



ETHIOPIAN SPICES



Ethiopian Spices Overview

Ethiopia produces more than 50 spices, herbs, and aromatic plants, out of which 23 are trading as export items.

The average land coverage by spices is approximately 222,700 ha and the production is 244,000 tons/annum. Spices have huge diversity and grow all over the country.

In this booklet, five major Ethiopian spices are discussed.

What makes Ethiopian Spices unique?

- Growing in a suitable ecosystem
- grows abundantly in the natural forests
- The existence of various indigenous spices in Ethiopia
- Farmers' traditional knowledge and experience
- organic farming

ETHIOPIAN TURMERIC

THE STORY OF TURMERIC

Turmeric, also known as “Indian saffron,” has been in use dating back to 4000 BC. The use of turmeric spans many purposes, as a dye, condiment, and medicine. Turmeric, originating from India, reached the coast of China in 700 AD and reached East Africa 100 years later and West Africa 500 years later. Arab traders were instrumental in spreading the plant to the European continent in the thirteenth century. The botanical name of turmeric is *Curcuma domestica* Val. syn. *Curcuma longa* L. belongs to the family Zingiberaceae. The Latin name for turmeric is *Curcuma longa*, which has its origin in the Arabic name Kurkum. (Willamson 2002).





**Average Annual
Exports of 3,203.19
MT**

ETHIOPIAN TURMERIC PRODUCTION

Ethiopia is one of the biggest producers and exporters of turmeric in Africa. The bulk of the Turmeric produced in Ethiopia is consumed domestically. Only a small portion is exported to Neighboring Countries (Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, and Egypt), Asia, the Middle East, and the USA.

2020/21

**28,850 MT Turmeric
Production**

2020/21

**4,754 MT Turmeric
Export**

DISTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE

Turmeric is a tropical plant and thrives well from sea level to 1500 m above sea level, at a temperature range of 20–35°C with an annual rainfall of 1500 mm or more. Turmeric production in Ethiopia is mainly concentrated in the southeast part of the country (Sheka, benchmaji and keffa zones) however, recently major ginger producing areas including Wolayta zone shifts the land to turmeric production.

Uses of Turmeric in Ethiopia

Turmeric is well known a component in many Ethiopian dishes (local stew, wot) (Girma et al., 2008aa; Hailemicheal et al., 2008). It has a characteristic flavor and is yellow in color. It is used in culinary preparations, in cosmetics (facial preparation and creams) and ayurvedic drug preparations, antiseptic, and also anti-inflammatory.



ETHIOPIAN PEPPER

THE STORY OF PEPPER

Pepper (*Capsicum* species) belongs to the Solanaceae family and originated in the new world tropics and subtropics (Mexico, Central America and Andes of South America) over 2000 years ago (Walter, 1986 and Rodriguez et al., 2008).



In Ethiopia, pepper is cultivated in many parts of the country and it is an important source of income for smallholder producers. Since the larger proportion of the pepper produced is for the market, it takes a significant share of the national income from commodity export.



**1st largest
Producer in the
world**

ETHIOPIAN PEPPER PRODUCTION

The total production of pepper in the country for the year 2020/21 Ethiopian main cropping season (Meher) was estimated at 2,959,805.10 quintals. The 2020/21 yield of pepper was very high, around 15.3 qt/ha in the country.

**With average
annual exports
2,737.8
Metric tons**

DISTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE

Pepper is an annual crop which grows at an altitude ranging from 1400 up to 2100 m.a.s.l. Peppers are widely grown in various parts of Ethiopia.

USES OF PEPPER IN ETHIOPIA

Pepper fruits are consumed as fresh, dried or processed products, as vegetables, as spices or condiments. The powder from dried ripe fruits of hot pepper is used as spice to flavor ‘Wot’, an Ethiopian stew in a daily traditional meal.



Ethiopian Black Cumin

THE STORY OF BLACK CUMIN

Black cumin (*Nigella sativa*) is one of the most important spices and medicinal crops; it is the miracle herb of the century, (Goreja, 2003). It belongs to the large family *Ranunculaceae*, containing about 70 genera and at least 3000 species. The genus *Nigella* contains about 14 species of annual herbs (Weiss, 2002). Black cumin is native to the Mediterranean region through West Asia to northern India and has long been domesticated. It is a minor seed spice cultivated from Morocco to Northern India; in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Niger and eastern Africa, especially Ethiopia.





ETHIOPIAN BLACK CUMIN PRODUCTION

Ethiopian annual average production of Black cumin seed is 14,730 metric tons and the national average of black cumin productivity is 1.428 tons per hectare. The country generated 3.199 million USD in the 2020 crop season from the export of 758 MT cumin seeds in addition to huge domestic consumption.

2020/21

20,600 MT Black Cumin
Production

2020/21

747 MT Ethiopian Black
Cumin Export

DISTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE

Black cumin is an annual flowering plant grown as a rain-fed crop within 1500 to 2400 masl on heavy black soils (Girma et al., 2015). It is found in different parts of Ethiopia at various altitude ranges it shows there is the existence of genetic diversity of black cumin species.

USES OF BLACK CUMIN IN ETHIOPIA

Black cumin seeds have been used to successfully keep people's health beginning in ancient times. In Ethiopia, black cumin is used to flavor bread and sauces as well as an ingredient in the berbere(hot pepper) spice mix.



Ethiopian Cardamom (Korarima)

THE STORY OF KORARIMA

Aframomum corrorima is a species in the ginger family, Zingiberaceae. The spice, known as korarima, Ethiopian cardamom, or false cardamom, is obtained from the plant's seeds (usually dried) and is extensively used in Ethiopian cuisine (Braun, 2011). It is an ingredient in berbere,



mitmita, awaze, and other spice mixtures, and is also used to flavor coffee (Bernard R. and François V., 2003). In Ethiopian herbal medicine, the seeds are used as a tonic, carminative, and laxative (Bernard R. and François V., 2003). Korarima as one of the major spices in the country which is considered as a potential substitute for the Indian cardamom is endemic to the rainforests of the country, particularly in the southwest region.



AVERAGE
ANNUAL
EXPORTS 45.8
METRIC TONS

DISTRIBUTION AND CLIMATE

The altitudinal distribution of korarima ranged from 1000 to 2000 m above sea level. As an indigenous spice, *Aframomum Korarima* grew in various parts of the country mainly in Kaffa, Jimma, Bale, South and North Omo, Sidamo, Illubabour, East and West Gojam and Gamugofa, East and West Wollega (Braun, 2011; Simegn et al., 2016; Zakir et al., 2018).



Uses of korarima in Ethiopia

Korarima (*Aframomum corrorima*) is one of the indigenous important spices used in Ethiopian cuisine and medicinal purposes (Girma et al., 2009b). Korarima seeds (dried or fresh) are used in Ethiopia to flavor all kinds of “wot,” for which they are ground and usually mixed with other spices. Sometimes it is used to flavor a special kind of local food, bread, and butter.

2020/21

38,660 MT Annual
Korarima Production

2020/21

105 MT Ethiopian
Korarima Export

ETHIOPIAN GINGER

THE STORY OF GINGER

Ginger, botanically known as *Zingiber officinale* Rosc., belongs to the family Zingiberaceae and in natural order Scitamineae (Zingiberales of Cronquist, 1981). Ginger was most valued for its medicinal properties, in ancient times, and also played a very important role in primary health care in India and China. The cultivation of ginger was started in Ethiopia during the 13th century when Arabs introduced it from India to East Africa (Janson, 1981).





**16th largest
Producer in the
world**

Ethiopian Ginger Production

In 2019, over 11,741 metric tons of ginger were produced in Ethiopia. Out of these only, 2 metric tons of ginger were exported. Sudan and Kenya are the main importers of Ethiopian ginger. International trade center's information shows, from 2015-2019, Ethiopia earned 1,067 million USD by exporting ginger to various countries and ranked 42nd in terms of income. During these years, Ethiopia's global market share of Ginger was 0.028%.

**2020/21
135,000
MT
Ginger Production**

**2020/21
45 MT
Ethiopian Ginger Export**

Distribution and Climate

Ginger is cultivated in many places in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia ginger is cultivated under sub-optimal conditions with rainfall often less than 1500 mm per year and at lower temperatures (Jansen, 1981).

Uses of Ginger in Ethiopia

Ginger is a common ingredient as an appetizer in many Ethiopian foodstuffs. Ginger is also an ingredient in many of the common food served by Ethiopians, Misir wot (spiced red lentil curry), Gomen (Ethiopian collard green), Berbere (Ethiopian spice mix), and Ethiopian spiced tea (Girma et al., 2016).





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