



Foxtail Millet - Reintroduction to Taiwan

USDA; Taiwan authority and universities; Bunun, Paiwan, Rukai, Tao, & Tayal growers

In the past, foxtail millet played a crucial role in the lives and culture of Taiwan's Indigenous communities. However, changing growing practices lead to the gradual loss of foxtail millet landraces and cultivation practices. In 2011, Dr. Warren H.J. Kuo reintroduced 100 Taiwanese foxtail millet accessions that had been maintained by the U.S. National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS). The bio-cultural diversity of foxtail millets has been restored thanks to the Indigenous communities' efforts to revive cultivation and the commitment of Taiwan authorities to protecting these resources.



Photo by Qing Xiong Ba

Millet used in an Indigenous cultural ceremony.

PROJECT GOALS

- ✓ Preserve bio-cultural diversity of foxtail millet
- ✓ Restore millets to the land
- ✓ Strengthen community heritage

Problems Addressed

In the 1960s, foxtail millet was cultivated on 6,000 hectares across Taiwan, but by 2020, there were only around 100 hectares. Foxtail millet is a resource for food security and moreover holds a significant place in Indigenous culture as source of ritual wine, betrothal gifts, and a food to welcome guests. However, with the outmigration and aging of Indigenous populations and the shift towards cultivating cash crops, fewer people now possess the knowledge of foxtail millet cultivation. As a result, the diversity of foxtail millet germplasm and traditional cultural practices have gradually been lost.

Solutions Developed

In 1977, Dr. Wayne Hazen Fogg collected 100 foxtail millet landraces (PI 433382–PI 433481) from Indigenous communities across Taiwan and preserved them in the NPGS. Dr. Kuo reintroduced these varieties back to Taiwan in 2011. He sent half to Taiwan's National Plant Genetic Resources Center for preservation. The other half was returned to the Indigenous communities. Collaborative efforts of Taiwan authorities and Indigenous communities resulted in many revival and outreach activities to preserve the bio-cultural diversity of foxtail millet and restore the heritage of the land and community.



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