ABSTRACT
A Country-wide farmers’ survey was carried out in 1998 among 124 subsistence farmers in the 18 Rural Development Areas (RDAs) in Swaziland. The objective of the survey was to provide baseline information on the cultivation of bambara groundnut, (Jugo beans), (Vigna subterranean) by subsistence farmers, as part of the first phase of a proposed multi-disciplinary research programme on the crop at the University of Swaziland. The results highlight the importance of bambara groundnut in Swaziland, and the knowledge of the crop that exists among subsistence farmers. The crop has survived generations of cultivation as a subsistence crop, and has remained a popular and important food and cash crop throughout the country. Eighty-nine percent of the farmers interviewed were either growing the crop in the 1997/98 cropping season or had done so in the past. Bambara groundnut is grown mainly by women, and mainly in the Manzini and Lubombo regions, and in the Middleveld and Lowveld agro-ecological zones. Nevertheless, the crop has received little scientific attention in Swaziland. Traditional beliefs are still deeply rooted in the rural agricultural communities and impact on the cultivation of Bambara groundnuts. Farm yields are low, and over the years, there has been a decline in the area under Bambara groundnut. However, 98% of all farmers’ interviewed would like to see the crop developed and its production increased. This would contribute to crop diversification, farm income, and food security in Swaziland.