

Finger Millet

Finger millet is in high demand in Kenya. It is good for infant feeding, special dishes for the sick and for special purposes among some people. It, therefore, fetches a good price in the market. The crop is mainly grown in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley Provinces.

Yields can be improved by planting improved Varieties and giving good care to the crop. Scientists and farmers in western Kenya have identified 2 good new varieties and a better way care for the crop.

VARIETIES

The new varieties are: P-224 and Gulu-E

They are good because they are:

- early maturing - they take 3 months to mature in warm moderate rainfall areas Busia and Teso Districts and up to 5 months in cold and low rainfall areas like it in Nakuru District.
- less susceptible to head and finger early blight disease (finger millet blast disease).
- easy to harvest as they grow up to knee height in cold areas and up to waist height in warm areas. All the heads of the plant mature at the same time.
- high yielding. In farmers' fields in Busia District these new varieties under good care gave up to 10 bags/acre.
- easy to thresh. Women appreciated the good threshing ability, especially for Gulu-E.

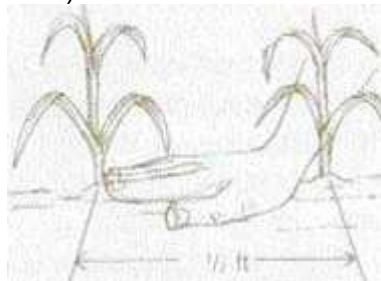
CROP CARE

- Dig (plough) the plot and harrow twice to make the soil soft before start of rains.
- Plant at start of the rains by: -
 - making furrows spaced at 1 ft (30 cm) apart
 - in the furrows apply uniformly Compound NPK 20:20:0 fertilizer (one 50 kg bag/acre). A handful (35 g) of fertilizer should go 10 steps (10 m) along the furrow. If you cannot afford fertilizer plant with manure.
 - In the furrows, put uniformly very little seed (1 kg per acre). A handful of seed should plant 100 steps (100 m) along the furrow.
 - Cover the furrows with loose soil.



Planting by drilling

- Do a 1st weeding 2 weeks after emergence
- Do a 2nd weeding 2 weeks after the first weeding and thin in the rows so that 1 plant is 1 hand (1/2 ft) from the other.



Finger millet thinning

- Harvest as soon as the seed is hard enough (do not let the birds harvest for you). Do not wait for the crop to dry in the field. Harvest when the crop is still green at the stage when you cannot crush the grain between your fingers.

IF YOU PUT IN A LITTLE MORE MONEY AND EFFORT, YOU CAN INCREASE THE YIELD FURTHER

- Apply furadan in the furrows before planting at 4 kg/acre. A handful of furadan should go 25 steps (25 m) along the furrow. Use plastic paper bag over your hand when handling furadan and wash hands soon after the work.
- Spray with Thiodan weekly between 1st weeding and 2nd weeding to kill insects that kill plant hearts (shootfly). Follow the instructions on the can.
- Apply one bag of CAN fertilizer per acre along the rows after 2nd weeding if the crop looks unhealthy.
- Do additional weeding when necessary.
- Scare off birds if you are in bird prone area.

Planting by drilling

YIELDS

From the average yield of 6 bags per acre of the local varieties under local care on

farmers' fields in Busia district, you get:

- 1.5 bags per acre more if you adopt better crop care alone (25%).
- 2.5 bags per acre more if you adopt better varieties alone (42 %).
- 3 bags per acre more if you adopt both better varieties and better crop care (50%).

ADVANTAGE OF NEW VARIETIES

- Growing the new varieties under your normal care is cheap and gives you good yield.
- Using better varieties only cost you the seed.
- You can repla0t the seed of the new varieties.

WHERE TO GET THE SEED

1. KARI-Kakamega Regional Research Centre.
2. KARI-Alupe Research Sub-Centre.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Compiled by COA Odour
KARI Headquarters Library
resource.center@kari.org
KARI/Kakamega PO Box 169 kakamega