PLANT FACT SHEET

Digitaria exilis (Kippist) Stapf

GENUS *Digitaria* **FAMILY** Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Hungry rice, Fonio

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Cereal

The grain can be cooked for porridge or used in couscous. It can also be popped over a hot fire.
It is ground into flour and used for bread and as a base for semolina.

DESCRIPTION

A millet grass. It is erect. It grows from seed every year. It grows about 50 cm high. It forms tillers or new shoots are the base of the stem. The leaves are narrow. They can be 15 cm long. It has 2 to 4 racemes per inflorescence. These are 15 cm long. The grains are very small and usually yellow. They are about 1.5 mm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It can grow on poor, shallow soils. It grows on the edge of the Sahel. It grows in the savannah. It can tolerate drought. It grows in arid locations. It can grow with 400 mm average rainfall. It can grow in acidic soils with a high aluminium content. It can grow in arid places. It grows in areas with a temperature between 20°C to 30°C. In West Africa it grows between sea level and 1,500 m above sea level.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed are sown very close together. They probably need a temperature above 25°C to germinate.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The growing period is 3-4 months. The plants are harvested with a sickle and tied into sheaths. These are dried then threshed and hulled with a mortar. Yields of 600-800 kg per hectare are average. Some varieties reach maturity in 40 days.

NOTES

There are about 250 Digitaria species. The protein content is only 6-8%.

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