



Edible insects in Africa

An introduction to finding, using and eating insects



Agromisa's mission is to strengthen the self-reliance and food security of small-scale farmers in developing countries worldwide, but with a focus on Africa. Agromisa dedicates itself to sharing experience and exchanging knowledge in the field of small-scale sustainable agriculture and related topics.

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Foreword

The meat crisis is prompting us to look for alternative protein sources. Since 1970, world meat consumption has increased almost threefold and is expected to double again by 2050. However, agricultural land resources will soon be depleted, as 70 per cent is already in use for livestock. In addition, industrial livestock production brings high environmental costs. Of the total greenhouse gases at least 15 per cent is derived from livestock, causing global warming. We therefore need to rethink our diets and food habits, in particular those related to meat consumption.

Only now is the Western world realising that millions of people in tropical countries have an excellent alternative: edible insects. In the West, then, people are eager to learn from tropical countries how to make use of this excellent food source. For centuries people have been collecting the nearly 2000 species of insects available for human consumption. This is not because it is a poor man's food – a Western misconception – but because it is delicious. Nutritionally, insects are no less valuable than conventional meat. Insects can contain large amounts of iron. This benefit is of particular importance considering that one billion people are anaemic, including children and pregnant women .

In the tropics, insects are mainly harvested in the wild. Examples are given in this book, such as the very popular Mopane caterpillar in southern Africa, and palm beetles and termites, which are considered absolute delicacies on all tropical continents. Included are explanations of how to collect, store and prepare them. However, if we want to promote the use of insects, then harvesting in the wild will not be enough. Therefore, examples also illustrate how to rear insects. There is experience rearing two species, the house cricket and the yellow mealworm. In Thailand there are already 20,000 households that rear crickets for domestic use and the market.

Worldwide interest in insects as human food is increasing. A number of new initiatives are being undertaken in both tropical and Western countries to explore their potential. This book is a welcome contribution to the re-evaluation of insects as to their role in ensuring food security.

Arnold van Huis

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Edible insects are a common ingredient in traditional dishes in many parts of Africa, a continent with more than 250 potentially edible insect species. As the world's population continues to grow, there is renewed interest in the use of insects as human food. Insects provide animal protein of good quality, and they are rich in lipids and macronutrients. The many edible insect species – an accessible and affordable source of food – can contribute to food security.

This Agrodok shows where to find, and how to collect and prepare 10 different insect species from 5 groups: caterpillars, beetles, true bugs, grasshoppers and crickets; and termites. With the information in this Agrodok, Agromisa aims to contribute to the use of edible insects as a means to securing access to sufficient quantities of nutritious food.

Agrodoks are a series of publications on small-scale agriculture. The booklets are aimed at people who work directly with small-scale farmers in the South. Each provides a theoretical background on a particular topic and then explains its practical applications extensively. All Agrodoks are published in English and French and many also in other languages. They can be ordered from Agromisa and CTA and are also available in PDF format.

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