

FOXTAIL MILLET

Italian Millet

Setaria italica

Gramineae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Foxtail millet is an annual grass crop, up to 1.5 m in height, and one of the most water efficient (250-300 mm per crop), short term (60-70 days), warm weather crops which can be used as a “catch” crop, planted after another crop has failed. The grain can be cooked whole or ground into flour. Foxtail millet is also a useful fodder crop for dry areas.

Origin

The exact country of origin of Foxtail Millet is unknown. What is known is that Foxtail Millet is one of the oldest cultivated crops in the world, being recorded as growing in China some 4,000 years ago. It is now grown as a staple crop in Asia.

Uses

A distinct benefit of Foxtail Millet is that it is one of the most water efficient, (10-12 in per crop) short term, (60-70 days), warm weather crops that can be used as a “catch” crop, planted after another crop has failed due to hail, wind, late frost. It can be grown in mountains or plains up to 50° North Latitude and up to an elevation of 1800 meters. Though other grains produce higher yields, Foxtail Millet can be depended upon to produce two tons per acre of forage quality, 9-13% protein grain with no nitrogen fertilizer. Its use as forage for animals excepting horses, and as a staple in human diets has decreased as yields of wheat and sorghum are far greater.

Common Names

- Tamil
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]

Cultivation

Growth in the first two weeks is very slow and competition from weeds can be a problem. Plant in narrow rows to shade out weeds or cultivate frequently.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Foxtail Millet grows as high as 2 m and is cut for hay during early heading stage when foliage is still partially green. It does not have a habit of regrowing after cutting. Grazing of the crop after it is cut, windrowed and left in the field, eliminates the labor of harvesting, handling and feeding. When grown for seed, the foliage should be uniformly brown and seed heads well filled out. Fields should be combined to separate the seeds from the plant. If harvested by any other method, cut the whole stalk, dry in bunches upside down, out of direct sun until the very small seeds separate easily. Seed should be stored in an area with lower than 13% moisture.

Pests and Diseases

Foxtail Millet is an alternate host for a mite that transmits the virus that causes wheat streak mosaic. The virus does not affect the millet itself and new varieties are bred to be non-carriers.

Cooking and Nutrition

As with other grains, Foxtail Millet can be ground for flour or a beverage base, boiled for porridge or the seeds can be roasted.

References

Heuzé V., Tran G., Sauvant D., 2015. *Foxtail millet (Setaria italica), forage*. Feedipedia, a programme by INRA, CIRAD, AFZ and FAO. <https://www.feedipedia.org/node/382> Last updated on May 11, 2015, 14:30

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=9732>