

Revenue Department

No 90

Dated 22-1-¹⁸⁵⁹~~1890~~

Fort Saint George, Revenue Consultation of 25th January 1859.

No. 27. Read the following Extract from the Minutes of Consultation in the Public Department; dated 14th January 1859, No. 63.

Calling upon the officer in charge of the Central Museum to report, after communication with the Committees or Superintendents of certain Botanical Institutions, whether further supply of the Imphee seed is required besides that already received. (Vide Public Consultation 18th January 1859, Nos. 31-32.)

No. 28. ORDER THEREON, No. 90; dated 22d January 1859.

Ordered to be forwarded to the Board of Revenue, who will be pleased to ascertain and report whether any supply of Imphee seed will be required for experimental purposes in the Collectorates of the Madras Presidency.

(Signed) J. D. BOURDILLON.

Secretary to Government.

Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 14th January 1859.

Read the following letter from RAWSON W. RAWSON, Esq., Colonial Secretary; to the Honorable the Chief Secretary, Madras, (Public Department) dated Cape of Good Hope, 6th November 1858, No. 206.

SIR,

In reply to your letter of the 2nd June last, No. 663, I have the honor, by direction of Governor Sir George Grey, to acquaint you that a box, containing such quantity of Imphee seed as His Excellency has succeeded in procuring, has been shipped on board the "Nanayana" addressed to the Officer in charge of the Central Museum, Madras.

2. His Excellency desires me to inquire whether the Madras Government requires more of this seed, and to state that in dependence upon getting a supply from Kaffraria, he did not order any to be grown in the Botanic Garden. He will, however, inquire whether it is too late to do so this season.

3. I enclose copies of letters containing information relative to the Imphee and its culture, from the Chief Commissioner for British Kaffraria, the Colonial Botanist, and the Head Gardener of the Botanic Garden in this Town.

22nd October 1858.

31st July 1858.

30th July 1858.

From JOHN MACLEAN, Esq., Chief Commissioner; to the Honorable RAWSON W. RAWSON, Esq., Colonial Secretary, Cape Town, dated Fort Murray, 22nd October 1858.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge your letters of the 6th August and 16th Instant, requesting me to obtain a supply of Imphee seed, for the use of the Madras Government, and to inform you that my delay in complying with your request has been solely caused by the difficulty of procuring the seed in any quantity, the natives, by whom the plant is cultivated, being so improvident as rarely to reserve any stock of the seed.

I send herewith such quantity of seed as I have been able to obtain, which will be sufficient for the culture of a large extent of ground.

In the event of your requiring more seed, I will endeavour to procure it, and will forward it to you from time to time.

I enclose herewith a Memorandum by the Gaika Commissioner on the cultivation of the Imphee, and I return the enclosures of your letter of the 16th August last.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE CULTURE OF IMPHEE.

The Kafirs cultivate four or five varieties of this plant, the principal of which are called by the Natives, Xoba, common Imphee and Dengendenge. The other varieties are merely grades between the Dengendenge and common Imphee, the Xoba being quite a distinct variety and of different appearance from the others.

I. Xoba is the smallest variety of the Sorghum or Saccharata cultivated by the Kafirs, growing only to the height of six or seven feet. It is thought by the Kafirs to contain the greatest quantity of Saccharine matter. This plant ripens in about four months from the time it is sown.

The head is of a reddish color, and in form somewhat resembles the brush of a fox.

II. The common Imphee is the variety most commonly cultivated by the Natives. It is preferred to the Xoba on account of its larger size, and to the Dengendenge because it does not require to stand so long on the ground. The head is somewhat in the form of a bush, the stems of the bush bearing the seed being pendulous. The average height of this plant is seven or eight feet. It ripens at from four to five months.

III. Dengendenge. This is the largest variety of the Imphee attaining a height of from eight to eleven feet according to the soil in which it is grown, but as it takes about six months to come to maturity, it is not generally cultivated. In appearance it greatly resembles the common Imphee.

All varieties are sown broadcast by the Natives, but it would be preferable to sow in drills, in order to obtain a more regular crop, and for the facility of weeding. The drills for the small variety might be two feet apart, and about six inches might be left between each plant. The largest variety should have the drills three feet apart, and from nine inches to a foot between each plant.

Never having cultivated the Imphee, I cannot speak with certainty respecting the exact distance required between the drills and plants.

When standing close together the plants are not so large in circumference, but grow higher than when a larger space occurs between them. Various distances might be tried in order to ascertain at what distance apart the largest yield can be obtained.

The Imphee is an exceedingly hardy plant against drought, and recovers after rain, though it should almost have been killed by drought, but, when its growth has thus been checked, it does not yield so large a quantity of Sacharine matter as if it had grown steadily, and under favorable circumstances; for, when a second growth takes place, it lengthens from the joints, and these parts do not contain much juice. The plant thrives best in hot situations and hot weather. It is killed by frost.

When the plants begin to seed, the head is taken off to the first joint, with the exception of as much as may be required for seed in the ensuing season. This also is taken off when the seed is formed, while still in a milky state, and long before it ripens.

The Natives assign, as a reason for this, that, if the seed were allowed to ripen, the produce would deteriorate, and would not be so sweet as the canes raised from the unripe seed. Whether this is really the case or not, I cannot say, but I think it worth mentioning. That the plant is improved by taking off the seed as soon as it appears I think reasonable, as the nourishment which would go to the top joint, which contains little juice, and is somewhat lithe, and the substance required to bring the seed to maturity, would thus be retained in the body of the cane.

The grain of the Imphee is not used by the Natives; thus there is no loss in pulling off the heads, but, as I think it would be excellent food for horses, cattle and fowls, it would probably be of advantage to allow the seed to ripen on the cane; this would also save the labor of taking off the heads, which in a large field, would be considerable.

Should the idea of the Kafirs be erroneous regarding the effects on the cane in the succeeding crop when the seed is allowed to ripen, much less seed will be required to sow a given piece of ground than when the seed has not attained to maturity, for the seed as sown by the Kafirs is so unripe that most of it does not germinate, and the seeds which spring are for a long time very weakly, whereas, if the grain had been well formed or ripened, the plant would from the beginning be much more vigorous.

The Imphee can be raised in poor soils, but thrives best in good rich ground. When cultivated in high and damp positions it is liable to rust, which, though it does not destroy the plant, greatly deteriorates its value.

The plant may be used at from three to seven weeks after going to seed, later than seven or eight weeks it begins to decay.

The Imphee, being a softer plant than the sugarcane, will not require such powerful machinery to crush it.

(Signed) CHAS. BROWNLEE.

From L. PAPPE, Esq., M.D., Colonial Botanist; to the Honorable RAWSON W. RAWSON, Esq., Colonial Secretary, Cape Town, dated 31st July 1858.

SIR,

In reply to your note of the 29th, I beg to remark that three different species of Sorghum are cultivated by the Kafirs.

The first of these is Sorghum Saccharatum. Pers. (Holcus Saccharatus, Lin. Holcus Caffrorum, Thby. Flor. Cap.) the "Imphee" of the Natives, and the "Zoet-stronk" or "Zniker-riet" of the Boers. This plant yields the greatest quantity of sugar, and is chiefly reared for that particular purpose.

The second, the Sorghum bicolor, Willd. is extensively cultivated by the Zoolus of Natal on account of its grain, which constitutes very nutritious food.

The third, Sorghum Usorum, Nees ab E. (Holcus Caffrorum, Thby. Prodr. Flor. Cap.) serves the same end, and is more generally cultivated in Kaffraria proper. The two latter species go by the name of "Kaffer Koren," Kafir Grain.

Sorghum vulgare of Persoon, the Holcus Durra of Forskal and the Holcus Sorghum of Linnæus, is a native of Arabia and the East Indies, not hitherto found in any part of South Africa.

Sorghum Saccharatum having been cultivated only of late by several farmers, I much doubt whether a sufficient quantity of its grain could be obtained within the Colony.

From J. MCGIBBON, Esq.; to the Honorable RAWSON W. RAWSON, Esq., Colonial Secretary, Cape Town, dated 30th July 1858.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of letter and enclosures requesting information as to the best means of procuring five bushels of Imphee seed, for transmission to India.

The Chief Commissioner of British Kaffraria is the best source to apply to, but I venture to express a doubt as to the possibility of procuring by any means, and under the present state of the Kafir tribes on our borders the large quantity of five bushels of Imphee.

I would therefore beg to suggest that the Secretary to Government at Natal, or the Secretary to the Agri-Horticultural Society there be requested to furnish a supply, with information on its cultivation, uses, &c.

Should all the above sources fail in supplying the quantity required, I would recommend that a sufficient space in the upper garden here be set apart for growing the quantity required. If sown in time it would be ready for transmission to India in January or February.

With reference to the cultivation of the Imphee, I beg to say I will be glad to furnish at any time notes on the practice. I may state that I have from time to time supplied the local prints with information on the cultivation, uses, &c., of the Imphee.

On application two years ago I received from Natal and Kaffraria seeds of several varieties of Imphee, and which have since been grown in this garden. The Holcus Saccharatus, "Chinese Sugar Plant" was imported previously, and has been annually grown in this garden. Large quantities of the seed have been distributed gratis throughout the Colony; and some has been sent to Australia by command of His Excellency Sir George Grey.

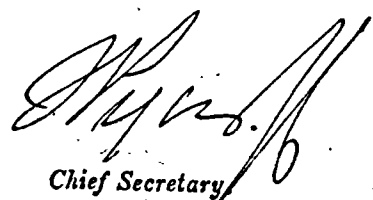
The imported Chinese Sugar Plant we are in possession of, is that cultivated for its Sacharine property in France and in the United States of America, and is, I believe, the one alluded to and requested by Dr. Balfour of Madras. It is quite different in appearance to any of the Imphees received from Natal and Kaffraria. The whole plant, when in flower, being of a darker green color, the plant being of a more gigantic height, often reaching 18 and 20 feet, the panicle is much denser, and the seeds when fully ripe are of a shining black color, altogether different from the Imphees I am acquainted with—they are usually dark brown or yellow.

Order.—The foregoing letter and the correspondence to which it refers will be communicated to the Officer in charge of the Government Central Museum, in reference to Extract Minutes Consultation, 11th November 1858, No. 1395.

2. Dr. Balfour will, after communication with the Committees or Superintendents of the several Institutions referred to in the margin, state whether a further supply of the Imphee seed is required from the Cape of Good Hope.

Agri-Horticultural Gardens, Madras.
Botanical Gardens, Bangalore.
Do. do. Ootacamund.

(True Extract and Copies.)


Chief Secretary

To the Officer in charge of the Govt. Central Museum.
„ Revenue Department.

20 True copies

Exd. F. Cartledge.

Pub Cas 16 of 1855/55 12-12-18
— 5 of July 55 — p 210.

Received of \$500 of 1855
By to say 25. May.
J. C. 69

Received from the
Attorney of Com
in the 18th of 1855

Recd 11th of January 1859
Recd 18th of January 1859
Transd of 1855 of 1855
1859 of 1855 of 1855

Calling upon the
Officer in Charge of the
Central Prisoners of War
after Commencement
the Committee on
Superintendent of Central
Prisoners of War
whether further supply
of the supplies need in
required basis that
already received
No 90-22 of January 1859 of
M. C. 69 of 1855

1859

Ordered to the for
inclosed to the Board of Prisoners
who under the Prisoners to receive
and report whether any supply
of 1855-56 and under the request
for experimental purposes in
the Collection of 1855-56
Presidency

1855
22nd January
1859
Office to the 1855 of 1855
with 1855 of 1855