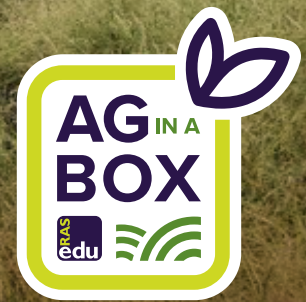




NATIVE GRAINS

Guli (Native Millet in Gamilaroi language) and Ganalay (Curly Mitchell Grass in Gamilaroi language) growing on the University of Sydney's Llara farm in Narrabri

WHAT ARE NATIVE GRAINS

Native grains are seeds from grasses, herbs, shrubs or trees (e.g. *Acacia*) which have been harvested and eaten for thousands of years by First Nations people. Native grains from grasses can be found across Australia (e.g. Guli, Native Millet, *Panicum decompositum*), however, some only occur in certain regions (e.g. Ganalay, Curly Mitchell Grass, *Astrebla lappacea*).

DID YOU KNOW?

Grass seeds have played a central role in providing nutrition, especially in arid and semi-arid regions of Australia.

NATIVE GRAINS ARE A NUTRITIOUS FOOD SOURCE!

- > Native grains can add beneficial nutrition when added to local diets.
- > They are highly nutritious; containing healthy fats and up to 2x the amount of protein compared to wheat, are gluten-free and high in fibre.
- > Native grains also come in interesting colours and flavours.



BENEFITS

- > Native grains are very well adapted to Australian conditions including poor soil quality and drought periods.
- > They can be grown on land that is not suitable for traditional cropping and require less water and irrigation.
- > Growing native grains can improve ecosystem health including capturing and storing carbon, increasing the water-holding capacity of soil, providing habitat for animals and increasing biodiversity.
- > Native grains have the potential to generate business opportunities for First Nations peoples.

ROLE OF NATIVE GRAINS FOR FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

Native grains are more than a food supply for First Nations people. Not only are they a part of Country that needs to be cared for, but they represent a connection to the ancestors who looked after these species for millennia. Native grains provide an opportunity for community to get together, and to share food and stories. They play a role in the rediscovery of lost knowledge and traditions connected to these species and to Country.

CHALLENGES

- > Native grains from grasses are challenging to harvest for food, as they occur in mixed grasslands with different growth habits and ripening times.
- > They require special harvesting techniques, such as brush harvesters, and several harvests, as seeds keep ripening over many weeks. In some cases, they need to be hand-harvested.
- > Threshing (cleaning of the seeds to food grade) requires specialised techniques for individual species.
- > Some of the species are considered weeds in traditional cropping systems (e.g. Button Grass, *Dactyloctenium radicans*).
- > If grown for biodiversity or carbon farming, some of these challenges can be avoided, but native grasslands will need to be managed, e.g. to keep out weeds.