

Millets Crop A Way to Maintain Food Security of Alarming Population of India

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Abstract

The agricultural sector is the primary source of livelihood for about 58% of the population in the country. In India, millets are grown over 13.8 Mha area with production of 17.3 Mt. The millets production contributes about 10% to the country's food grain requirement. Millets are considered to be "powerhouses of nutrition". On April 10, 2018, the Agriculture Ministry declared millets as "Nutri Cereals". In India day by day population is increasing and for providing a nutritive foods for them in low price not being possible without the production of Millets,

Introduction

The agricultural sector is the primary source of livelihood for about 58% of the population in the country. The share of agriculture in the gross domestic product (GDP) is about 17% about half of which is contributed by the agricultural crops (MoF 2020-21). The food grain production in India has reached an all-time high to 315.51 million tons (Mt) in 2021-22. Nevertheless, continuous supply of agricultural commodities, especially staples like rice, wheat and pulses enabled to achieve the food security in the country. Millets were among the first crops to be domesticated. There is evidence for consumption of millets by the Indus valley people (3,000 BC), and several varieties that are now grown around the world were first cultivated in India. West Africa, China, and Japan are home to indigenous varieties of the crop. Millets are now grown in more than 130 countries, and are the traditional food for more than half a billion people in Asia and Africa. They require much less water than rice and wheat, and are mainly grown in rainfed areas. Globally, sorghum (jowar) is the biggest millet crop. The major producers of jowar are the United States, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan. Bajra is another major millet crop; India and some African countries are major producers. The word millets is used to describe small-grained cereals like

sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra), foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, finger millet (ragi/ mandua), proso millet (cheena/ common millet), barnyard millet (sawa/ sanwa/ jhangora), and brown top millet (korale). In India, millets are grown over 13.8 Mha area with production of 17.3 Mt. The millets production contributes about 10% to the country's food grain requirement. Millets were traditionally consumed as food but due to the push given to food security through the green revolution in the 1960s, millets were rendered as 'orphan crops' and thus are less consumed and almost forgotten. Before the Green revolution, millets made up around 40% of all cultivated grains, which has dropped to around 20% over the years. Despite the many benefits of growing millets, there has been a downward trend in the cultivation of millets in the country. In the past six decades, the area under millets has gone down by 62.57%, dropping from 36.34 Mha (1955-56) to around 13.83 Mha (2019-20). Yet, the production target of all millet crops is maintained with an increase in productivity per hectare over 4 times in pearl millet and more than 2 times in sorghum, finger millet, and small millet crops over the decades. Small millets improvement efforts during the late 1950s and 60s have contributed significantly by releasing several HYVs and developing crop protection and agronomical techniques. However, real growth in finger millet productivity was achieved during 1950-60 when the hybridization technique was successfully established. The finger millet varieties, CFMV 1 and 2 are rich in calcium, iron, and zinc.

Present millets status in India:-

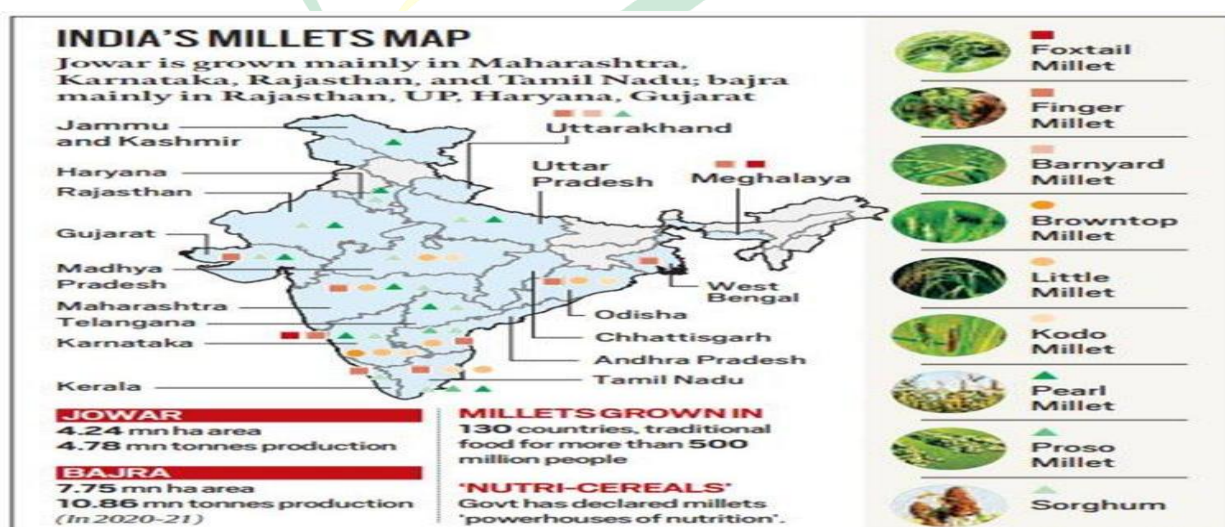


Fig.1 courtesy:- MoAg.



In India, millets are mainly a kharif crop. During 2018-19, three millet crops — bajra (3.67%), jowar (2.13%), and ragi (0.48%) — accounted for about 7 per cent of the gross cropped area in the country, Agriculture Ministry data show.

Bajra is mainly grown in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Of the total 7.75 mn ha under bajra in 2020-21, the highest (4.32 mn ha) was in Rajasthan. The state also produced the most bajra in the country (4.53 million tonnes of the total 10.86 million tonnes) in 2020-21.

Nutritive value of Millets:-

Millets are considered to be “powerhouses of nutrition”. On April 10, 2018, the Agriculture Ministry declared millets as “Nutri Cereals”. Jowar, bajra, ragi/ mandua, the minor millets — kangani/ kakun, cheena, kodo, sawa/ sanwa/ jhangora, and kutki — and the two pseudo millets, buckwheat (kuttu) and amaranth (chaulai), which have “high nutritive value” are now regarded as “Nutri Cereals” for the purposes of production, consumption, and trade. Although, “Millets contain 7-12% protein, 2-5% fat, 65-75% carbohydrates and 15-20% dietary fibre... Small millets are more nutritious compared to fine cereals. They contain higher protein, fat and fibre content.”

Year of Millets

On March 3, 2021, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The proposal was moved by India, and was supported by 72 countries. Several events and activities, including conferences and field activities, and the issuing of stamps and coins, are expected as part of the celebrations aimed at spreading awareness about millets, inspiring stakeholders to improve production and quality, and attracting investments.

PDS is a vehicle to provide millets to Every BPL family of India:-

Under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, eligible households are entitled to get rice, wheat, and coarse grain at Rs 3, Rs 2, and Re 1 per kg respectively. While the Act does not mention millets, coarse grains are included in the definition of “foodgrains” under Section 2(5) of the NFSA. Meanwhile, the quantity of coarse grains procured for the Central Pool and distributed under the NFSA has been negligible. The latest data on stocks with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) show only 2.64 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of coarse grain

was available in the Central Pool on November 1, 2022. In comparison, the stocks of rice, wheat, and unmilled paddy were 265.97 LMT, 210.46 LMT, and 263.70 LMT respectively.

Conclusion

Millets are considered to be “powerhouses of nutrition”. In India day by day population is increasing and for providing a nutritive foods for them in low price not being possible without the production of Millets,

