## Grains

| Cereal | Pulse |
|---|---|
| Pearl Millet | Mung bean |
| Sorgum | Bambara |
| | Cowpea |

## Vegetables

| Root/tuber | Leafy |
|---|---|
| Livingstone potato | Common labsquater |
| Zulu round potato | Amaranth |
| Marama bean | Bottle gourd |
| Amadumbe | Black jack |
| Cassava | Jews mallow |
| | Nightshade |
| | African kale |
| | Cowpea |
| | Cleome |

## Fruits

| |
|---|
| African mangosteen |
| Red milkwood |
| Raisin bush |
| Num-num |
| Wild plum |
| Stem fruit |
| Kei apple |

***Further information can be obtained from:***


Directorate Plant Production
Private Bag X250
PRETORIA 0001

Tel: +27 12 319 6072
Fax: +27 12 319 6372

E-mail: DPP@nda.agric.za or PA.DPP@nda.agric.za



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Directorate Agricultural Information Services
Private Bag X144
PRETORIA
0001

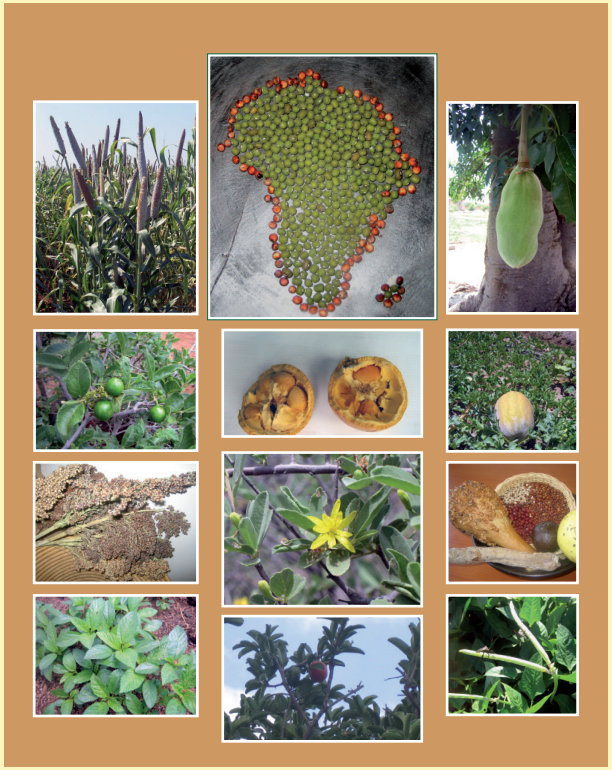

DIRECTORATE

# Plant Production

## — INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS —

*"Take pride"*

*"Common heritage, common future"*



agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, forestry & fisheries
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## AIM

Develop, promote and implement national policies, norms, standards and guidelines that support sustainable production of indigenous crops.

## FUNCTIONS

1. Develop and promote policies to support production of indigenous food crops

2. Develop and promote sustainable production practices for indigenous food crops.

3. Develop and facilitate the implementation of programmes for improving production of indigenous food crops

4. Render advisory services on production of indigenous food crops and related matters.

## WHAT ARE INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS?

Indigenous food crops refer to crops that have their origin in South Africa or Africa. Added to these crops, are those that were long introduced into the country or in Africa and are now recognised as naturalised or traditional crops These crops are produced and found growing in the country under various climatic conditions with many found in the wild.

## WHY INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS?

### *Lost heritage*

The introduction of exotic crops into South Africa and Africa was characterised by a gradual but sure movement away from its indigenous food wealth and the embrace of the newly found crops. The continual promotion of these exotic crops resulted in most of the African indigenous food crops being marginalised. In recent decades, production and consumption of indigenous crops has dropped even further as more people have adopted exotic food crops. Crops such as sorghum and millet have largely lost their status as staple crops. In South African agriculture, these crops are on the verge of being lost.

### *Neglected by researchers and policy makers*

Most of the indigenous crops are less researched, grown on a small scale, or collected from the wild and mostly not marketed. The crops did not form part on school curricula and as such never appeared on the researcher's priority list.

### *Resistance to pests and diseases*

It has been reported that indigenous crops are reletively resistant to pests and diseases as the pest will normally have natural enemies and the fact that the plants themselves have evolved to adapt to the environmental conditions prevailing in their place of origin.

### *Adaptability*

Indigenous crops are relatively adapted to the marginal areas than exotic crops. Crops like millet and sorghum are more drought tolerant than maize. These crops are also able to give a good yield under low input conditions.

### *Nutritional status*

It has been documented that some of the indigenous food crops are as nutritious as the exotic food crops in some cases even more e.g amaranth is more nutritious than the common cabbage.

### *Food security and income generation*

The economies of a number of countries were based on small enterprises; as such these crops could form the basis of the niche global markets targeting urban markets. Production of these crops will provide food to the rural household and the surplus sold to the urban market with prospect of exporting.

## INDIGENOUS FOOD CROP CATEGORIES

The indigenous food crops can be broadly divided into three categories, namely grains, vegetables and fruit crops. Grains can be further subdivided in to cereals and pulses while the three subdivisions of vegetables are leaf, tuber and root crops.