

# Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

## A. Grasses

### 9. Forage Sorghum

#### *Sorghum vulgare* Pers. (sweet sorghum) cv. White African

Reg. No. A-9b-4

Registered prior to December 1971

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#### Origin

Introduced into the U.S.A. in 1857 from Natal, South Africa, by Leonard Wray under the name Enyama and later called White Mammoth (6). Registered as White African in the U.S.A. in 1936 (1). Classified and described under the name White Mammoth by Snowden (5) as *Sorghum dochna* (Forsk.) Snowden var. *melliferum* Snowden Form 1.

Details of its introduction to Australia are not known but the New South Wales Department of Agriculture was doing selection work with it and using it in breeding at the Grafton Experiment Farm and Hawkesbury College in 1927 (2). It was probably introduced to Queensland also prior to 1930. Selection for juiciness of stem and seed type was commenced at the Grafton Experiment Station in 1952 because seed stocks had degenerated (3). Seed so selected was used as breeder's seed for certification by the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in 1954 (3). Certified seed has not, however, been available in New South Wales since 1960.

#### Morphological description (4,6)

Similar to cv. Saccaline in general morphological characters but differing from that variety in many respects. It has thicker and stronger stems and tends to tiller less than Saccaline and its leaves are a little more widely spaced on the stems. Panicles are oval rather than cylindrical and less compact and more open and spreading than in Saccaline. Glumes are large, brownish black with a few hairs, holding the caryopsis fast, covering it almost to its tip and only exposing it in the angle between the glumes; lemmas are awnless. The seed is white, approx. 40,000 per kg, elongated and distinctly ellipsoidal in shape; endosperm starchy, nucellar layer absent.

#### Agronomic characters (2,4,6)

A late-maturing variety having the same growing period as Sugardrip or being slightly later, like Tracy, it is adapted to much the same areas. It is sturdy in habit and resists lodging under very windy conditions better than most other sweet sorghums; it is also generally more resistant to leaf diseases. It carries well into winter, and though its juice is quite sweet it is not as abundant as in some varieties. Is very suitable for silage (3). It requires exacting soil conditions for germination which often tends to be low. Because of this it has lost favour in New South Wales.

#### References

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3. Peterson, S. (1955). Government certified sweet sorghum seed. *Agric. Gaz. N.S.W.* **66**, 506-10.
4. Queensland Department of Primary Industries (1964). Sorghum in Queensland *Qd. Agric. J.* **90**, 157-66.
5. Snowden, J.D. (1936). "The Cultivated Races of Sorghum." 274 pp. (Adlard & Sons Ltd., London).
6. Vinal, H.N., Stephens, J.C., and Martin, J.H. (1936). Identification, history and distribution of common sorghum varieties. U.S.D.A. tech. Bull. No. 506.