

A NEW CORN VARIETY FOR THE HIGHLANDS

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Corn is a minor food crop in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. It sometimes becomes important seasonally. There are many varieties grown in highlands gardens. Almost all the varieties grown are open pollinated. Thus the farmers do not have to worry about buying new seed for a new crop as they would have to do in the case of hybrid corn varieties. Most farmers save some seeds from their last crop of corn. Sometimes farmers obtain corn seed from agricultural extension officers, agricultural research stations, neighbours and friends.

In order to get good crops all the time, farmers should get replacement seed every few plantings, or whenever their crops do not seem to be growing so well.

For the past eight years the variety Metro has been distributed from Aiyura to interested farmers, groups, and institutions in the highlands. Metro was originally from Indonesia and was introduced to Papua New Guinea in 1972. It did well in the lowlands but was never adequately tested in the highlands.

Fifteen variety trials have been conducted at Aiyura near Kainantu, at Kuk near Mount Hagen and at sites in the Enga Province. Most of the varieties tested in the earlier trials



The corn variety Piwa growing in a highlands mixed garden

were hybrids but a few were open pollinated varieties. Results of seven of these trials are available. These were done by horticulturists at Aiyura and Kuk. In these trials Metro, Suwan, Piwa and other more commonly cultivated varieties in the highlands were tested.

Based upon the results of these trials, a variety called Piwa is very promising. It has done very well in all the trials it has been tested in. Yields of some of the varieties tested at Aiyura are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. AVERAGE YIELDS OF SOME VARIETIES OF CORN IN FOUR TRIALS AT AIYURA IN TONNES/HECTARE

Corn variety	Yield in unfertilized trials	Yield in fertilized trials
Piwa	4.9	6.0
Metro	2.7	4.1
Suwan	3.0	3.5
Kabiufa	2.9	3.0
Local Yellow	2.9	2.5
NG 7485	1.9	2.5
Q12508	2.0	2.4
Q12152	2.0	2.2
Q12544	1.6	1.4

Piwa is a variety of unknown origin. It was collected from the Seventh Day Adventist Church High School at Kabiufa near Goroka and multiplied at Piwa Agricultural Station in the Southern Highlands Province. It is likely that it originated in the United States of America.

Piwa is a tall variety which grows vigorously after germination. It has large cobs and reddish yellow grains. Usually two cobs can be expected but sometimes three cobs can be obtained from a single plant.

Small quantities of seed can be obtained, free of charge, from Aiyura. Growers should multiply this themselves.

To obtain seed, write to:

The Officer-in-Charge
Highlands Agricultural
Experiment Station, Aiyura,
P.O. Box 384, KAINANTU
Eastern Highlands Province.

FURTHER READING

Bourke, R.M. (1976). New corn varieties. *Harvest* 3 (1): 3-5.