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Millets in India

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Introduction

2018 was approved as the National Year of Millets by Government of India for increasing the production of millets and the agro-industries associated with its production. It has helped in promoting the millet production and consumption in the country in various ways. For ensuring a nutritious diet and good health, India needs to revolutionise the production of millets. The earliest evidence of millets dates back to 3000 BC. They are hardy, small seeded, adapt well in rainfed areas or dry zones under medium conditions of soil fertility and moisture. India contributes to about 20% of global millets production and 80% of Asia's production. The states where millets production is highest include Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. They have a short life span of 65 days, from sowing to harvesting. They have a good storage capacity of minimum 2 years or beyond. These provide grain rich in nutrients as well as fodder, can also adapt to poor soil or climate conditions and can be a good option for multiple cropping system for irrigated and dry land farming. Its good storability under normal conditions has provided them with the status 'Famine Reserves', which is of importance to India, since there are aberrant and uncertain status of monsoon in India.

India has also implemented a Sub-Mission on Nutri-Cereals (Millets) under National Food Security Mission (NFSM) under the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FW) for enhancing the area, production and productivity of millets. The resultant of these schemes was an increase in the production of millets from 14.52 million tonnes in 2015-16 to 17.96 million tonnes in 2020-21. The Government of India has called the millets as nutri-cereals in 2018 due to their nutritional values, being a rich source of fibre, protein, minerals, iron and calcium and, a lower glycemic index. The Government of India has also given proposal to the United Nations to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets

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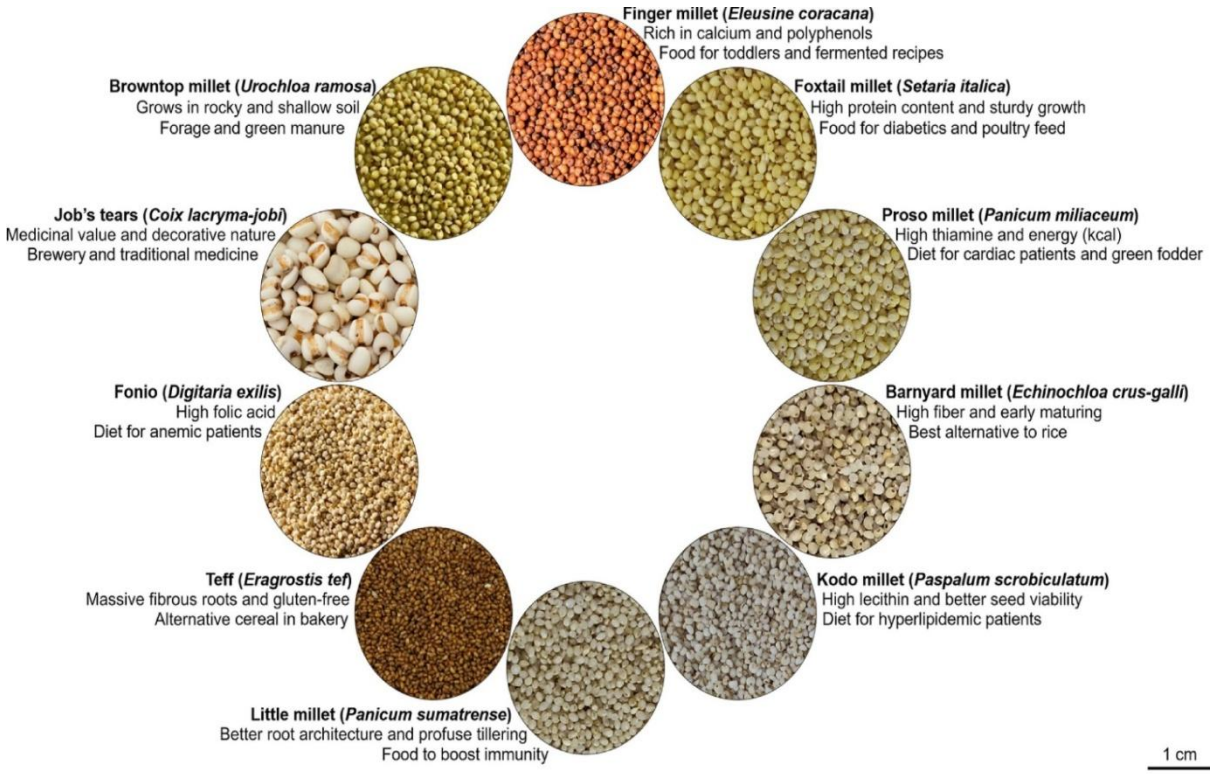
(IYoM) for creating a domestic and world-wide demand and providing nutritional food to the country. With the support of 72 countries, United Nation's General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. For popularizing these nutri-cereals, the Government of India has established 3 Centres of Excellence (CoE) and is also promoting its research and development. Start-ups and entrepreneurs are also given support for promoting the consumption of millets.



Importance of Nutri-cereals:

1. Millets are mostly non-glutinous, non-acid forming, rich in nutrients and easy to digest foods. Because of its lower glycemic index, it promotes the slow release of glucose thereby reducing the risk of diabetes.
2. They are also a rich source of potassium, calcium, zinc, phosphorous, iron and magnesium. They also contain dietary fibres and vitamins like vitamin B6 and folic acid. Millets consumed regularly can therefore, help overcome malnutrition.
3. They are not only a rich source of photochemical like phytosterols, tannins, polyphenols and antioxidants, but also contain some anti-nutritional factors that are able to get reduced by some processing treatments.

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4. They are widely adaptable to various climatic conditions, ranging from coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh to moderate high altitudes of North-eastern states and hilly areas of Uttarakhand. They are able to survive differences in moisture, temperature and soil types varying from sandy infertile lands to heavy soils.

Millets grown in India:

1. **Finger millet:** It is called as ragi in Karnataka and mundua in hindi. It can be a good substitute for oats and cereals.
2. **Barnyard millet:** It is rich source of fibre and iron, known as sanwa in hindi.
3. **Foxtail millet:** It is also rich in vitamins and minerals, known as kangni in hindi.
4. **Little millet:** It is known as kutki in hindi, and is rich in iron and fibre.
5. **Proso millet:** It is called as barri in hindi.
6. **Pearl millet:** It is a rich source of proteins, and is known as Bajra in hindi.

Measures taken to promote millets since 2018:

1. **2018 as National Year of Millets-** Millets were called nutri-cereals, which include Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi/Mandua), Minor Millets i.e. Foxtail Millet (Kangani/Kakun), Proso Millet (Cheena), Kodo Millet (Kodo), Barnyard Millet (Sawa/Sanwa/ Jhangora), Little Millet (Kutki) and two Pseudo Millets (Buck-wheat (Kuttu) and Ameranthus (Chaulai).
2. National Food Security Mission implemented the 'Sub Mission on Millets'.
3. Various states launched the mission on millets.
4. Under the Poshan Mission Abhiyan by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, millets were included.
5. A variety 'Quinoa (Him Shakti)' was released by ICAR
6. With the help of IIMR, Hyderabad, 200 start-ups were supported with a turnover of greater than 320 crores.
7. At the Centre of Excellences, 67 value added technologies were developed.
8. The millets export increased from a $24 million in 2017 to a $26 million in 2020.
9. 13 high yielding varieties including 4 biofortified varieties of millets were released.
10. For facilitating the millets movement, the Government of India has revised the guidelines for the movement of surplus production of millets to other states.