

International Year of Millets, 2023



LIFE

Lifestyle for Environment

“Millets can play an important role and contribute to our collective efforts to empower smallholder farmers, achieve sustainable development, eliminate hunger, adapt to climate change, promote diversity, and transform agri-food systems”

~ QU Dongyu, FAO Director- General



GREAT MILLET (Sorghum Millet)

source: Internet



FOXTAIL MILLET

source: Internet

Introduction

The year 2023 has been declared as the year of millets by the United Nations following the proposal of India as India wants to position itself as a “*Global Hub for Millets*”. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, the global agrifood systems face challenges to feed an ever-growing global population, resilient cereals like millets provide an affordable and nutritious option and efforts need to be scaled up to promote their cultivation.

What is Millet?

Millet is a type of cereal that is a part of the grass family Poaceae. This small round grain is found in India and Nigeria and is widely consumed in developing countries throughout Africa and Asia. While it may look like a seed, millet's nutritional profile is similar to that of sorghum and other cereals.

Attributes and types of Millet

Millets are considered an ancient grain, they are used both for human consumption, livestock, and bird feed. Although all millet varieties belong to the Poaceae family, they differ in color, appearance, and species. It is also divided into two categories large and small millets.

Large millets

- Pearl Millet (Bajra)
- Foxtail Millet (Kakum/ Kangni)
- Finger Millet (Ragi)
- Proso Millet (Chena/ Barri)

Small millets

- Browntop Millet (Korle)
- Barnyard Millet (Sanwa)
- Little Millet (Moraiyo)

Background of Millets in India

Millets were largely consumed in India, but due to food security through the green revolution in the 1960s, millets were rendered as 'Orphan crops'. Millets comprised 40% of all produced grains but over the years it has dropped to 20%.

Consumption of millets is not the only area that has seen a decline but also the area used for cultivating millets has been replaced with commercial crops, oil seeds, pulses, and maize due to its profitability, which of its production is supported through subsidized inputs, incentivized procurement and inclusion in the public distribution system which has resulted from changes in dietary patterns in favor of fine calories rich cereals.

In contrast to the previous administration's belief, the Indian government has realized the importance of millets in nutritional security in the country and now has made several

efforts to gazetting millets as nutri-cereals and celebrate the National year of millets in 2018, putting forward several small-scale policies concerning millets and also proposing the international year of millets to United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Climate required for the cultivation of millets in India

Different climatic conditions are required for different types of millets; however, the climatic condition outlines remain roughly the same for all:

- ◆ **The sustainable temperature for millet growth is 20-30 degree Celsius.**
- ◆ **Warm temperate climate is essential for the sprouting and germination of the millet seeds.**
- ◆ **Most millets can do with little moisture since they have efficient water utilization abilities.**
- ◆ **Minor millets require below 35cm of rainfall, while a few other major millets require at least 40 cm of rainfall for a good harvest.**
- ◆ **In India, about 8 millet types are cultivated under rain-fed conditions which require little or no irrigation.**
- ◆ **Millet cultivation in India happens in the Kharif period, during the monsoon season.**

Areas and Regions of Millet Cultivation in India

- 📌 In India, millets are majorly grown in 21 states depending on the soil type required by each millet.
- 📌 Millets are the staple food in the regions of Manipur, Nagaland, and Meghalaya.
- 📌 Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Karnataka are the top 3 millet-producing states in the country.
- 📌 Karnataka is the largest producer of Ragi followed by Tamil Nadu.
- 📌 Small millet yields well in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh to hilly regions of Uttarakhand and North-Eastern states.

Benefits of millets

- ✓ Rich in antioxidants
- ✓ Control blood sugar level
- ✓ Helps to lower cholesterol
- ✓ Improve digestive health



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Pearl millet is the most drought and heat tolerant of all cereals.

Why did millets lose preference over the past few decades?

Millets are said to be among the earliest cereals cultivated by mankind. But when India was hit by a food shortage, the Green Revolution prioritized the production of wheat and rice to help avert a crisis.

Before the Green Revolution, the production of rice and millets were higher than the production of wheat, and maize barely. Till 1965-70-time frame, millets formed 20% of food grain.

Millets Cultivation in Nagaland

Millets are one of the important cereal crops in Nagaland. Millets have long been cultivated in the hilly terrain of the Eastern part of Nagaland. It has been part of the staple diet of the people. About 80% of Jhumia in Mon district grow millets as a paddy-based crop in jhum fields.

Commonly grown millet in Nagaland is Foxtail and Great Millet (Sorghum). In Chizami Village of Phek district, some species of millet like foxtail millet can be cultivated even after 20-30 years of storage.

