FINGER MILLET

Ragi, Kurakkan, African Millet

Eleusine coracana *Poaceae* family

ECHO PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

ORIGIN – Finger millet is probably of Indian or African origin. It is widely cultivated in tropical Asia and East Africa and on the rainy slopes of the Himalayas up to 2300 m elevation.

USES – Finger millet is the main food grain for many peoples as it is higher in protein, fat and minerals than rice, corn or sorghum. It is made into flour and then into cakes, puddings or porridge. It is also fermented into a beer or malted into a flour suitable for infant food. It is especially a good food for diabetics. The straw makes a valuable fodder for both working animals and milk cows.

CULTIVATION – Finger millet is grown as either a hot weather crop or cold season crop depending on the type of seed used. In areas where irrigation is available, it can be grown year-round. Seed can be broadcast or drilled in rows. Sheep or cattle dung is commonly used as fertilizer. Minute amounts of zinc sulfate increase the yield of both grain and straw. The plants should be cultivated and weeded about every 2 weeks. Frequency of irrigation varies with seasonal conditions.

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HARVESTING & SEED PRODUCTION – Finger millet matures 3-5 months after sowing. Crops that are rain-fed are cut close to the ground and the stalks allowed to wither for a day or two. They are then bundled and stacked for about two months before threshing. The dried heads are beaten with sticks and sheaves are trodden by bullocks or stone rollers. The separated grains are winnowed and cleaned.

Irrigated crops are harvested at about 3 1/2 months. The ear heads are gathered as they ripen, usually requiring several pickings to complete. They are heaped up, allowed to dry, then threshed. The straw from these plants is coarse and usually grazed or turned under.

DISEASES AND PESTS – Millet is subject to few serious diseases and pests. Leafspot, blight and smut are among the fungi that may attack it. Insect pests include hairy caterpillar, Jola grasshopper, ragi leaf-roller or shoot-borer. Beetles can cause problems in storage.

COOKING AND NUTRITION – For human consumption, millet is usually ground into flour and used in cakes & puddings, etc.

ECHO 17391 Durrance Rd., N. Ft. Myers, FL 33917-2239 USA
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