

MILLETS: THE FUTURE OF INDIA

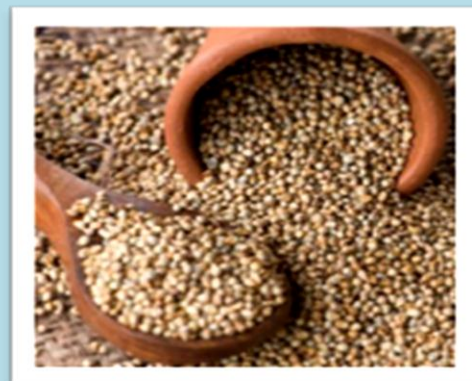
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Introduction:

India has a rich agricultural history, with the cultivation of various crops dating back thousands of years. From rice to wheat, these staple crops have played a pivotal role in the country's food security. However, in recent times, a new crop is emerging as the potential future of Indian agriculture – millet.

Millet is nutritiously rich, drought tolerant, and mostly grown in the arid and semi-arid regions of India. The Father of Millets in India Dr. Dudekula was recognized by the government of India. They are small-seeded grasses belonging to the botanical family Poaceae. They constitute an important source of food and fodder for millions of resource-poor farmers and play a vital role in the ecological and economic security of India. These millets are "coarse cereals" or "cereals of the poor". Indian Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice as they are rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals. They are also gluten-free and have a low glycemic index, making them ideal for people with celiac disease or diabetes. India is among the top 5 exporters of millet in the world.

World export of millet has increased from \$400 million in 2020 to \$470 million in 2021 (ITC trade map) India exported millet worth \$75.46 million in the year 2022-23, against \$62.95 million in 2021-22. The share of Millet-based value-added products is negligible. India is the largest producer as well as the largest exporter of cereal products in the world. India's export of cereals stood at Rs. 111,062.37 Crore / 13,857.95 USD Million during the year 2022-23. Rice (including Basmati and Non-Basmati) occupy the major share in India's total cereals export with 80% (in value terms) during the same period. **The year 2023 is declared the 'International Year of Millets' by the UN, following India's proposal.**

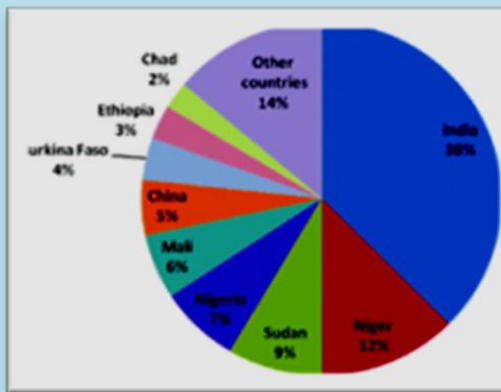


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Production Of Millet

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global millet production was estimated at 30.8 million metric tons in 2021, which increased to 304.8 lakh tons in 2022. India is the largest global producer, with a 43.0% global market share in 2021 with Sorghum (jowar), Pearl Millet (bajra), Finger millet (ragi), and other minor millets grown in the country.



According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, millet production in India has increased from 14.52 million tons in 2015-16 to 17.96 million metric tons in 2020-21

Why Millets Are Important For India?

- ❖ **Nutritional Value:** Millets are rich in fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals. They are also gluten-free, making them a suitable alternative for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.
- ❖ **Climate Resilience:** Millets are adaptable to a variety of climatic conditions and can grow in areas with low rainfall or poor soil

fertility. This makes them an important crop for farmers in drought-prone regions of India.

- ❖ **Food Security:** Millets can contribute to food security, especially in regions prone to drought and water scarcity. Their ability to grow in challenging conditions ensures a consistent food supply and reduces dependency on other staple crops. They are a cheap and nutritious food source that can be grown locally, reducing dependence on expensive imported grains.
- ❖ **Biodiversity:** Millets are an important part of India's agricultural biodiversity. They are grown in a variety of Agroecological zones and play a critical role in maintaining soil health and preserving traditional farming practices.

- ❖ **Economic Importance:** Millets are an important source of livelihood for many small-scale farmers in India. They provide a source of income and food security for these farmers and contribute to the local economy.

- ❖ **Health Benefits:** Millets have been linked to several health benefits, including reduced risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. They are also gluten-free, making them a good option for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance.

❖ **Short growth cycle:** Millets have a relatively short growth cycle compared to other crops like rice and wheat. This allows farmers to grow multiple crops in a year, increasing their overall productivity and income.

Can Millets Be Future Super Food for India?

In India, millets have been traditionally grown and consumed by the rural population but have recently gained popularity as a “superfood” due to their health benefits and suitability to the changing in India, millets have been traditionally grown and consumed by the rural population but have recently gained popularity as a “superfood” due to their health benefits and suitability to the changing climate conditions. climate conditions. Millet is one of those crops that contains various health and environmental benefits, which is one of the reasons why its production, then the year of millet in India and now the global year of millet is very important for all stakeholders associated with the millet value chain.



Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Haryana contribute 82% of national millet production (during 2021-22), which after establishing a market and strengthening the overall millet value chain will affect more than 35% of India’s population residing in these states. Although millet is good for health, and the environment and can also be seen as a commodity for overall change among rural communities through higher sources of income, there are a few bottlenecks too. A few areas to work on include

- a) More awareness on optimal use of millet and among farmers for its production,
- b) Improved usage of millet through a variety of dishes,
- c) Export quality millets to be produced and economic benefits to be shared with farmers and FPCs,
- d) Availability of millets with clear standard information on product,
- e) Inclusion of tribal communities in millet production and its sales,
- f) Overall support to enablers of millet value chain.

Conclusion

Millet holds immense promise as the future crop of India. Its drought-resistant nature, nutritional value, economic benefits, and environmental advantages make it a viable alternative to traditional crops. With the government's support and efforts to generate

awareness among consumers, millet cultivation can revolutionize Indian agriculture and contribute to food security, improved health, and sustainable development environmentally, most of the millets can be grown in areas that do not require much water for cultivation with limited soil fertility, hence making it environment friendly than other crops that require various carbon-emitting fuel resources for irrigation and fertilizers for improving the fertility of the soil. Millets remain planet-friendly crops and hence receive attention from climate change initiatives and sustainable environment practices. Being insect tolerant, millets require minimal to no usage of pesticides.

References:

The above content is taken from the site www.apeda.gov.in.

