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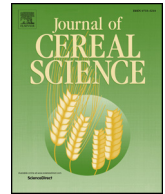
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Advances in sorghum and millet research special issue



Although sorghum and millets (which comprise a number of species) are only fifth and sixth, respectively, in terms of global production (after maize, rice, wheat and barley), they are immensely important in some geographical regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where their importance relates to their adaptation to challenging environments and use in traditional foods. In addition, sorghum in particular is grown more widely in semi-arid environments such as parts of Australia and Latin America. The importance of these crops in food security and human nutrition has been recognised in recent years by major research investments, particularly in international research centres and the countries where they are major crops. As a result, sorghum and pearl millet now rival other cereals, such as wheat and barley, in the availability of genetic and genomic resources. In addition, they are being increasingly studied in relation to the health benefits associated with traditional crops and diets.

The papers in this Journal of Cereal Science virtual special issue are drawn from presentations at the conference “Sorghum in the 21st Century”, held in Cape Town, South Africa, 9–12 April 2008. The conference was jointly hosted by the USAID Feed the Future Innovation

Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet (SMIL) at Kansas State University and the University of Pretoria. This was the first global conference devoted to sorghum and the millets in nearly 30 years and was attended by more than 400 delegates from 36 countries, including 17 African countries.

The papers selected reflect this research investment, and include studies of health-promoting compounds and the applications of genetics and genomics to improving agronomic and quality traits. They also reflect the wide international interest, with authors from North America, Europe and Australia as well as Africa, India and China. Access to the collection of papers is by the Special Issues icon, below.

It is noteworthy that several of these studies would not have been possible even a decade ago, and all show the impact of new approaches and technologies. The future of these crops is clearly in safe hands!

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