

Why are some plants called

orphan crops?



And where are their parents?!



Orphan crops refer to a group of crops that are important for local or regional food security and nutrition but have received **relatively little attention in terms of research, development, and commercialization** compared to major staple crops.

95%
of the world's
population uses

only
30
edible species

out of
30 000
estimated
edible species

Used edible plant species
0.2%



Other known edible plant species
99.8%

Why are orphan crops important?

Local Importance



- often cultivated by smallholder farmers
- play a role in emerging regions providing nutrition and income

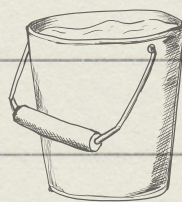
Genetic Diversity

- often exhibit a high degree of genetic diversity
- resilience in the face of environmental challenges.



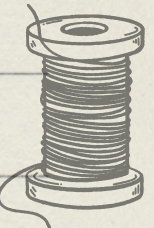
Adaptability

- well-adapted to local agroecological conditions
- require less input in terms of water, fertilizers, and pesticides



Multipurpose Crops

- rich in nutrients
- address issues of malnutrition
- many have medicinal properties and/or are used for making ropes, textiles and more



Examples of orphan crops include:

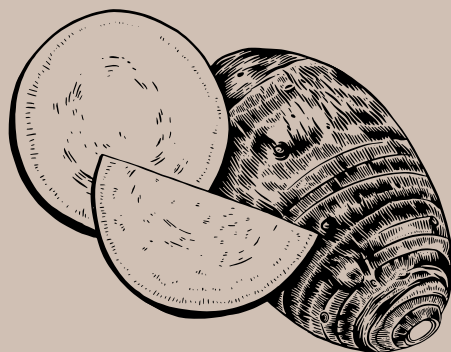
Sorghum is a drought-tolerant cereal crop grown in arid and semi-arid regions.



Traditional sorghum beer is found in some parts of Africa. An example is Umqombothi from South Africa. Its commercialised version is called Chibuku Shake Shake.



Taro is a root vegetable cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions.



Poi is a traditional Hawaiian food made from the underground stem of taro. It is a starchy, slightly sour, pudding-like dish.



Teff is a staple cereal crop in Ethiopia and neighbouring countries, known for its small size and high nutritional value.



Injera is a sour fermented pancake-like flatbread with a slightly spongy texture, traditionally made of teff flour.



What is the EU doing to improve the status of orphan crops?

European Union is funding research activities, projects and programmes.

For example, the Horizon 2020 programme funded the following ongoing projects on the topic of orphan crops



Read more about these and similar projects on Cordis:

tinyurl.com/487xa8f2

Horizon 2020 projects on orphan crops

BIOVALUE (2021-2025)

€ 5.993.562,50

CropDiva (2021-2025)

€ 5.998.257,50

DIVINFOOD (2022-2027)

€ 5.999.858,25

RADIANT (2021-2025)

€ 5.999.715,00

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