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**HARD-SHELL AND WATER ABSORPTION IN COWPEA BEANS (*Vigna Unguiculata* L)**

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Legumes play an important role in human nutrition, especially among low income groups in developing countries. Beans are particularly important in Brazil for two reasons: Brazil is the world's largest producer and consumer of grain legumes and the fact that are a major source of protein. On the other hand, cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata* L) is the most important food for the population in northern and northeastern Brazil. The grains can be eaten dry (quiescent) or green (immature) and, nutritionally, are predominantly composed of carbohydrates (65%) and proteins (24%), also representing a good source of fiber, vitamins and minerals. This study aimed to evaluate the hard-shell percentage and the water absorption capacity in three cowpea beans cultivars, developed by Embrapa Mide-North obtained from the same area and planting time (winter). The cultivars BRS Gurgueia, BRS Guariba and BRS Xique-Xique were evaluated. All cultivars did not presented hard-shell grains and the water absorption capacity was 40% for the three cultivars.

Keywords: Cowpea bean, hard-shell, water absorption capacity, *Vigna unguiculata*