

New compendium identifies 100 promising forgotten foods for Africa

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Africa is paradoxically reliant on imported food and home to a disproportionate share of the world's hungry while at the same time boasting the potential to be a global breadbasket and food superpower. Part of realising that potential depends on tapping the continent's vast array of food crops, which too often have been pushed off-stage by global commodity foods produced elsewhere.

These include traditional local mainstays such as Bambara groundnut and pigeon peas, superfoods such as fonio or baobab fruit, and naturalised vitamin-rich crops such as amaranth or taro.

The new *Compendium of Forgotten Foods in Africa* aims to move the needle by identifying so-called orphan foods that very often are "locally adapted and less fastidious than exotic cultivars" such as maize, rice or wheat. Produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), the compendium presents 100 examples of neglected local foods that have the potential to sustainably provide the much-needed dietary nutrients to various communities across Africa.

The 100 examples collated in the *Compendium*, with imagery, agroecological suitability, agronomic requirements, and nutritional qualities, were selected after an initial canvassing of experts around Africa, whose specialities range from value-chain development to genetic improvement.

The project, begun as an initiative between FAO and the African Union, also dovetails nicely into The Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), a newer project spearheaded by FAO and the State Department of the United States of America which is strongly geared to leveraging Africa's indigenous agricultural products and techniques.