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Millets: “A Certain Solution” To Nutritional Insecurity!!!

(*Narendra Danga and Sangeeta Danga)

Agricultural Research Sub Station, Nagaur

*Corresponding Author's email: danganarendra9@gmail.com

Millets are a group of nutritious cereal crops that are rich in essential nutrients and provide a range of health benefits. Here are some of the key nutritional values of millets: Millets are rich in fibre, which is important for good digestion, regular bowel movements, and reducing the risk of heart disease and other chronic conditions. Millets are a good source of protein, which is essential for building and repairing body tissues. They are also a good source of essential amino acids, which are the building blocks of protein. It is having also important micronutrients, such as iron, calcium, phosphorus, and B vitamins, which are important for good health and development. Millets contain antioxidants, which can help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Low glycaemic index, which means that they are slowly absorbed and metabolized by the body, providing a steady source of energy and reducing the risk of blood sugar spikes. It is gluten-free making them a good option for people with celiac disease or gluten intolerance. Overall, millets are a nutritious and versatile food crop that provides a range of health benefits. They can be incorporated into a variety of dishes, including porridge, flatbreads, and stews

India is one of the largest producers of millets in the world, and there are several types of millets that are widely grown in the country. Here are some of the major millets grown in India:

- ❖ Sorghum (jowar): Sorghum is one of the most widely grown millets in India, and it is a staple food crop in many regions of the country. It is known for its drought tolerance and high yields, making it a popular crop for farmers in semi-arid regions.
- ❖ Pearl Millet (bajra): Pearl millet is widely grown millet in India, and it is a staple food crop in many regions of the country. It is known for its high nutritional value, drought tolerance, and high yields, making it a popular crop for farmers.
- ❖ Finger Millet (ragi): Finger millet is widely grown in India and is a staple food crop in many regions of the country, particularly in southern India. It is rich in essential nutrients, such as iron and calcium, and is a good source of fiber and protein.
- ❖ Foxtail Millet (kangni): Foxtail millet is widely grown in India and is an important food crop in many regions of the country. It is rich in essential nutrients, such as iron and calcium, and is a good source of fiber and protein.
- ❖ Little Millet (kutki): Little millet is a staple food crop in some regions of India and is known for its high nutritional value and drought tolerance.

These are some of the major millets grown in India, and each one provides unique nutritional and health benefits. By incorporating millets into their diets, people in India can benefit from their high nutritional value and improve their health and well-being.

Benefits of growing millets

- Improved soil fertility: Millets are often grown as rotation crops, which can help to improve the soil structure and fertility over time.
- Drought tolerance: Many millet varieties are drought-tolerant, which makes them well-suited to growing in areas with limited water resources.
- High yields: Some millet varieties can produce high yields, making them a profitable crop for farmers.
- Pest resistance: Millets have a natural resistance to pests, which can reduce the need for chemical pesticides and improve the sustainability of farming practices.
- Diversification: Growing millets can provide farmers with an alternative crop option, which can help to diversify their income sources and reduce the risk of crop failure due to weather or disease. Overall, millets can be a valuable addition to a farmer's crop rotation and can help to improve their income and sustainability.
- Millets have the potential to play a significant role in reducing malnutrition in India, as they are nutritionally rich and provide a range of health benefits. Here are some ways in which millets can help to remove malnutrition from India.
- High nutritional value: Millets are rich in essential nutrients such as iron, calcium, fiber, and vitamins, which are important for good health and development.
- Improved food security: Millets are drought-tolerant and can be grown in semi-arid regions, where food security can be a challenge. By providing a reliable source of food, millets can help to improve food security for millions of people in India.
- Accessibility: Millets are relatively inexpensive and widely available, making them an accessible source of nutrition for people in India, particularly those who are living in poverty.
- Reduced food waste: Millets have a longer shelf life than many other staple crops, which can help to reduce food waste and increase food security.
- Increased income for farmers: By promoting the cultivation and consumption of millets, farmers in India can increase their income and improve their livelihoods.
- To effectively address malnutrition in India through millets, it will be important to promote their cultivation and consumption through education and awareness campaigns, as well as by improving storage and processing infrastructure. In addition, it will be necessary to support small-scale farmers and promote sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices.

What the status of millets in India

In India, millets have traditionally been a staple food crop, especially in rural and semi-arid regions. However, in recent decades, there has been a decline in their cultivation and consumption, due to several factors, including:

- ❖ Shift in dietary habits: With increasing urbanization and modernization, there has been a shift in dietary habits towards more processed and westernized foods, leading to a decline in the consumption of millets.
- ❖ Competition from other crops: The government has provided subsidies and support for the cultivation of other crops, such as rice and wheat, which have led to a decline in the cultivation of millets.
- ❖ Low productivity: The adoption of modern agricultural practices for millet cultivation has been slow, leading to low productivity and profitability for farmers.
- ❖ Lack of storage and processing infrastructure: In many areas, there is a lack of storage and processing infrastructure for millets, which can result in waste and reduced profits for farmers.

- ❖ Despite these challenges, there has been a growing interest in millets in recent years, as people have become more aware of their health benefits and environmental sustainability. The government of India has also launched several initiatives to promote millet cultivation and consumption, including the National Millets Mission, which aims to increase the production and consumption of millets in the country. Overall, the status of millets in India is complex, with both challenges and opportunities for their cultivation and consumption. Efforts to promote their cultivation and consumption are likely to have a positive impact on the livelihoods of farmers and the health of consumers.

Why does not adopt millets cultivation popularly by farmers

Millets have been a staple food crop in many parts of the world for thousands of years, but in recent decades, their cultivation has declined in many regions. There are several reasons why farmers have not adopted millets cultivation, including:

- **Lack of market demand:** In many countries, there has been a shift away from traditional staple crops like millets towards more profitable crops, such as rice and wheat. This has led to a decline in market demand for millets, making it less attractive for farmers to grow them.
- **Low yield potential:** In comparison to other staple crops, some millet varieties have lower yield potential, which can make them less profitable for farmers. This is particularly true in areas where farmers have limited resources and need to maximize their yields.
- **Poor storage and transport infrastructure:** Millets are often grown in remote and rural areas, where storage and transport infrastructure can be limited. This can make it difficult for farmers to get their crops to market and receive a fair price for their produce.
- **Lack of modern farming practices:** In some areas, farmers have limited access to modern farming equipment and techniques, which can limit their ability to grow millets effectively. This can result in low yields and reduced profits for farmers.
- **Perceived health risks:** In some regions, there is a perception that millets are not as nutritious as other staple crops like rice and wheat, which can discourage farmers from growing them. This can be due to a lack of knowledge about the health benefits of millets and how to prepare them for consumption.
- **Government policies and subsidies:** In many countries, government policies and subsidies favour the cultivation of other crops, such as rice and wheat, over millets. This can create an uneven playing field for farmers who choose to grow millets, making it harder for them to compete in the market.
- **Difficulty in mechanization:** Millets are often grown in small-scale, rain-fed farming systems, which can make it difficult to adopt mechanized farming methods. This can result in higher costs and lower productivity for farmers, which can reduce the profitability of millet cultivation. In conclusion, there are several factors that have contributed to the decline of millet cultivation by farmers in recent decades. Addressing these challenges will require a multi-faceted approach that includes increasing market demand for millets, improving access to modern farming methods, and addressing the health and nutritional concerns associated with their consumption.

Overall, millets have the potential to play an important role in reducing malnutrition in India, by improving food security, increasing access to essential nutrients, and supporting the livelihoods of farmers

Possibilities in millets next decades

The possibilities for millets in the next few decades are promising, as more and more people become aware of their health benefits and environmental sustainability. Here are some potential developments for millets in the future:

- ❖ Increased cultivation and consumption: As the demand for healthy and sustainable food options grows, it is likely that the cultivation and consumption of millets will increase, both in India and globally.
- ❖ Improved agricultural practices: With increasing investment in research and development, it is likely that new and more efficient farming practices will be developed, which will help to improve the productivity and profitability of millet cultivation.
- ❖ Greater processing and storage infrastructure: As the demand for millets grows, it is likely that more processing and storage infrastructure will be developed, which will help to reduce waste and increase the profitability of millet cultivation.
- ❖ Development of new products: As the popularity of millets grows, it is likely that new products will be developed, such as millet-based snacks, breakfast cereals, and ready-to-eat meals, which will make it easier for people to incorporate millets into their diets.
- ❖ Expansion of export markets: As the demand for millets grows globally, it is likely that export markets for millets will expand, providing new opportunities for farmers in India and other countries.

Overall, the future for millets is bright, as people become more aware of their health benefits and environmental sustainability. With increased investment in research, development, and infrastructure, millets have the potential to play a significant role in addressing global challenges, such as malnutrition, food security, and environmental degradation.