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You can live on legumes alone

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You can live on legumes alone

GOOD LIVING

BY SOLOMON KARANJA

Advantages of legumes

• Legumes provide abundant protein and fibre while containing very little fat and no cholesterol. They are nutritious.

• If the same amount of money used to buy certain amounts of meat were to buy legumes, the amount purchased would be several times greater in terms of calories, vitamins and minerals.

• They are ecologically profitable since one hectare dedicated to legume production provides up to seven times more calories and protein than if it were used to raise livestock for milk or meat. Besides, they provide natural fertiliser to the soil.

• Legumes reduce cholesterol, making them medicinal plants. A study by participating medical students who ate 120 grams of cooked beans a day for three weeks had their cholesterol and triglyceride levels reduced by 10 percent, according to the American journal of clinical nutrition.

• Legumes have a low glycaemia index; they raise the blood glucose levels very little. They also reduce the need for insulin in diabetics and constitute a bona fide diabetic preventive, according to studies done in Madrid in 1995 and reported in the International Journal of Food Science and Nutrition.

• They prevent constipation by promoting proper bowel function due to their high fibre content.

• Their low levels of sodium and high levels of potassium help to prevent arterial hypertension.

• Legumes lower the risk of gallstones since they promote the elimination of bile salts, which are the raw materials in the formation of gallstones in the bile ducts and gall bladder.

• Due to their high fibre content, they reduce the risk of colon cancer.

Disadvantages

They lack vitamin A, C and B12; they cannot be eaten raw and they contain purine that transforms into uric acid. They should be avoided by gout patients.

It is not for nothing that githeri and mucimo are the dishes of choice in many homesteads and institutions. It is nutritious. A combination of legumes and grains provide biologically high quality protein that contains all essential amino acids in proper proportion. This fact has led to an increase in their consumption.

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