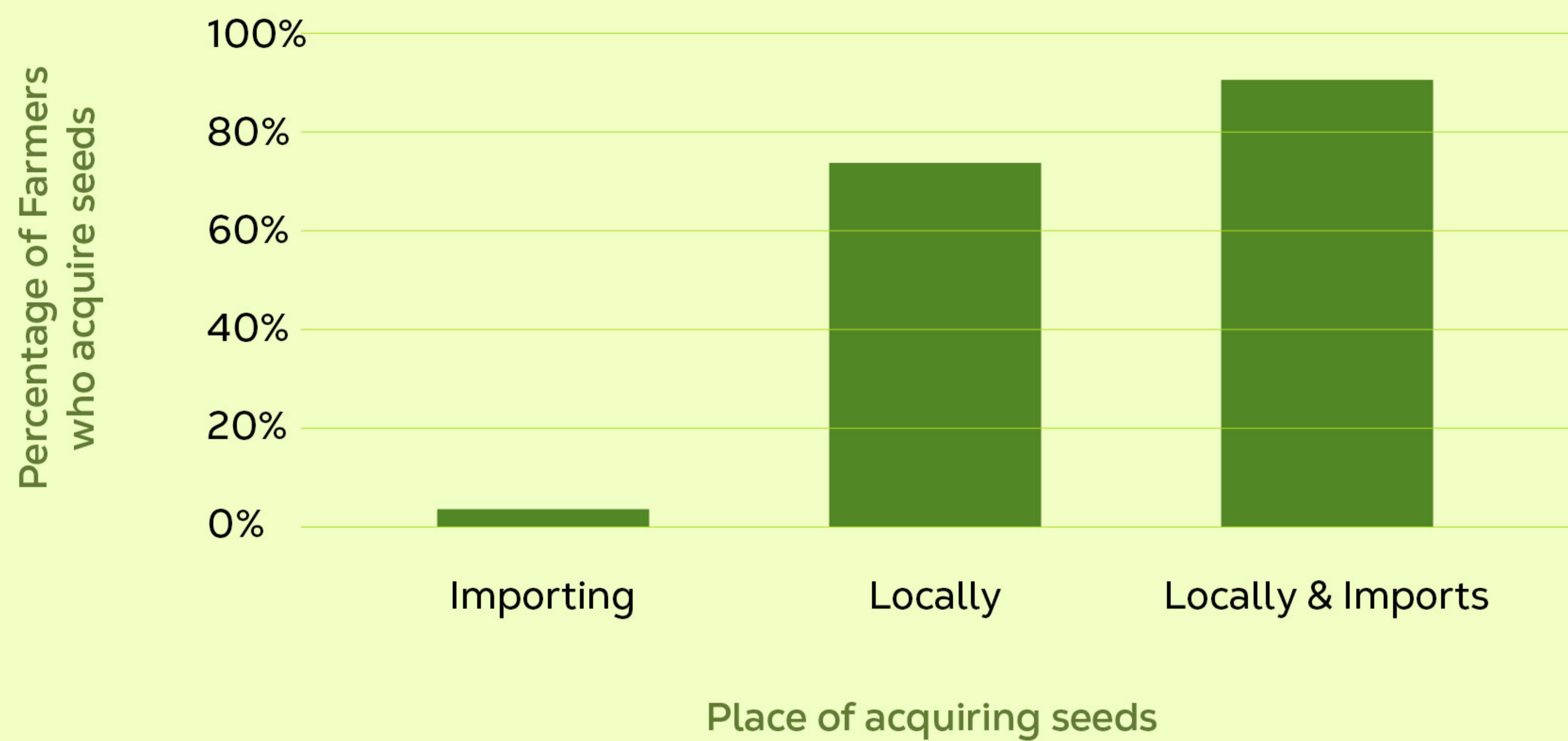
Percentage of Farmers vs Ease of Acquiring seeds



On the acquisition of seeds, 61% described it as difficult to acquire, while 32% described it as very difficult to get and only less than 2% found it very easy to acquire.

Figure 7

Percentage of Farmers who acquire seeds vs place of acquiring seeds



Vast majority of the farmers acquire seeds locally. This accounts for 68% while only less than 2% acquire through import. More than 90% combine both local and import.

Other Data

Vegetables Planted

13 different categories of vegetables were covered; some farmers mentioned more than 2 different types of vegetables. Hot pepper and bitter ball are mostly farmed, 88% and 86% respectively. Others mostly farmed include Okra and cabbage. Less than 3% of the respondents mentioned sweet pepper, carrot and onion, cowpea, and collard greens. Farmers cited many reasons for choosing their specific vegetable for cultivation. Key reasons include but are not limited to: **to get more income, because the vegetable is in demand, fast to grow, and to take care of domestic expenses.**

Figure 8**Percentage of challenges vs Challenges in acquiring seeds**

Price of seed and quality of seed amongst others were cited as the most challenging in the acquisition of seeds. For each vegetable, mostly, price and quality were cited. 91% and 75% of cited price and quality respectively.

Three major opportunities for Investors and Development Partners

Importation of Affordable Quality Seed: Following shortage and high cost of vegetable seeds in Liberia, there is opportunity for seed importation into the country- private sector can invest in improving seed imports into Liberia.

Local Distribution of Seeds: To improve accessibility of farmers to vegetable seeds in Liberia, distribution of vegetable seeds in the country must be strengthened- private sector partners can invest in seed distributorship to improve seed supply chain in Liberia.

Training of Local Farmers in Seed Multiplication: As part of a long term solution to vegetable seed accessibility and affordability crisis in Liberia- farmers can be trained on seed multiplication and seed banks can be established for the same purpose. Building capacity of farmers is key to seed security in Liberia- this is an opportunity for Development Partners to engage.