



## Millets: Low-Cost, High-Profit Crops for the Future

\*Aarti Kamboj

Department of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, Haryana-125004

\*Corresponding Author's email: [aartikamboj77@gmail.com](mailto:aartikamboj77@gmail.com)

In today's changing climate and rising input costs, farmers are looking for crops that require less water, fewer inputs, and still give good returns. Millets—often called “coarse cereals”—are emerging as a smart choice. Once considered traditional crops, millets are now gaining importance again due to their resilience and growing market demand.

### Why Millets Matter Today

Millets such as bajra (pearl millet), jowar (sorghum), and ragi (finger millet) are well suited to Indian conditions. They can grow in low rainfall areas, tolerate high temperatures, and perform well even in poor soils. With increasing uncertainty in rainfall and groundwater depletion, especially in regions like Haryana and Rajasthan, millets offer a reliable alternative to water-intensive crops.

#### 1. Low Input, High Efficiency

One of the biggest advantages of millets is their low cost of cultivation:

- Require less water compared to rice and wheat
- Need fewer fertilizers and pesticides
- Suitable for rainfed farming
- Can grow in marginal lands

This means farmers spend less while still maintaining stable production.

#### 2. Profit Potential for Farmers

Millets are not just low-cost—they are also becoming high-value crops:

- Increasing demand due to health awareness
- Used in products like flour, biscuits, ready-to-eat foods
- Government promotion and support programs

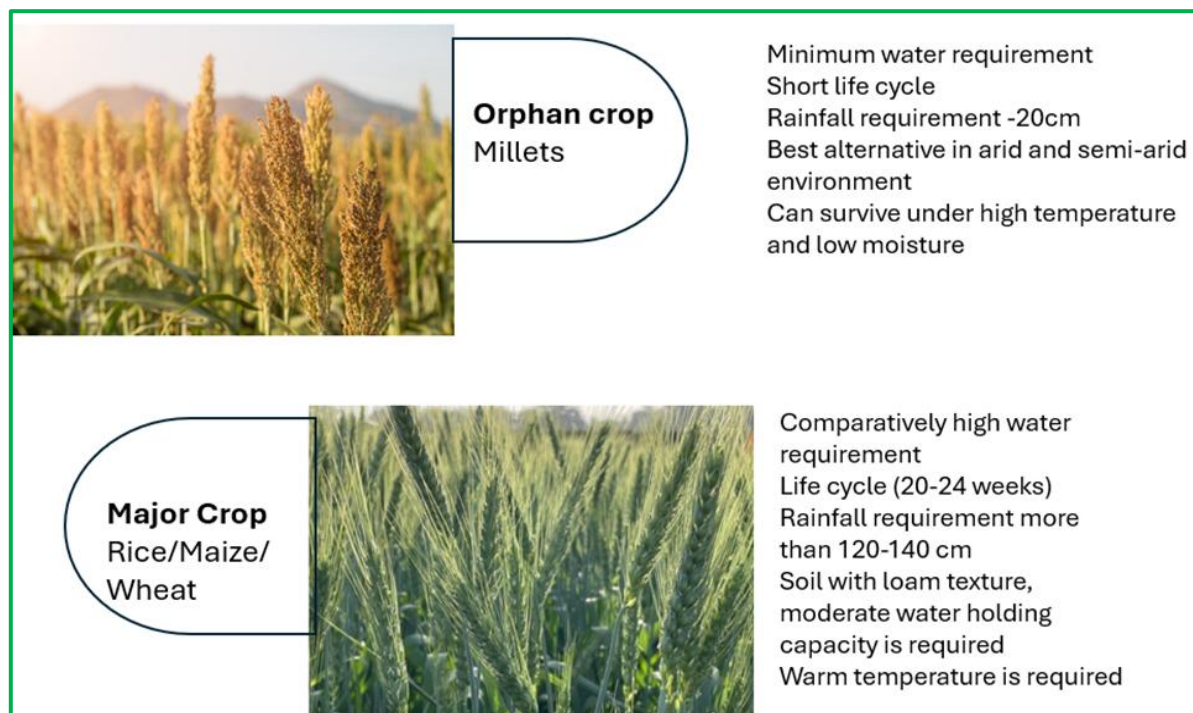
Farmers can benefit from both direct selling and value addition, increasing their income.

#### 3. Climate-Resilient Crops

Millets are known for their strong adaptability:

- Tolerate drought and heat stress
- Short duration crops
- Lower risk of total crop failure

In uncertain weather conditions, millets provide income security. In Haryana, especially in districts like Hisar, Bhiwani, and Mahendragarh, farmers have started shifting from water-intensive crops to bajra due to declining groundwater levels. Bajra requires significantly less irrigation and performs well under dry conditions. Farmers in these regions have reported reduced irrigation costs and stable yields even in low rainfall years. In some cases, bajra cultivation has helped farmers avoid crop failure during drought-like conditions, where crops like paddy would have suffered heavy losses.



**Fig 1: Comparison showing lower water and input requirements of millets compared to conventional crops**

#### 4. Suitable Cropping Systems

Millets can be easily included in existing farming systems as a replacement for water-intensive crops, in crop rotation to improve soil health and along with pulses for better land use. Millets also contribute to soil health improvement as their deep root system improves soil structure, they require fewer chemical inputs and fits well in crop rotation with pulses, improving overall farm productivity.

#### Government Support

Millets are being actively promoted under government initiatives such as:

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops like bajra
- Inclusion in public distribution systems (PDS) in some states

These efforts are improving market access and price stability for farmers.

#### Simple Tips for Farmers

- Choose improved, locally suitable varieties
- Follow timely sowing with monsoon onset
- Use balanced fertilization (even if low input)
- Explore local markets and processing options

#### Benefits at a Glance

Aspect	Advantage
Water requirement	Very low
Input cost	Low
Climate tolerance	High
Crop duration	Short
Market demand	Increasing

#### Conclusion

Millets are not just traditional crops—they are future-ready crops. With low investment, high resilience, and rising demand, they offer a practical solution for farmers facing climate and cost challenges. By adopting millets, farmers can reduce risks, improve income, and move towards more sustainable agriculture.