Maize: What variety do I grow in Coastal Kenya?

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More information can be obtained from
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Introduction

Maize is the dominant staple food in Coastal Kenya and is mainly grown by small-scale farmers. Many traditional maize varieties are grown by the farmers. The most popular traditional variety in Kilifi district is Mudzihana while the most popular in Kwale is Kinyalili. To obtain high grain yields, you need to choose the right variety for your region.

Improved maize varieties

The maize varieties available to coastal Kenya can be divided into two groups: Improved and traditional varieties. Improved varieties consist of hybrids and a composite.

Hybrids

Hybrids yield better than traditional varieties. Currently, hybrids available are Pwani Hybrid 1 and Pwani Hybrid 4.

Disadvantages

- Seeds have to be bought every season

Composites

Composites yield more than traditional varieties but yield lower than hybrids. Coast composite is the only improved composite found at the coastal region.

Advantages

- Variety produces longer cobs and remains green for a longer period of time
- The composite is more variable and therefore adaptable to more stressful environments
- Seeds can be recycled for up to three seasons

Disadvantages

- Tall and lodges easily especially in sandy soils.
- Takes longer to mature or matures unevenly

Sources of seed

Obtain certified seed from registered stockists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved maize varieties</th>
<th>Pwani Hybrid 1</th>
<th>Pwani Hybrid 4</th>
<th>Coast Composite</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spacing (pure)</td>
<td>75 x 25 cm (one plant/hill)</td>
<td>90 x 30 cm (one plant/hill)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maturity period</td>
<td>100-110 days from planting</td>
<td>Over 120 days from planting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yield potential</td>
<td>24 x 90 kg per acre or 450 kg/ha</td>
<td>15 x 90 kg per acre or 300 kg/ha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Short variety (4-5 ft tall) suitable for coastal lowlands</td>
<td>Taller than Pwani Hybrid 4 suitable for the hotter, humid areas</td>
<td>Taller variety (over 6 ft tall) suitable for the more clay soils of coastal province</td>
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