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Evaluation of reed canary grass for different end-uses and in breeding

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Abstract

Traditionally reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea* L.) has been cultivated for forage, but currently is a new non-food crop in Europe. The aim of this study was to evaluate reed canary grass germplasm, elite and wild populations, for non-food, forage and seed production. An index composed of different agronomic traits was used to establish the best populations for each end-use. Populations were ranked according to biomass or seed yield only. Non-food cultivars have not yet been developed, but results from this study suggest that high biomass forage cultivars could be used in non-food production. However, local populations possessed a desirable combination of traits including higher proportion of straw associated with high biomass yield. This study indicated that local populations could be used in crop breeding together with elite material. Some evidence for the potential of populations for forage production was also noted through leaf area and leaf proportion measurements. High non-food or forage indices were associated with good seed production in local populations. Results help in selecting appropriate cultivars for non-food use, which is currently important as the cultivated reed canary grass for biofuel in Finland is anticipated to be 75 000 hectares by 2010.

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