

The Millet Mission

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Introduction

Following an initiative from India, the United Nations has designated 2023 as the "International Year of Millet." India is pressuring the rest of the globe to bring these nutritious cereals back to the table. Scientists are examining the use of a super food crop's mineral abundance to treat malnutrition. Various researches on millets' ability to combat malnutrition because of their mineral abundance have been published by international experts and the efforts have been made by different stakeholders to bring Sri-Arnna (Millets) to mainstream.

The International Year of Millet 2023

The Centre announced a slew of events around the nation to encourage the growing and consumption of the "nutri-cereal" as it officially launched the International Year of Millets. Events will be held all throughout the year to promote and raise awareness of the advantages of millets for the "cultivator, consumer, and climate" by central ministries, State governments, and Indian embassies. According to a government announcement, millets will play a very significant role at G-20 meetings. In December, India took over as host country of the G-20 conference.

About the Millet

Millets are a type of small-grained cereal crop that is used for both food and fodder. The "Millet in your meals" book states that there are roughly 6,000 different colour-varieties of these grains in existence worldwide. One of the first meals known to mankind, according to experts, they were also the first grains to be farmed for household use. Even millet eating throughout the Indus Valley civilisation has been documented. Millet was reportedly one of the prized plants in the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.



Fig.1 women cultivating finger millet at Agricultural Research Station at Peddapuram in East Godavari district File photo of women cultivating finger millet at Agricultural Research Station at Peddapuram in East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh. | Photo Credit: The Hindu.

Odisha Millet Mission

The Indian government designated 2018 as the "National Year of Millets" in order to increase the production of the nutrient-rich millets. The Odisha Millet Mission is a flagship initiative of the state government of Odisha that was started in 2017 with the goal of enhancing family nutrition by reviving millets on tribal populations' plates and in farms throughout the state. In order to assess the key accomplishments of OMM, the operational model used, plans, lessons learned, and document the best practises of OMM experience to develop a range of knowledge products, World Food Programme, India, and Odisha Millet Mission signed an MoU-Memorandum of Understanding (state party agreement).

Millet Day in Odisha

The 10th of November 2022 was recognised as "Millet Day" by the state government of Odisha. The first Thursday of the month of Margasira, according to the Hindu calendar, was chosen as the date.

In the tribal regions of Odisha, millets have historically played a significant role in both the food and farming system. The Odisha Millet Mission was established by the state of Odisha in 2017 to promote the consumption of millets. The mission was introduced in 2017 in 30 blocks spanning over 7 districts. The agricultural department also intends to enclose 81,700 hectares between 2022 and 2023. SHGs participated more and more in all aspects of the millet value chain, including processing, value addition, and marketing.



Fig. 2 Govt. of India asked states to learn from Odisha.

The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana allocated Rs. 300 crores in 2011–12 to promote millets as nutri-cereals. Millets were declared nutri-cereals in April 2018 due to their high nutritious content, and the year was commemorated as the National Year of Millets. The Indian government recommended to the UN that 2023 be designated as the International Year of Millets in order to increase domestic and international demand and to supply nutrient-dense food to the populace.

The sacred product which can be grown in less care

Millets may be cultivated in conditions that require less attention, which means they can tolerate attacks from pests and diseases as well as drought, upland conditions, and nutrient stress. This is owing to their extensive genetic diversity.

Millets are useful for managing disorders including diabetes, heart disease, and anaemia that are caused by malnutrition. Millets are widely used in our food system, culture, and religious literature. For example-

सावां साठी साठ दिन, बरखा बरसे रात दिन

It means, even if it is raining day and night, sanwa (Barnyard millet) and saathi (a variety of rice) will grow in 60 days.

कै जुरतो नहीं कोदो सवां, प्रभु के परताप तें दाख न भवत।

It is the conversation between Shri Krishna and Sudama, which is mentioned in Shrimad Bhagwad Gita. It means, for Sudama, earlier it was difficult to afford grains like Kodo and Sanwa (Barnyard millet) but now he find all delicacies in those food.

Myths about millets still continue to be widespread.

Conclusion

By the criteria listed above and the ideas that have been employed, it should be assumed that, in addition to wheat and rice, millets should also be grown in India and used as a staple diet because they are naturally very nutrient-dense. We as citizens should take advantage of the programmes and initiatives that the government is making every effort to offer in order to improve our lot in life. Millets should be prioritised in light of the fact that cancer is becoming more and more prevalent nowadays and that children are suffering from rare diseases as a result of food or food product adulteration. To raise demand among consumers, millets should be grown in significant regions and with great care. Millet's processed products, including kheer, cookies, dosa, paratha, namkeens, and cake etc are in high demand right now since humans tend to favour processed goods.

Reference

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Odisha government observed 10th November as 'Millet Day' in the state (adda247.com)
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