

## Book review

### Biology and Agronomy of Forage Arachis

Eds PETER C. KERRIDGE and BILL HARDY. Published by Centro International de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), 1994. 209 pp. ISBN 958-9183-96-4. CIAT publication No 240.

This book contains the review papers presented at an international workshop on Forage Arachis held in 1993. Participants at the workshop and authors of the papers were predominantly CIAT staff. Expertise from other organisations and countries in South and Central America, the United States of America, Australia and Africa was accessed.

The book is a summary of the history and current knowledge of the Forage Arachis group. It is a comprehensive review. Aspects of the biology and agronomy covered ranged from their natural distribution, the previously confused taxonomy of the group, through genetic and reproductive biology, mineral nutrition, Rhizobium requirements, pests and diseases and possible uses, to their nutritive value and value for animal production.

Each chapter of the book is a scientific review paper. The first 5 chapters contain information on biology and Chapters 6-11 contain information on agronomy. Chapters 12-16 are reviews of experiences with Forage Arachis in different areas of the world, including Australia. Chapter 17 presents the findings of the workshop on future directions for research and development. As the chapters in the book are written in a scientific style, some of the papers, particularly those on the biology of the Forage Arachis, are difficult to read.

Most of the information presented in the book is from the evaluation of only 2 species of Forage Arachis, *A. pintoii* and *A. glabrata*, and further from only one accession of each species. These accessions have been allocated different identification numbers and names in different countries, so that the same accession has different numbers in different chapters. This may be confusing for the reader, and constant checking is required to

keep the story clear. Some of the limited amount of literature available is over referenced, being cited in 5, 6 or 7 chapters. This is most noticeable in the Regional papers where information from outside the designated Regions is cited. This repetition also makes reading the book a trying experience.

A useful addition to the book would have been an appendix listing all accessions referred to in the text with identification numbers from the different countries where they have been evaluated.

The Forage Arachis group obviously has enormous potential. They have been neglected and overlooked until the last 2 decades because they are so different from other tropical legume species. This book is an excellent focus for the future development of the Forage Arachis, to continue the rapid progress that has been made in recent years. It summarises the current biological and agronomic knowledge on the subject, providing access to much previously unpublished information. Desirable characteristics of the cultivars currently available in a number of countries are presented. The problems of the provision of planting material, slow establishment and the need for varieties adapted to dry conditions are highlighted.

While the scientific style of the book limits its audience to research and extension staff with a scientific background, the information contained in the book is essential reading for anyone in the pastures field with an interest in Forage Arachis.

Books can be obtained from CIAT in Colombia, or in Australia, from The Tropical Grasslands Society of Australia, 306 Carmody Road, St Lucia, Qld 4067, Australia.

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