

INCREASING THE PRODUCTION OF THE FONIO THROUGH A TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION FROM SENEGAL

[Sanoussi Diakite](#) from Senegal, a professor of mechanical engineering, manufactured a husking machine that produces about 75 kg of Fonio in 2 hours. Before this invention, it took about 2 hours to pound 2 kg of Fonio. More than 20 machines are now operational in African countries. Sanoussi Diakite has patented his invention with the African Intellectual Property Organization and has won several international prestigious awards.

Fonio production that had declined in most Western African countries is now likely to increase thanks to the husking machine. In fact, one of the biggest obstacles for the production lies in the long and complex transformation process of this latter. Since the grains are very little, their processes of scraping and milling are really laborious. These processes are traditionally operated by the women by hands, through the utilization of mortar and pestle.

[The Fonio \(*Digitaria exilis*\)](#) is one of the cereals farmed since ancient times in Africa. White Fonio and black Fonio are produced in the area formed by the Countries of Senegal, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Nigeria. The Fonio contains many kinds of proteins, and its grains are used in order to produce sweet cakes, couscous, bread and beer. It ripens in just eight weeks, and it endures also in impoverished soils and with scarce rains.

Until now, the production has been carried on at low scale by some local farmers such as the members of the [Yakaar Niani Wulli Farmers Federation](#) of Senegal that farm this cereal in small allotments. This production could be increased also thanks to this innovation, characterized by reduced costs and consequently approachable for local small enterprises and production cooperatives too.

[The French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development CIRAD](#) is a prestigious institution supporting the development of the Fonio, also in collaboration with Research African Centers, with the aim of increasing the quantities of this product, both on the local and foreign markets. In the website of the CIRAD, information and videos about the [Fonio plant](#), technological processing related to it, the policies aimed at increasing its production in African Countries, can be found.



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