



**Food  
Legume  
Improvement  
and  
Development**

Proceedings  
of a  
workshop  
held at The  
University  
of Aleppo,  
Syria,  
2-7 May  
1978

Geoffrey C.  
Hawtin  
and  
George J.  
Chancellor,  
Editors

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IDRC-126e

Food legume improvement and development: proceedings of a workshop held at the University of Aleppo, Aleppo, Syria, 2-7 May 1978. Ottawa, Ont., IDRC, 1979. 216 p.:ill.

/IDRC publication/. Compilation of workshop papers on /legume/ /food production/ in the /Middle East/ and /North Africa/ — discusses agro/bio-climatology/ and /cultivation system/s, /nutrition/al value and /food composition/; /plant production/ (particularly of /chickpea/s, /lentil/s, and /faba bean/s), /agricultural research/, /cultivation practice/s for /plant protection/; /plant disease/s, /insect/ /pest/s, /disease resistance/, /weed control/ problems (use of /herbicide/s in /arid zone/s); /plant breeding/ and /genetic improvement/. /IDRC mentioned/, /list of participants/.

UDC: 633.3

ISBN: 0-88936-202-5

Microfiche edition available

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Proceedings of a workshop held at  
the University of Aleppo,  
Aleppo, Syria, 2-7 May 1978

*Editors:* Geoffrey C. Hawtin and George J. Chancellor

*Published by the*  
International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas  
*and the*  
International Development Research Centre

*The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual author(s) and do not  
necessarily represent the views of ICARDA or IDRC.*

ARCHIV  
633.3  
H 3  
1978

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## Food Legume Production in Libya

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In comparison with other food crops, such as wheat and barley, the production of legumes in Libya takes place on a very small scale. Even the most important of these crops, namely broad beans, is only cultivated on an average annual area of about 4000 ha, a figure that has remained static for the past 10 years. Together with the other pulse crops, which include lentils, field beans, and peas, broad bean cultivation is confined to the northern part of the country along the Mediterranean coast. In this strip of land, which varies from 4 to 40 km in width and extends the length of the country from Tunisia in the west to Egypt in the east, the annual rainfall ranges between 250 to 300 mm and temperatures fluctuate from 25 to 30 °C. The soils are generally sandy with occasional patches of clay or gypsiferous, and many farms rely almost completely on groundwater for their crop production.

With this very limited production situation, the bulk of the country's consumption requirements are imported from its neighbours.

Both large- and small-seeded types of broad beans are grown and varieties include Local land 40, Cyprus, and Sax. The crop is consumed as green pods, green seeds, or dry seeds. The production of lentils, which used to be on a fairly large scale to provide animal feed, has decreased considerably in recent years with the increasing popularity and availability of alternative fodder crops, and at present Libya has to import its total requirements. Peas are, however, grown on a somewhat greater area for seed, with varieties such as Sidi Masri 1 and 2 and Little Marvel dominating. Field bean varieties include Stringless Blue Lake and FAO, but bean production is of very little importance in the country.

The production of food legumes is severely limited by several constraints, which include the total lack of research emphasis on the crops and the corresponding lack of trained research personnel; the low and variable fertility and salinity problems of many of the soils; the great variability of annual rainfall and the shortage of irrigation water; disease problems that reduce production in years of adequate rainfall; and the scarcity of hand labour coupled with the difficulty of mechanizing production, which is resulting in greatly increased production costs and rapidly making the crops uneconomic to produce.

The way to expansion in food legume production in Libya lies in placing considerably more emphasis upon research into these critical problem areas. In recognition of this, a committee composed of representatives of the Agricultural Research Centre, the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Tripoli, and the Ministry of Agriculture has recently been established and has recommended that legume research and production be promoted throughout the country. This is a first, vital step and the way is now clear for increased cooperation with organizations such as ICARDA, FAO, and ACSAD to build up a base of personnel and material with which to form the foundation of a strong future development program for these hitherto neglected but vitally important crops.