



Products of Sorghum

Other names:

Corn, Aysh, Dhura

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Domain

Traditional Agriculture
Crops

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LOCATION

Community groups

The spread of maize cultivation sites in Sudan can be categorized according to the agricultural sector to which they belong. The irrigated sector includes the states of Northern Nile, Sennar, Gezira, and Blue Nile. The semi-mechanized rainfed sector includes the states of Kassala, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and West Kordofan. The traditional rainfed sector, which is considered one of the most important sectors for maize production in Sudan, includes the states of Al-Qadarif, North Kordofan, and scattered parts of Darfur states.

Practitioners

Farmers

Purpose / Use

Corn is used as a main food source for the people of Sudan and is used in the production of several main dishes such as "louqmet el 3asida," "kisra," "baleela," and "koja." It is also used in the production of some Sudanese beverages like "abri halw mar," "nasha," "mareesa," and "baqniya." Additionally, it is used in the production of some cosmetic products to produce "dalka" and "lakhoka." It is also used as a popular remedy in "qalia" which is consumed to treat digestive disorders, considering it as an essential component of traditional medicine and breakfast

Knowledge / Skills

The skills of corn cultivation include the necessary knowledge of selecting good and suitable seeds for the type of soil and rainfall ratios, in addition to knowing the necessary timings for the crop planting stages in direct relation to rainfall ratios, density, land leveling timings, weed removal, seed sowing, and maintaining balanced plant density according to the size of the cultivated area. The optimal plant density for corn cultivation ranges from 42,000 to 52,500 plants per acre, with plants spaced in rows averaging 70 cm between each row and 10 cm between plants. The period from July 1st to July 20th is considered suitable for planting, as the autumn season usually begins with sprinkler rains that play a functional role in sealing soil cracks and providing adequate moisture for seed germination. Fertilization, cleanliness, and the use of non-harmful pesticides for the soil or crop are then initiated as needed. These ratios and timings vary slightly between different agricultural sectors, and the necessary knowledge and skills also include the period required for plant growth to maturity, usually estimated at 105 days until reaching the harvesting stage, which in turn requires knowledge and skills for successful completion. Even the processes of corn packing and storage also involve a set of necessary knowledge and skills for successful completion.

Transmission

In the past, this knowledge and expertise used to be passed down through experience and practical application only, and this method continues through the continuity of extended farmer families who are keen on transferring this knowledge to the new generations. Recently, agricultural institutes and colleges have provided organized ways to transfer and develop this knowledge, in addition to the emergence of various agricultural guidance departments within large projects and under the Ministry of State, contributing to the effective transfer of this knowledge to traditional sector farmers who have not had the opportunity for university education. The former State Cinema Institution used to provide short films dedicated to this purpose before its dissolution.

Tools, Equipment, Services

Planting corn, like any other type of agriculture, has gone through different stages of using and developing farming tools and equipment between traditional and modern contemporary methods. In the past, most farming operations in Sudan relied directly on manual labor and relatively benefited from animal power, such as in the case of plows. Among the traditional farming tools, we also find the hoe used for weeding and cleaning the land, the dibble stick used for seed planting, in addition to the sickle used in harvesting grains.

Recently, with the introduction of mechanized agriculture, corn farming tools and equipment have evolved to include all that is new in terms of plows, planters, harvesters, and other modern mechanical tools.

HISTORY

The history of planting and using corn in Sudan dates back to thousands of years before Christ. Archaeological evidence indicates that South Atabai and the Qash Delta were the cradle of corn cultivation from its wild origins in the fourth millennium BC. The archaeological site of Khushm Al-Qirbah provided the first evidence of corn cultivation in the period 3700-2900 BC, followed by the site of Jebel Moya around 2500 BC.

The artifacts were adorned with drawings of corn plants and cobs in pottery found in the Meroitic tombs in Barbar and in sculptures at Jebel Qeili, indicating the importance of corn in Meroitic culture. Corn was also found in Kushite artifacts in the regions of Kawa, Dongola, and other sites in northern and central Sudan. The consumption of wild corn was prevalent in Sudan before the fourth millennium BC, as evidenced by artifacts found in the Kadru region and the stone mills used for grinding it found at the same site.

INTRODUCTION

Corn is called "al-Aysh" in Sudan, as it is considered the main livelihood upon which people depend for their food, trade, agricultural activities, and the harvest-related events and celebrations. Just as other nations refer to their main food as "al-Aysh," where Gulf Arabs call rice "al-Aysh" as it is the basis of their food sustenance, more than Asian cultures. Sudanese people call corn "al-Aysh" as it is the most widely spread food in different directions of Sudan, and the most cultivated plant within cultural and ethnic groups covering most of Sudan's geography. Corn occupies the largest cultivated areas in the country, with rain-fed lands averaging around 7-8 million hectares, while irrigated areas reach approximately 450 thousand hectares.

Farmers describe the stages of corn growth based on the shape and size of the plant, using comparisons with other plants, animal parts, and local cultural terms, giving each stage a distinct name indicating to the listener which growth stage it is. For example, it is called "Shawka" when it first sprouts and appears on the ground without showing its leaves, similar to plants with a single cotyledon. It is called "Adan" or "Farefar" when its first small leaves appear, resembling mouse ears in size and shape. Then it is called "Sawasy" when its leaves spread out and rise from the ground like an eagle's stature, "Latiba" when it is a green, dewy cane, "Hammala" and "Shurayya" during the flowering stage, "Lubna" and "Ain Duda" during the milky stage, "Freek" and "Aysh" when it reaches maturity, signaling the approaching harvest stage.

Cultural Value:

Corn has been linked to daily life and cultural practices in Sudan in various ways, including celebrations, communal work, weddings, funerals, seasonal festivities, and religious celebrations for thousands of years until today. Many Sudanese communities are known for their harvest celebrations and songs dedicated to it, such as in the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, and Darfur regions. These harvest celebrations are cultural festivals where all segments of society participate in singing, music, and dancing to rejoice and celebrate the harvest season and its abundance. In the Nuba Mountains, people perform their famous dance, the "Kambala dance," during the harvest festival known as "Sobr Adrat," and this season is also celebrated in other regions of Sudan like Kassala, for example. The harvest festival in the Blue Nile region is characterized by unique customs such as the "Gadaa Al-Nar," "Mwatagga," "Abmabm," and "Al-Owki," where people play their famous musical instrument, the "Waza," sing, dance, and organize feasts for several days. There are also collective songs practiced for manual harvesting activities in Sudan, enhancing the spirit of teamwork and sharpening energies to accomplish the task, mixed with a spirit of play and enthusiasm under a common traditional name in Sudanese proverbs called "Dag Al-Aysh."

Associated Practices:

Harvest Festivals. Singing

Cultural Expressions

Poems that mentioned sorghum:

1. الحردلو

(..تنبأ حارسو حراثو)

This poem describes a strong and noble camel. The poet praises its endurance, speed, and physical beauty. He portrays it as powerful in harsh heat, swift like a falcon, with visible veins and shining features. When the cool breeze touches it, it moves energetically. The verses celebrate the camel's vitality, elegance, and resilience in the desert.

2. محمد المهدي المجذوب

(..فى بيت الفحل أبى الشرة)

These lines glorify *kisra* (a traditional Sudanese bread). The poet elevates this simple food to something sacred and central to Sudanese life. By repeating praise for *kisra* and describing its whiteness, he connects it to hospitality, dignity, and cultural identity.

3. ود كنون (praising his camel)

(..ماكل فيتريت عضمك)

This poem praises a camel's strength and reliability. The poet describes it as well-fed, solid, and essential to his livelihood and his children's survival. It travels vast deserts, hunts with him, and moves as fast as a soldier's bullet. The camel is portrayed as a loyal companion and source of pride.

4. ود الفزاش

(..سامع نك قتل لا اشتريكا)

This poem expresses admiration for a beautiful woman. The poet says he had heard about her beauty before seeing her. He describes her graceful walk and compares her to a fresh, green sugarcane stalk, symbolizing sweetness and freshness. The tone is romantic and full of longing.

5. الحردلو

(..البارح أنا وقصة مدالى السيل)

This poem describes an intimate night conversation between the poet and his beloved. They spend the night talking until dawn. The imagery of horses and movement suggests passion and vitality. The beloved is generous in affection—neither withholding nor excessive—creating a balance of love and desire.

VIABILITY

Threats:

Natural disasters like locusts, drought seasons, and decreased commercial value.

Natural Resources used

The water seeds dried foods like fish kajik.

[Image\(s\) source :](#)[Link\(s\)](#)