

HUMBLE MILLETS CAN AID IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

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With the growing population, diminishing land and changing climate, we need to explore resilient sustainable crops. Millets are C4 plants which have more photosynthetic efficiency than C3 plants. They are short-duration crops and grow well on acidic to alkaline soil. They are tolerant to high temperature and resistant to drought, most diseases and pests and do not require much care. Millets have immense potential to combat malnutrition. They are rich in macro, micronutrients, phytochemicals and antioxidants. Millets have complex carbohydrates, are gluten free, have low glycaemic index, have good-quality fat and are rich in fibre, protein and essential nutrients. Their consumption can help in prevention of several cardiovascular diseases and good for people with celiac disease or gluten sensitivity. They can be helpful in preventing diseases arising due to bad food habits and also in improving physical and mental well being. Millets have been a staple food for millions of people in India for centuries, specially the rural and tribal population. But after green revolution, their use has declined. Millets are now gaining popularity due to spread of knowledge about their immense health benefits. Due to their nutritional benefits, they need to be an important part of public distribution system (PDS) in India. Global millet market is increasing after the declaration of year 2023 as 'International Year of Millets' by the United Nations. We are one of the market leaders with 40% world millet production and amongst top five global exporters of millets. We are looking forward to grab the billions of Dollar of export opportunity by promoting millets and millet-based products. This will not only help farmers but also boost our economy. The present article discusses various aspects of these neglected crops and why they need to be promoted, popularized and accepted by consumers for a sustainable agriculture.
