HULLED WHEATS IN ITALY TODAY

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Today in Italy, out of a total wheat area of 1 800 000 ha (mostly durum wheat), hulled wheats or “farri” cover less than 4000 ha. Einkorn is cropped on ~300 ha, scattered across the country but with a core area in the Po plain south of Brescia. Emmer is the most diffused hulled wheat, cultivated on ~3000 ha along the peninsula mountain range, from Tuscany to Molise. The “farro della Garfagnana”, cropped in a mountainous area of Tuscany, received in 1996 the European IGP (Indicazione Geografica Protetta), i.e. geographic identity protected by law, while in Umbria the “Farro di Monteleone di Spoleto” was awarded in 2010 a DOP (Denominazione di Origine Protetta) by the European Community. The third hulled wheat species, spelt, is managed mainly in central Italy and Alto Adige (Süd Tyrol) on about 500 ha.

INTRODUCTION

Einkorn (Triticum monococcum subsp. monococcum), emmer (Triticum turgidum subsp. dicoccum) and spelt (Triticum aestivum subsp. spelta) are hulled wheats, i.e. wheats with glumes that tightly envelop the kernels even after harvesting. Staple food of humankind for several thousand years, they are currently cropped only in limited areas and represent a minimal part of total wheat production. Current trends towards low-impact and sustainable agriculture as well as an ever-increasing interest in the nutritional aspects of food suggest that the hulled wheats may still play a role in human consumption.

ADVANTAGES

ADAPTABLE / THRIFTY
RESISTANT TO DISEASES > NO NEED OF PHYTOPHARMACS
HIGH TILLERING > COMPENSATE FOR MISSING PLANTS

DISADVANTAGES

TALL PLANTS > RISK OF PLANT LODGING
LATE HEADING > LATE HARVESTING
LOW YIELD: 30-40% THOSE OF BREAD WHEAT
HULLED KERNELS: ADDITIONAL THRESHING NEEDED

CROPPED AREAS IN ITALY IN 2012

BREAD WHEAT: 600 000 ha
DURUM WHEAT: 1 200 000 ha
EINKORN: ~300 ha
EMMER: ~3 000 ha
SPELT: ~500 ha

Hulled wheats crops in different areas of Italy

Spikes of einkorn (left), emmer (centre) and spelt (right)

CONCLUSIONS

The increasing cultural and commercial interest of “farri” has led to new research and to the release of improved varieties with better agronomical performances. Low cultivation costs and good market prices, especially for organic crops, guarantee a viable market even in recession phases. Their further and sustainable diffusion relies on offering the consumers a range of different food products that combine good technological quality with the outstanding nutritional value of hulled wheats.

Einkorn food products

Emmer food products

Spelt food products